

Educational Experiences in Making Art:

An Investigation of Process-Based Learning in the Studio

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Abstract

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Using a combination of practice-led research methods and process-based learning techniques, this thesis explores the possible benefits and limitations of documentation and reflection processes in the learning environment of an artist's studio. The researcher completed six large scale artworks while practicing rigorous documentation and reflection. An analysis through the visual means of concept mapping revealed multiple insights on the positive effects of process-based learning in the studio, as well as the nuances and difficulties of taking on this type of learning.

Over the course of three months of directed studio practice, the researcher identified multiple positive effects of process-based learning. Included in these beneficial outcomes is consistent and continual artistic growth. Sustained self-directed learning is a valuable skill that can aid individual artists and students in pursuing their goals both inside and outside of the traditional education system. Other pertinent outcomes include enhanced understanding of artistic direction, heightened self-understanding and accelerated progress.

The limitations of process-based learning became evident when documentation and reflection took over artistic processes, disrupting the flow of thought during the making of an artwork. The researcher emphasizes the necessity of finding balance between intuition and organization within an artistic project to ensure that process-based learning can be integrated seamlessly into an artistic practice. The findings are applied to multiple art education contexts in order to extend their applicability beyond the artist's studio.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	iv
Introduction and Questions	1
Background to the Research	4
Review of Created Media	6
Review of Literature	21
Methodology and Procedures	30
Data Analysis	41
Concept Mapping and Further Reflection	41
Learning with Process-based Tools in the Studio	47
Specific Instances of Lasting Effect and General Outcomes	69
Recommendations and Significance	75
Conclusion	85
Bibliography	88

LIST OF FIGURES

1- Sarah Lickley, <i>They are the Mortar (Elsie and Katherine)</i> , acrylic, oil, pastel and collage on watercolour paper, 2012	7
2- Sarah Lickley, <i>Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union (Peter and Christiane)</i> , Acrylic, oil, pastel and collage on watercolour paper, 2012	9
3- Sarah Lickley, <i>Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement (Peter and Joseph)</i> , acrylic, oil, pastel and collage on recycled paper, 2012	11
4- Sarah Lickley, <i>My Early Exchanges of Abstract Beliefs (Gisela and Sarah)</i> , acrylic, oil, pastel and collage on handmade paper, 2012	13
5- Sarah Lickley, <i>A Rare Outburst Upon Exiting Into the Night (Gertrude)</i> , acrylic, oil, pastel and collage on handmade paper, 2012	15
6- Sarah Lickley, <i>Untitled #1 (Elsie)</i> , linoleum print collage, glue, pastel and acrylic on paper, 2012	17
7- Sarah Lickley, <i>Untitled #1 (Gertrude)</i> , linoleum print collage, glue, pastel and acrylic on paper, 2012	18
8- Sarah Lickley, <i>Untitled #1 (Gege)</i> , linoleum print collage, glue, pastel and acrylic on paper, 2012	19
9- Evernote Screen Shot of November 2 nd Documentation, 2012	39
10- In Progress View of <i>They are the Mortar</i> , October 16, 2012	49
11- In Progress View of <i>Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union</i> , October 30, 2012	51

12- In Progress Detail of <i>Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union (Peter)</i> , November 2, 2012	53
13- Detail of Concept Map Concerning <i>Behind the Curtains of the Anomalous Union</i> , December, 2012	54
14- In Progress View of <i>Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement</i> , November 14, 2012	56
15- Comparison of Reference Image and Finished Painting for <i>Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement</i> , Original reference image from 1986	58
16- In Progress Detail of <i>My Early Exchanges of Abstract Beliefs</i> , November 28, 2012	60
17- Detail of Concept Map Concerning <i>My Early Exchanges of Abstract Beliefs</i> , December, 2012	61
18- In Progress Detail of <i>A Rare Outburst Upon Exiting Into the Night</i> , December 8, 2012	63
19- Page from Journal Documentation, December 3, 2012	65
20- Detail of Concept Map Concerning <i>Linoleum Print Collages</i> , December 2012 ..	67
21- Concept Map Concerning <i>Linoleum Print Collages</i> , December 2012	68

INTRODUCTION

“Art denotes a process of doing or making.” (Dewey, 1934, p. 48)

This statement, made decades ago by American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey, still holds strong in the contemporary context. Most notably, as this discussion of my research will show, experiential or process-based learning and art are clearly connected and have proven fertile ground for personal, artistic and educational growth. By means of rigorous documentation and reflection, I investigated process-based learning in my studio as an artist, analyzed and interpreted the experience as a researcher, and applied and reflected on the findings from the perspective of an educator. Throughout the project, my experiences guided me in creating meaningful connections between art making and process-based learning. I found that process-based learning tools have the potential to enhance critical viewpoint and self-awareness as well as stimulate artistic and educative growth.

In my research and practice, I have become more conscious and informed of the process-based learning tools that are driving studio practice in academia. My research, hinging on the pedagogy of process, seeks to evaluate the validity and effectiveness of documentation and reflection tools through first-hand engagement.

Specifically, I was compelled to ask, “What are the strengths and limitations of certain documentation and reflective practices in process-based learning and art making within a studio inquiry project?”

In analyzing the use of documentation and reflection methods, I was able to synthesize my findings for applicability in an art education context. This led me to ask, “What are the specific qualities of my own learning process through studio practice that can be transferred to the teaching of art?”

I understand these two questions as the driving forces behind my academic/artistic research for this project.

Upon reflection, my research direction can be traced to my earliest learning experiences. As a child, I showed both an affinity for tactile tasks such as drawing and a difficulty with language. Learning through doing was a necessity my parents, as public school teachers, recognized and fostered. In high school art class, as my educational development became more balanced, I discovered my passion for all forms of artistic creation. As I continued my artistic training in university, my affinities further developed into a passion for art making and teaching. It is apparent in hindsight that through practicing and enhancing my artistic skill with others, I became excited to share in and direct the artistic development of others. In my personal, educational and professional lives, I continue to seek out artistic and educational projects that allow me to practice art and educate others concerning its uses and benefits.

In reflecting on my own experiences, I took up this research project to investigate the possibilities of process-based learning¹ in art education, specifically from the

¹ Process-based learning is when knowledge and skill outcomes are achieved through experiences of doing and making. Many scholars highlight the vital processes of documentation and reflection within this learning approach. Documentation – record keeping in various forms – helps the learner recollect and identify aspects of the learning process. Reflection or looking back at various times in the process facilitates further understandings and development (Scrivener, 2000, n.p.). Scholars Steven Scrivener (2000), Nancy De Frietas (2002), Nithikul Nimkulrat (2007), Donald Schön (1987) and others illustrate these terms within their research. In the Methodology chapter of this text these terms and their manifestations are described in greater detail.

perspective of an independent studio artist. This project enabled me to meld my artistic and written skills. Within this research, learning through process-based activities has given me a greater understanding of and ability to articulate my artistic process. I have also become better able to understand and describe the use and applicability of the process-based tools of documentation and reflection in various learning environments. In examining and using these tools, my self-awareness as a student and teacher has grown considerably. I was also able to identify the traits, benefits, limitations and applications of this research—knowledge that will aid in the communication and use of this work in various art education contexts.

In the chapters that follow, I first examine in more detail the background to the inquiry and the studio work completed. I then contextualize the research, referencing the work of relevant artists and the research of art education scholars who investigate process-based learning, studio inquiry, visual arts as research and other applicable topics. Then, having prepared the backdrop for the research project, I relay in detail and with visual references how the project unfolded and developed both in terms of the process of art making and in terms of data analysis. Finally, I apply my experiences and research findings in the form of recommendations to various art education contexts. All of these recommendations prove to be interconnected and often mutually beneficial.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Arriving at my research questions, means of inquiry and analysis methods was a more difficult process than I had initially anticipated. Due to my predilection for independent studio-based inquiry, my first thought was to embark on a project focused solely on my own creative production and products. With a BFA in visual arts, I have been a practicing artist for almost eight years, immersed in independent art making and learning throughout. However, a purely studio-based approach would have neglected my position as both an art education student and an educator. I have accumulated three years of teaching experience in various community, institutional and private settings. A solely studio-based project would also have overlooked the potential for the thesis project to be a self-reflective learning opportunity for myself as an artist-educator. After much consideration, I oriented my studio-based thesis towards the pedagogy of process, which I have come to understand as an inquiry into the possibilities of process-based learning and the corresponding tools of documentation and reflection.

My previous experiences as an artist and educator have allowed for a more critical and informed reflection on my artistic process, the tools of process-based learning and their connection to education. In undertaking this project, it was vital that I have a basic repertoire of experiences to aid and induce comparative reflection. As an art educator, I aspire to teach post-secondary level students who need the skills and knowledge of independent studio-based learning to carry them through their own artistic careers.

My investigation was conducted through creating mixed-media paintings while implementing, recording and reflecting on the use of documentation and reflection as learning tools. I then took up the data analysis method of concept mapping to deduce

outcomes, which helped me formulate conclusions. Therefore, my studio-based thesis project has been an inquiry consisting of three interdependent components: artworks, created data and finally this thesis text, which includes data analysis, outcomes and recommendations.

To decipher how an artist benefits from or is limited by the use of the process-based learning tools of documentation and reflection, my first task was to create a series of artworks true to my own artistic practice while also integrating these tools. The series is titled *Relating Again to Found Origins* and is comprised of six large scale mixed-media figurative works and three small collaged linoleum print works that are oriented towards public exhibition. Each of these artworks takes as its subjects individuals, pairs and groups of people linked through the consideration of material, thematic and subject matter concerns.

The specific subject matter of this project is direct family members and other close relations whom I referenced from old found photographs. This choice of subject matter was deliberate in its tie to the documentation and reflection tools I investigated; each photograph presented itself as a document of time I did not remember, and each painting became a reflection of how I understood the image in the present context. By referencing the dated personal images of my family's history, my intention was to heighten meaning through ideas of nostalgia and memory as well as to induce a reflective contemplation on universally relatable subjects and themes. Each finished artwork is briefly reviewed in the next chapter.

REVIEW OF CREATED MEDIA

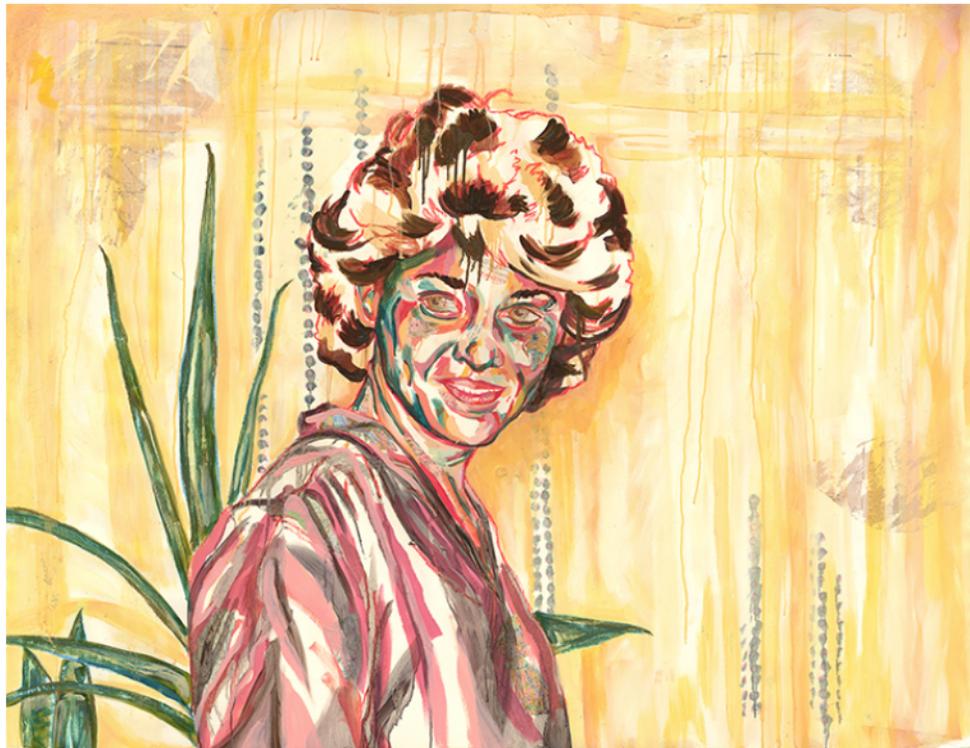
The first artwork I completed, *They are the Mortar (Elsie and Katherine)*, referenced a series of traditional family photographs taken in the late seventies just before my grandfather's death and when my father, his siblings and his parents were still very much a family. I have saved these photos for a very long time, unsure about how to reflect on the hardship I believe that they represent for my grandmother. Although the painted image does not suggest hardship, I have learned that this emotional tone has been concealed by the traditional family portrait format of the reference image. This work engages with themes related to absences, changing family dynamics and the strength of family that is often upheld by women. As I re-composed and reworked these photographic references, two characters of importance emerged. My grandmother and my aunt are rendered in the foreground together as a dyad, replacing the more typical husband and wife. In the background I chose only to outline the figures' silhouettes to emphasize their distance and ghostly presence. This work, like others in this series, utilizes stark line, expressive colour, collage, gestural brush strokes and spaces of unfinished ground to distort the original reference and provoke emotive responses. This effect is achieved through a varied array of distortion that requires the viewer to fill in the blanks, both visually and thematically, reimagining their own relationships and experiences in comparison.

Figure # 1



My next two paintings, *Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union (Peter and Christiane)*, are a diptych that explores my parents' seemingly calm and utopic relationship through a nostalgic lens. I chose this theme and subject matter because I have always found my parents' relationship very perplexing and beautiful. Their relationship appeared anomalous because of its faithful and peaceful qualities; in my adulthood it has seemed frustrating and impossible to emulate. I found the two reference images for this work in a box of old unsorted photographs while visiting my maternal grandmother. The two photographs particularly resonated with me as a pair, which is why I decided to represent them as a diptych. In these works, due to the larger than life scale, my brush strokes, gestures and paint drips are larger and more visible. The subdued colour palette and lack of detail in the backgrounds add emphasis to the characters and their idealized and mirrored representation.

Figure # 2



The fourth work I created, *Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement (Peter and Joseph)*, reveals a dyadic friendship between two men. The original photographic reference portrayed brothers-in-law playing video games. In the composition of my painting, I cropped out the video game console at the bottom of the image in order to bring more focus to the characters and their connection. Although these brothers-in-law no longer share moments like this due to changing family priorities, I found it therapeutic to recapture and reinforce the image of their time together as a reminder of my early childhood and of extended family ties that are often difficult to maintain. Focusing on the positive aspects of this past relationship, rather than my disjointed family in the present day, gave me a sense of calm and control over my own ideas of family.

Figure # 3



The fifth work, which I originally anticipated would be the final work in the series, is a self-portrait entitled *My Early Exchanges of Abstract Beliefs (Gisela and Sarah)*. This work referenced two separate photographs: one of myself as a child at Christmas, and one of my Aunt Gisela in her early adulthood at Christmas. Although the photographic references were captured at different times, I combined them in order to recreate my own memories of being with my aunt at Christmas. This memory has been part of my life and my understanding of family togetherness, even as my life became separate from my Aunt Gisela's. Making a work that included my Aunt Gisela was especially important to me because she was the one who inspired me as a child to take up art and who was my informal art teacher. In creating this work, my main goal was to recreate this fading childhood memory before it is forgotten and to reinforce its positive effects on my present understanding of myself.

Figure # 4



My final large scale work, *A Rare Outburst Upon Exiting Into the Night* (*Gertrude*), referenced an old photograph of my maternal grandmother. I found the person in the photograph very unusual in comparison to the one I remembered growing up: as a child I knew her to be very strict, reserved and sometimes cold, whereas this photograph showed her in a playful and un-composed state. With her mouth wide and her arms clenching her stomach, I found her pose eerily enlightening in terms of the complex spectrum of human behaviour. Each person is capable of humility, excitement, empathy and understanding as much as they are capable of rudeness, harshness, judgment and perturbation. In homage to my newly formed close adult relationship with this grandmother, I recreated the image in large scale with more visual exaggeration than in my previous works. I drew out colours, line and form to emphasize her animated facial features and pose. I amplified my usual contrasting colour choices to stimulate the viewer to imagine her un-composed and elated emotive response upon being caught by a camera at a social party.

Figure # 5



Between developing my large scale paintings, I created small linoleum print collages of the elder characters in my life (Figures #5, #6 and #7). I left these works untitled. My conception of elder figures is similar to that of aboriginal communities: elders are generally role models, teachers to grandchildren, and considered wise due to their valuable historical knowledge. My two grandmothers and my great grandfather pictured in my works are recognized in my family circle as elder figures as they have positive and vital roles. Carving their faces in linoleum, I was able to read and emphasize their advanced ages and create simplified but recognizable portraits. I found it very satisfying to give recognition or attention to these faces and the lines that tell their history.

Figure # 7

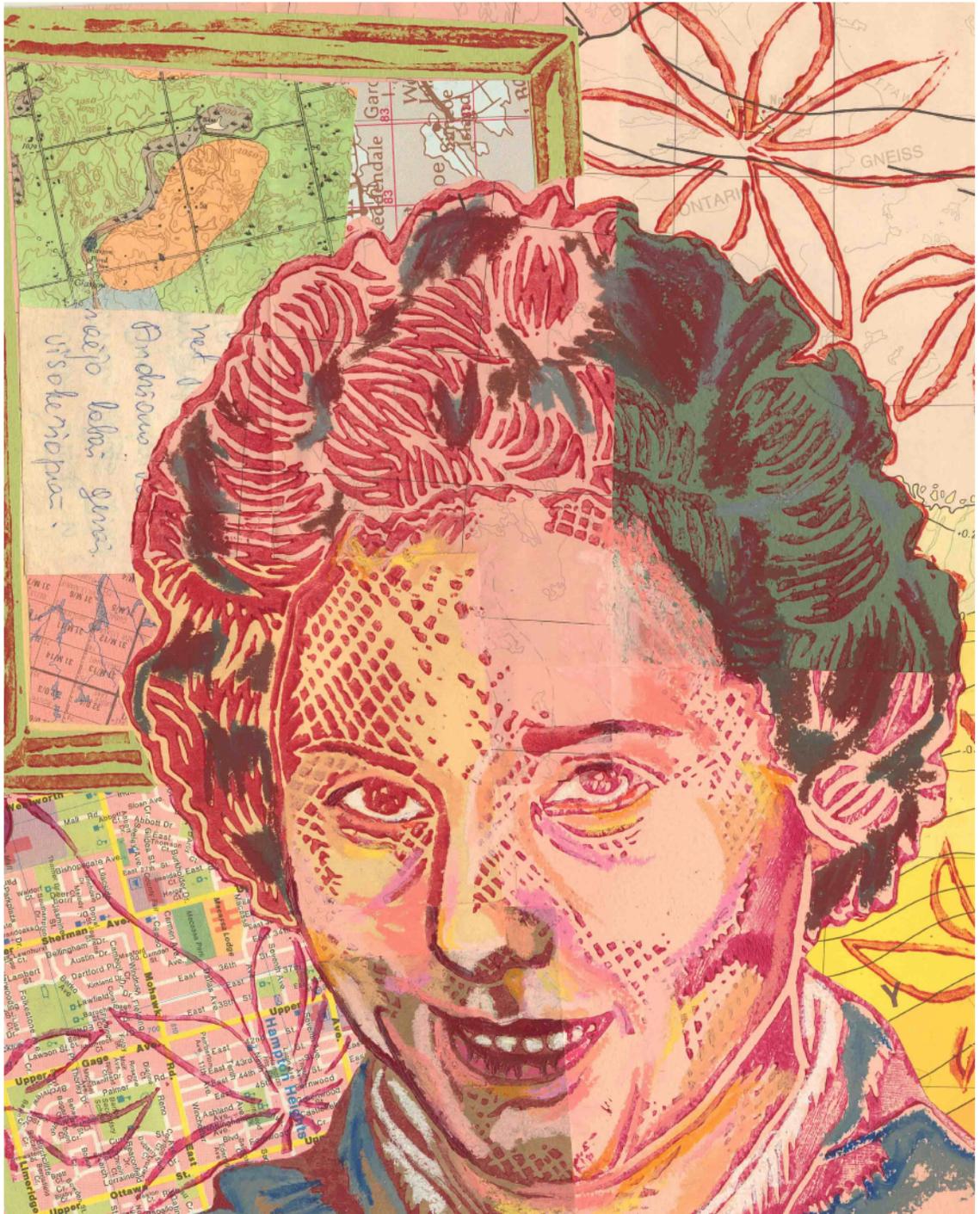
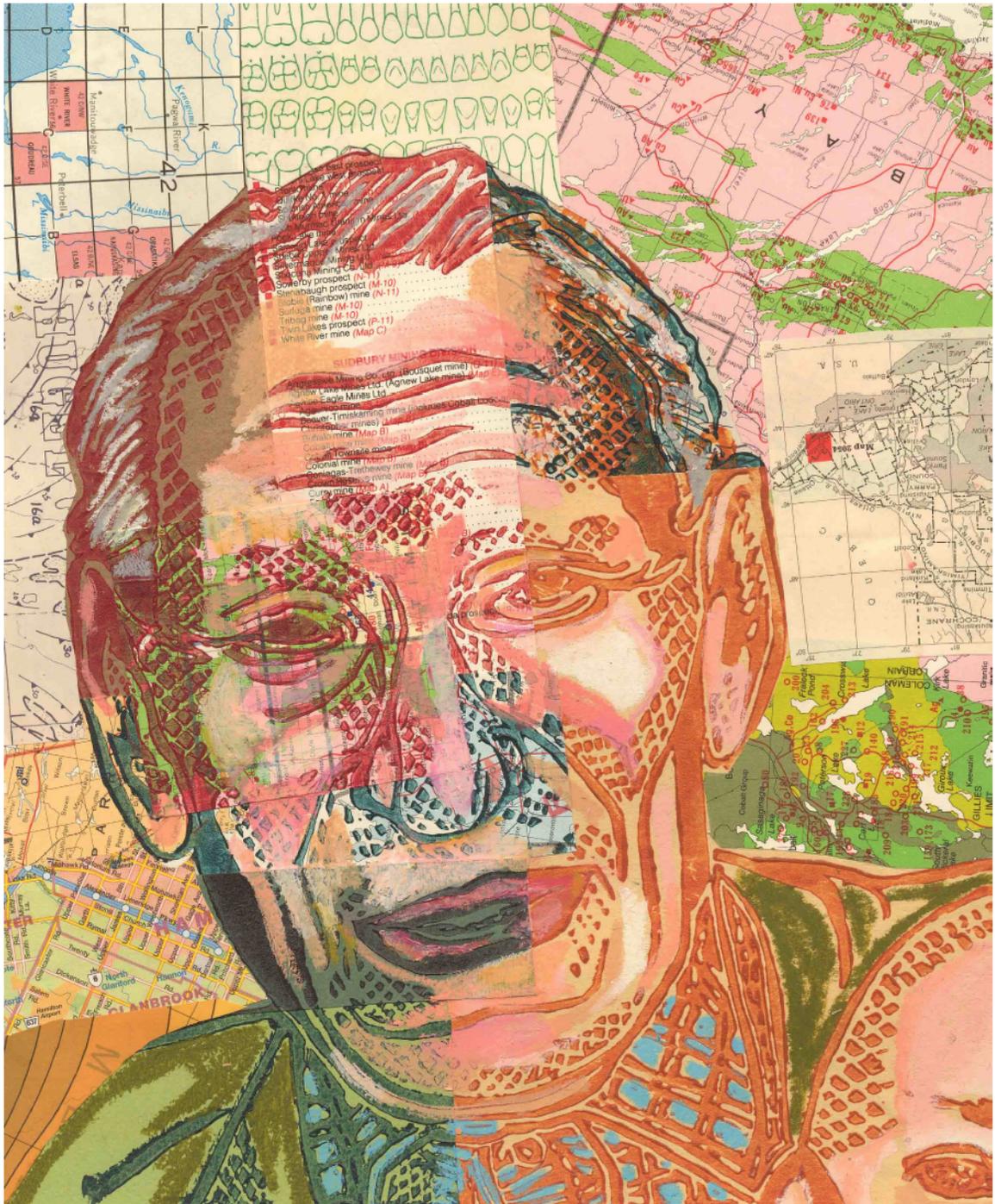


Figure # 8



The second component of my research involved documenting the making of the artifacts in the studio. This process necessitated creating and organizing digital files that archived the work in progress through photography and text, as well as more personal notes that served as detailed records of material choices, theory and deep reflection. For this task I used Evernote software (Evernote.com), an online and on computer program that saves and organizes files by date and subject. Evernote also allows for the user to search the texts created using keywords - a beneficial function when looking back in order to reflect. My guiding approach was pieced together from methods of practice-led research, mainly drawing on documentation and reflection procedures (De Freitas, 2007; Scrivener, 2000). Process-based methods of inquiry have brought my research to the forefront of my artistic practice and allowed me to incorporate pedagogical considerations within my studio-based thesis project. These method-based considerations are explored in detail in my Methodology chapter.

Lastly, in the third component of my studio-based thesis—this final research paper—I have analyzed the first two components of my research by way of concept mapping and further reflection in order to address the strengths and shortcomings of the documentation and reflection processes that I have utilized in my artistic practice.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When first bringing together the research for my thesis proposal and prior to beginning any studio activities, I sought out artists and researchers who broadly mirrored my own artistic and research goals. Below are the artists and researchers who were most familiar to me upon beginning my studio project, and who remained pertinent throughout the research process.

I investigated the use of visual arts research in the academy via the works of artists and researchers whose practices relate to my own. I examined artists who construe their work as research through written and visual materials beyond their artist output as well as artists who create their artwork without written extensions, encouraging me to look towards art critics and theorists for contextual notes.

David Parker, an American artist-researcher, engages in a painting practice that employs abstract and imagined imagery while submerged in Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theory. In his paper “The Abstract Unconscious in Painting”, Parker (2009) investigates the process in which he creates imagery unconsciously, with seemingly no association to outside images. Using psychological and philosophical research as support, Parker describes his ability to paint unconsciously through the archetypal aesthetic qualities of his paintings. He states that when he is creating a painting “lines, marks, colours etc. begin life without meaning or context and these are slowly and painstakingly brought into consciousness and formed into a structural matrix—one that aims to reveal and integrate unconscious complexes with highly structured conscious assimilations” (p. 5). His work serves as an example of how a specific approach to painting can become the basis of a practice-led research project.

Although my own artistic work is figurative, I spontaneously connect to images and experiment with media in similar intuitive processes.

Integrating collage with psychological themes, Concordia professor and art education researcher Kathleen Vaughan describes her research and artistic practices as “interwoven and mutually sustaining” (2005, p. 2). Her paper “Pieced Together: Collage as an Artist’s Method for Interdisciplinary Research” was part of her PhD work to define her method of collage and articulate its possibilities. Through reflective and personal narrative inquiry, Vaughan formulates an epistemological practice-led research approach that aesthetically explores her collage practice. Her final work for the project, entitled *Unwearable*, sheds light on the intersections of the personal and political possibilities of using collage, and the positive effects of thinking through her own personal issues in a specific medium (pp. 15-16). I found this research a valuable reference for its articulation of collage methods and its use of documentation within a textual document.

Similarly, artist-researcher Nithikul Nimkulrat investigates how her “practice-led research on the expressivity and materiality of a fibre material can shape the total artistic process as well as the resulting artworks and their meanings” (2009, p. 459). By engaging in practice, Nimkulrat seeks to define the influence of the medium on her experiences, processes and final artistic product. Her research questions are preoccupied with a material’s effect on the artwork, investigating how media affect process-based concerns. While teasing out the qualities of expressiveness of her chosen paper medium, the researcher identifies the term “paperiness”—a material quality that describes paper’s many ineffable visual and physical qualities that influence the expressive qualities of the final art object. Nimkulrat concludes that the “paperiness” greatly stimulated theoretical

and metaphorical connections throughout the working process (p. 460). Her work provided a powerful perspective on a material's influence in directing artistic processes. I embarked on a similar exploration of my own materials, specifically paint, paper, printmaking and collage.

Eliza Griffiths is a Canadian figurative painter who has also been of great influence to my work. Primarily, her artwork attracted me because of its play with finished and unfinished aesthetics on the surface of the canvas. She speaks of this aim when interviewed: "I have a desire to reveal my process a little, let the paint speak" (R. Vaughan, 2002, p. 5). Visually, this technique adds personal and cultural meanings to the critical engagement with issues of sexuality and identity found in Griffiths' multi-figure oil paintings. Although her work comments on the sex and gender power struggles induced by popular culture's bombardment of hyper-sexualized images, Griffiths concedes that often the everyday viewer overlooks her critical viewpoint and is seduced by the bodies and drama of her figures (R. Vaughan, 2002). Here, the written artist's words and critics' interpretations are very beneficial to understanding the goals of the work, not to replace or supersede the artwork, but to further articulate the aims of the artist. In addition, Griffiths' techniques in oil and their connotations prove illustrative of various artistic investigations that I explored. Specifically, I can learn from Griffiths' suggestions of narrative and nuanced depiction of dynamics between characters through her choices of composition as well as her hinting towards psychological states and dream-like situations by her use of gesture and layering of paint and drawing materials.

Bridging the gap between modern and contemporary art, German artist Georg Baselitz is most well known for his neo-expressionist figurative work. Not only did

Baselitz's work provide an influence in expressive painterly techniques through his use of colour and form, but also in his parallelism, relating his artwork to his personal context. As the artist's upbringing coincided with the Second World War, his artistic pieces render a "painful working through of the unhappy Nazi past [and] a fixation on it" (Kuspit, 1993, pp. 212-213). Baselitz's work represents a generation of Germans who feel guilt for surviving the actions of their parents. As "a reification of melancholy" his figurative works show a slow healing process of historic proportions (p. 214). His fragmented representations of the figure are exemplary of how psychological processes can be rendered in paint. The fragmentation conveys a psychological conflict and shattered understanding of self, of the subjects themselves, and of the artist himself. My artwork also took on psychological themes, but within family histories of less grand and traumatic proportions.

Two practitioners who use collage methods among various other material practices are Massimo Guerrera and Arnaud Maggs. Before introducing these collage artists, I will provide a more updated and inclusive definition of collage: "contemporary artistic practice that resides in the juxtaposition of elements—whether appropriated or purpose made—that otherwise would have been independent" (Vaughan, 2009). Guerrera exhibited his installation entitled *A Hyphen between the Visible and the Invisible (Daboral)* (2008) at the National Gallery of Canada shortly after it was created. It was there that I viewed and interacted with it. Since *A Hyphen between the Visible and the Invisible (Daboral)* is participatory, it allowed the viewers to take off their shoes and enter into it. His work, which is sculptural in appearance, compiles and reworks a variety of artistic media and non-art objects, creating a visual collage in three-dimensions that

fills a large room. Also interesting is Guerrero's use of marouflage techniques, whereby he "draws on paper that he then collages on canvas": a two-dimensional layering act that renders soft bodily forms in space (Hmtlb, 2005). His organization of sculptural components in installation mirrors collage techniques as he directs the viewer by juxtaposing and compiling bodily forms in three dimensions. His artistic investigations always involve raw and visceral human forms, either in the creation process or final representation (Hmtlb, 2005). His work was influential to my artistic practice as it is a primary example of how the process of art making can be revealed in the final art product.

Another extension of collage that I find relevant to my studio inquiry is Arnaud Maggs' exhibition entitled *Identification* (2012). In spite of his photographic work being a highly systematized and organized take on collage, its access to profound meanings is apparent to the viewer. For example, Maggs' assembly of numerous portrait photographs, titled *Kunstakademie* (1980), is arranged in a grid. Each column is five photographs in height, and each column is designated to one specific human subject. All five images in a given column capture the human subject from a different angle. Although on first glance the piece seems mainly pragmatic and scientific, on closer examination it seems a very introspective and inclusive work through its use of very personal and varied views of a subject. Through mass comparison of multiple photographs in each work, Maggs' exhibition reveals his awareness of minute detail and nostalgia for forgotten or overlooked things. I understand Maggs' photographic series as collages/collections that juxtapose images to heighten meaning. His approach is valuable as it further extends media use in collage practices revealing an alternative and considerably minimalist

working process in collage.

Art therapist and researcher Mary Dougherty investigates the relationship between creation and emotion in her research project entitled “On Articulating Affective States Through Image-Making in Analysis” (2011). Acknowledging the interconnectedness of psychoanalysis and art, Dougherty’s research uses the process of “making marks on paper”, the intrinsic use of materials, to uncover the symbolism that comes from her art therapy patients (p. 4). She concludes that the creation of images as a means of expression allows her patients to develop an awareness of how their emotional reactions affect others (p. 13). Although she is oriented towards healing others, not aesthetic expression, her research is relevant because it attempts to join cognitive processes and understandings to continual art making and reflection.

As my studio work developed, I investigated a number of other artists who helped me further reflect on my research and contextualize myself in light of the objectives of this project. As I worked to understand and document my own process, my eyes became more sensitive to process-based learning concerns in the artwork of other artists.

For instance, contemporary Canadian First Nations artist Carl Beam was important in terms of my research focus on process-based learning. Within his lifetime, Beam created visually dynamic artworks that tie together personal, cultural and popular culture references in order to provoke viewer questions. Much of Beam’s work has a political agenda, presenting cultural critique through image juxtaposition or distortion. “My works are like little puzzles,” he writes, “interesting little games. I play a game with humanity and with creativity. I ask viewers to play the participatory game of dreaming ourselves as each other. In this we find out that we're all basically human” (Ryan, 1999,

p. 151). In varying formats, his work reveals deep connections between the process of layering media and imagery and the act of reflection in art. This effect is most apparent in his photo transfers on canvas, papers and silks. In these works, multiple old and new visual and textual references are combined on one plane to interrogate history and illuminate the artist's personal contemporary experience. This act of juxtaposition asks both the artist and the viewer to reconsider their positions and relations to the imagery presented, and prompts a reflection on popular conceptions and misconceptions of the portrayal of First Nations people in popular culture. In Beam's words, "Things have a power in and of themselves... a peculiar emanation. The task of the artist is to set up a dialogue between objects" (Ryan, p. 151). I find Beam's preoccupation with the power of juxtaposing images—both personal and universal—similar to the preoccupations found in my own working processes with family images. Through its use of collage, Beam's work demonstrates how deep reflection within the process of making a work of art can help connect the artist and his experiences to the work. In the eyes of the viewer this is experienced through the complexity and personal nature of the narratives presented, and provides integrity to the artist's message.

American installation artist Mary Kelley uses documentation as a means of creating her artworks. Kelly collects and remakes documents derived from real life experiences and displays them in the traditional gallery space. Specifically, in the iconic work *Post-Partum Document* (1973-79), the artist extends the analytic use of documents into the artistic realm. Through meticulous arrangement and archiving of personal remnants of her life as a mother, her artwork highlights the "formative moments in her son's mastery of language and her own sense of loss, moving between the voices of the

mother, child and analytic observer” (Kelley, 2012, n.p.). With these features, her work connects most closely to my data collection and analysis processes in its organization and reflective viewpoint. Kelly provokes consideration on the nature of contemporary art and the possibilities of systematized regular documentation. This latter aspect inspired me. As revealed in my data analysis, my documents of my artistic working process serve as objects to reflect on in order to extend my knowledge as an artist and researcher.

Collage artist, painter, researcher and educator Barry Nemett primarily focuses his working processes on layering the artwork with his own created drawings and paintings, using life studies from multiple sources as reference material. Visually, his completed artworks represent a view of a landscape or structure, much like a traditional photograph. However, upon closer inspection, the collaged images provide much more detail, perspective and depth than a photograph. In an interview he notes, “I’m comfortable with a lot of stuff going on in my life at the same time, and, perhaps reflecting this, my most sustained, ambitious art works, the projects of mine that make my heart pump hardest, are usually the ones that have the most ‘stuff’ going on in them, the ones that are the most densely loaded” (Ober, 2008, n.p.). Nemett’s use of collage is a re-creation of space and the academic landscape painting, as well as an examination of the fabrication of beauty and the ways the natural world is accessible through the creative imagination. His work serves as an example of a more structured approach to collage, an approach in which elements are compiled.

Relating more closely to my material processes in collage, Libby Barbee, art instructor and artist, creates colourful collages through the layering of imagery. Arranging small bits of photographs and scraps of painting by colour and shape, Barbee

juxtaposes specific elements to represent the depth, texture and chaotic patterns of landscapes. Emphasizing the psychological and cultural implications of place, Barbee re-visions the kitsch landscape paintings of the Colorado region by exaggerating line, colour, texture and the presence of animals and humans (Yeapanis, 2013). In creating unstable, surreal and disturbed natural scenes, Barbee makes the viewer aware that the idea of wilderness—like the medium of collage—is a construction; for example, on closer inspection of her collage elements, a rock face may reveal itself to be compiled of images of parking lots, or a rolling hill of suburban front lawns. I admire her psychological reflections on space and place using collage and paint, and in referencing her work I considered how I create my own connections between theory, theme and media use.

In reviewing these artists, visual arts researchers and art educators, I have situated myself in a vast field of art education research and, in the process, have become more aware of my intentions and choices as an artist and researcher. Focusing my research on process-based learning, I am able to examine, investigate, and imagine the practices of others more clearly, and to see their working processes in comparison to my own. Through my initial investigation of relevant artists and researchers, as well as during additional inquiries into the practices and methods of working artists, I was able to develop my own approach to using documentation and reflection within my artistic practice. This newly developed approach enabled me to describe and develop my own practice more clearly. In the following chapter I examine the methods I utilized to implement process-based learning within my studio practice.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

I have investigated the learning involved in documented and reflective studio practice via the practice-led research methodology.² A practice-led approach has allowed me to scrutinize my artistic practice, as well as the process-based learning tools of documentation and reflection. Sullivan describes practice-led research as a unique form of visual arts research “because the primary role [is] played by the artistic processes as the impetus of directing the research” (p. 78). My thesis work supports the idea of practice-led research that describes practice as having an essential role: “making is conceived to be the driving force behind the research” (Mäkelä & Routarinne, 2006, p. 22). In practice-led research, “the accepted research task of data collection is also conceptualized as data creation” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 78). This methodological approach has allowed me to pair my studio-based practice with the investigation of process-based learning tools, analyzing their benefits and drawbacks first hand.

Art education researcher and professor Steven Scrivener describes two kinds of creative thesis project types: creative production projects and problem-based design

² In *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts*, art education researcher Graeme Sullivan (2010) explicitly defines visual arts research as the means by which the roles and processes of the artist become apparent within various communities by utilizing “creative and critical practices [to] transform human understanding” (p. xi). Underneath the umbrella of Sullivan’s visual arts research lie the more specific methodologies of arts-based research, research creation, practice-based research and practice-led research. Applicable to most visual arts research projects is research creation: “a creative process that comprises an essential part of a research activity, and fosters the development and renewal of knowledge through aesthetic, technical, instrumental or other innovations” (SSHRC, 2012). Research-creation projects incorporate high quality academic research, as well as excellent artistic works fostered by the research (SSHRC). Arts-based research describes a type of educational inquiry that borrows heavily from qualitative research. In arts-based research, “seeing and sensing [most often in the classroom] is the basis for compiling thematic patterns of evidence from which meaning is made vivid” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 56). Practice-based research is inquiry focused on gaining new knowledge by means of artistic practice and the outcomes of that practice. Focus is on the final products, as knowledge outcomes are most often demonstrated through these creative artifacts. Practice-led research is unique “because the primary role [is] played by the artistic processes as the impetus of directing the research” (p. 78). I can identify with the trait of practice-led research that describes practice as having an essential role: “making is conceived to be the driving force behind the research” (Mäkelä & Routarinne, 2006, p. 22). Given the nature of my research is to advance knowledge on practice, I position my work as practice-led.

projects (2000). The bulk of my project falls under the definition of a creative production project. As Scrivener describes, “a creative production project is not concerned with and does not reduce to a problem and its solutions” (2000, n.p.). Traits of creative production projects are described clearly by Scrivener: “artifact(s) are produced”, “the artifact(s) may not be a new or improved version of an earlier artifact”, “artifact(s) do not demonstrate a solution”, “artifact(s) may have no obvious use” and “may be of no obvious relevance to others” (2000, n.p.).

These characteristics describe my studio practice when considered in isolation, but not when pairing it with my research inquiries into process-based learning and the data analysis presented in this final text. Rather than the final artwork being the most important outcome, my studio practice, resulting documentation and reflection, and final artworks are considered evidence made from “exploratory experiments” or testing in the field (Scrivener, 2000, n.p.). Considering and reflecting on the success of process-based learning tools and their applicability to others in art education directed my final text and produced knowledge outcomes beyond the artifacts of my artistic production. As is the case for my research project, Scrivener acknowledges that often there is overlap between the two project types, as a specific “creative production project may comprise of some problem solving” (2000, n.p.).

My data creation involved both documentation and reflection procedures. Data creation occurs throughout the art production, reflection and documentation processes (Nimkulrat, 2007). In my project, data was collected/created in a variety of forms: final artwork, images of work in progress, journal entries, referenced texts, and ongoing feedback from peers and professors. All documented work was considered data

immediately after being recorded. Each form of documented data was considered part of the whole project: just as the journals were created artifacts that served as aspects of the project outcome, so too were the digital files and final artworks. Classification within the data creation process was vital to ensure my documents were accessible for reflection, as well as to prepare the data for analysis.

Documentation activities did not only record the action of making, but also of reflection. Scrivener describes reflection-on-practice as “reflection on a description of creative practice” (2000, n.p.). What this means is that each document of practice has the potential to be reflected upon, and that reflection should also be documented. Scrivener demands rigour in stating that “each surprise during working... should be reflected on with regards to its contribution to the project and its implications for future action and practice” (2000, n.p.). I worked extensively to improve my abilities and frequency of documentation and reflection during this project in order to enhance the continuous process of learning within my artistic practice.

When documented visuals and texts are reflected upon, they can be used to extend the research process (Nimkulrat, 2007). When a researcher looks back on previous actions and outcomes by “analyzing and contextualizing the resulting artifacts as well as the creative process that went into using the documentation created during the process and any relevant theories”, new knowledge emerges (p. 4). These two processes that make up data creation—documentation and reflection—worked in sequenced or interspersed patterns to inform the direction of my research.

Personal reflection helped to guide the project away from preconceived conclusions (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2011). Scrivener suggests that the artist “reflect back

on the issues, goals and appreciation [that] surfaced” throughout the project, and that “at the end of the project there should be a final reflective stage” (2000, n.p.). More specifically, Scrivener outlines a series of reflective stages that ensured I stayed on track in my evaluation of documentation and reflection processes. As I have done in this final thesis document, Scrivener suggests that the activities of “pre-project reflection on practice; review of theory, knowledge and information; and reframing of issues, concerns and interests” take place (Scrivener, 2000, n.p.). In working in my studio throughout the months of October to December 2012, I completed the numerous cycles of summarizing or documenting my artwork, reflecting on my artwork during and after completion of each piece and reflecting on the process of reflection and its effects on my growth. These guidelines helped me to remain focused on emphasizing the process-based learning in my work.

To define the reflective process, educational writing by Donald Schön appears to be fundamental as it crosses multiple disciplines in its understandings. He first describes the common phenomenon of “knowing-in-action”, an act that refers to tacit knowledge (Schön, 1987, p. 25). Knowing-in-action is often indescribable, as its methods are instant and instinctually skillful, “like riding a bicycle” (p. 25). According to Schön’s writings, using reflection to better define and extend tacit knowledge is possible and beneficial in enhancing the artistry of any skill.

The first and most often used step to improve one’s skills is to reflect after an action. Reflection-on-action is “thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action [i.e., familiar routine procedures] may have contributed to an unexpected outcome” (p. 26). The defining feature of reflection-on-action is its lack of

effect on the outcome, as it takes place after the event.

The second reflection tool described by Schön is reflection-in-action. It is applied much more immediately and can occur whenever a positive or negative challenge arises, with “reflection giv[ing] rise to on the spot experimentation” (p. 28). Reflection-in-action has an additional benefit of enhancing the project at hand, as well as future projects (p. 29). Becoming aware of subtle variations in everyday phenomena and responding either immediately or in hindsight is a skill in itself that requires practice and development. Schön’s tools reveal that reflection is about rethinking the familiar and going “beyond available rules, facts, theories and operations” (p. 35). This process parallels practice-led research, which attends to knowledge outside of the traditional pre-established frame of reference. I used documentation and reflection to record and understand instances of reflection-in-action. Through the process of creating a series of work, this approach allowed me to become more conscious of my reaction and solutions to problems within the process of making.

Artistic practice, like other professional practices, involves the practitioner learning and developing a set of “conventions, constraints, languages and appreciative systems” (Schön, 1987, pp. 36-37). Learning can take place independently or through more formal education such as lectures, apprenticeships or practica. Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses, having more or less direction. A practicum is “a setting designed for the task of learning a practice” (Schön, 1987, p. 37); it relates most directly to my thesis project, in which I worked in my studio and researched in my role as an artist-educator with multiple mentoring figures: my thesis supervisor, my thesis committee and my peers.

In examining Schön's guidelines for reflective practice, I believe that his descriptions of developing design skills in practicum can be applied to creative arts practices. Schön describes the characteristics of creative work that render it impossible to teach via a traditional lecture form. Primarily, creative work's dependence on tacit knowledge or knowing-in-action means skills must be acquired through experimentation (1983, p. 158). Art making is a holistic endeavour, where skills are developed through experience with the medium (p. 162). Although tacit knowledge of one's practice is initially vague, it can be fleshed out and verbalized through the use of reflective tools (p. 162). Schön's parameters of learning a creative skill through experience are partnered with structured teaching to inform the learner of the base technical knowledge. This knowledge can later be tested and manipulated by the student through experience. My studio experience was constructed through parallel means. I had already accumulated a base technical knowledge of artistic practice through my structured undergraduate and graduate classes. In venturing into a studio project, I reorganized my practice to include documentation and reflection procedures, which in turn helped me to articulate and reformulate my existing working processes.

Extending reflection practices was also of interest to my understanding of art education. Reflexive practices in studio art—making one's relationship with the world apparent and coherent—can help situate a student within a larger sphere (Crouch, 2007, p. 108). In reflexive actions, comparisons to others' ideas and practices can equalize similarities and differences, limiting a student's excessive individualism. Becoming aware of one's own related context is a positive process achieved through reflexive thought. In practice-led research, Sullivan describes reflexivity as when “the artist

intuitively adopts the dual roles of the researcher and the researched, and the process changes both perspectives” (2010, p. 51). The roles of the artist-researcher were helpful in beginning positive comparisons, a process I began through contextualization in my initial literature review and continued in my research actions.

“The intellectual strategy for ‘discovery’ in the creative arts appears to be one in which material is brought forward for analysis, discussion and reflection, through making, rather than through observation or reason” (Scrivener & Chapman, 2004, n.p.). I documented spontaneous reflection as efficiently as possible within my working process; I understand now that I slowly became conscious of and better able to identify the spontaneous instances more immediately. To ensure I did not unintentionally miss critical instances of discovery, and to become more familiar with the reflective process, reflection was scheduled as a mandatory weekly exercise. Scrivener argues, “the practitioner could benefit if reflection was recorded and reported more systematically” (2000, n.p.). I also scheduled a reflection after each artwork was completed in order to review the learning instances I had encountered. Beginning my project with some regimented reflection time made certain that preconceptions and habits were questioned on a regular basis. My reflection process developed and demanded different parameters as the project continued.

Documentation was the most necessary research activity in my project, as it connected and redefined all other aspects of my research. The benefits of documentation are extensively studied in the work of art education scholar De Freitas, where she observes, “active documentation by participants [...] disturbed their habitual practice and encouraged attentive reflective processes” (2007, p. 10). De Freitas’ research argues that

documentation helps to link methods and materials to the final artifact (2007).

In practice-led research terms, documentation occurs when “the artistic production and experience—both facts and feelings—are captured, whether in visual or textual formats” (Nimkulrat, 2007, p. 3). A record of documentation can serve to record the relationships and interplay between various aspects of the artist-researcher’s practice. Within the practice-led research process, all documentation is considered vital data. De Freitas more explicitly defines the parameters of active documentation procedures for art and design thesis projects (2007). According to De Freitas, documentation activities include: “1) identifying the evolution of the work in progress; 2) capturing information on accidental discoveries, improvements or problematic blocks; 3) articulating those phases of work that become invisible with progress; and 4) providing the detached record necessary in the abstraction of research issues” (2007, p. 3). Her definition captures all aspects of the making process in the studio and therefore implies that documentation activities should be continuous and extensive. It was vital that I kept rigorous documentation throughout each working session to ensure that I captured all aspects of my own art making process.

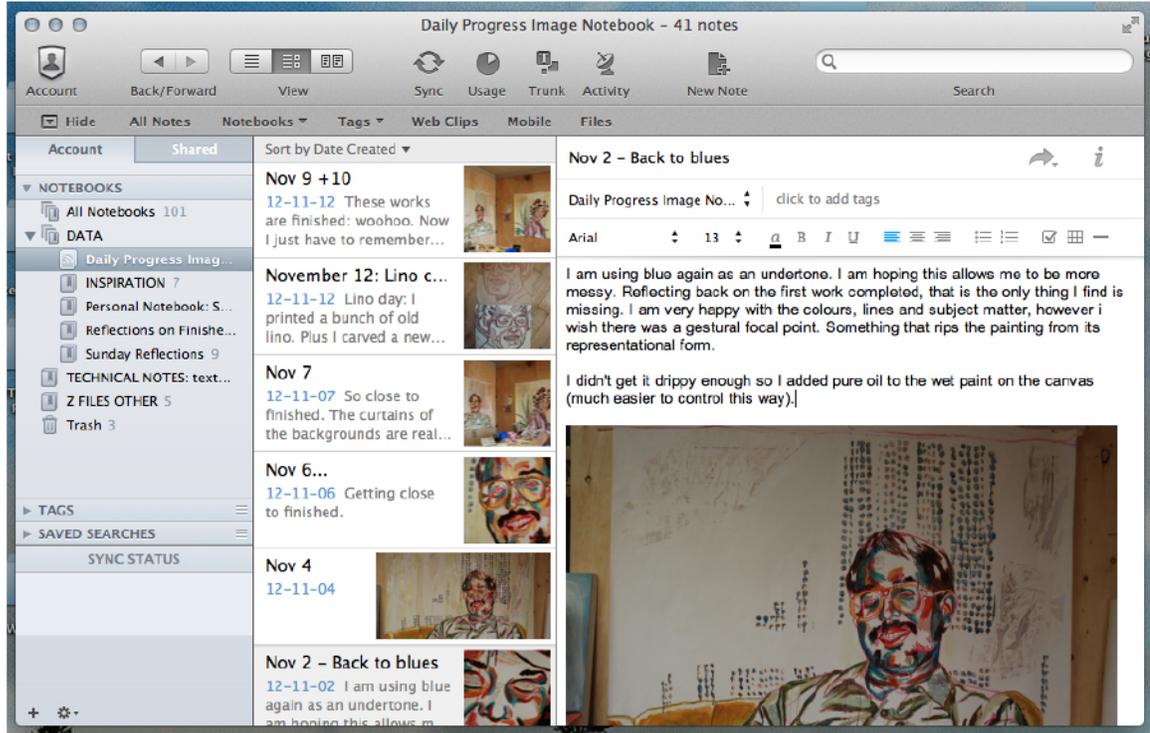
Although the artifact is often the focal point of studio-based research, my project’s focus is toward the processes involved in art making and learning. I was “able to demonstrate and communicate the ways in which the artifacts are a result of a research process” because of the direction of my research concerns (De Freitas, 2007 p. 6). Documentation acted as supporting evidence, as it identifies significant aspects of the artwork and making process. Especially when concerning tacit knowledge, which is not often readily accessible or communicable, “active documentation can assist both the

learning process and articulation of this knowledge” (p. 7).

In order to ensure that I critically questioned my familiar practices, I predetermined specific tools for documenting my process as well as a specific schedule with minimum documentation and reflection requirements set within it. When documenting my artistic process, it was vital that the documentation record extend over the entire journey or process, not just the final artistic artifacts (Nimkulrat, 2007). While I also made notes and sketches, my primary mode of documenting was through the use of photography. One or more photographs documented each working session’s trials and progress. However, Nimkulrat proposes that documentation take the form of both textual and visual materials in order to provide adequate evidence of process (2007, p. 5). I therefore also took textual notes in correlation with each day’s photographs. These notes described the actions leading to the appearance of the artworks in the photographs, reflection on the work’s overall progress, other thoughts that arose during the day and relevant references that I had discovered.

Nimkulrat describes the necessity to document not only the process of making art, but also the overall research process involved in using the tools of documentation and reflection in order to recognize overarching patterns (2007, p. 6). In my textual reflections, I continually pinpointed and elaborated on my thoughts on processed-based learning. Finally, I employed sketching or rendering at the beginning of working sessions, especially if a new artwork was being considered. Since my artistic hand was guiding the research, it is only natural that I documented some thoughts visually.

Figure # 9



To hold all of the created data types described above I utilized two separate data collection tools: Evernote software for digital collection, and a small sketchbook/notebook for more traditional collection. Evernote is an online program that saves and organizes virtually any file type. It is accessible on a computer or smart phone from any place with internet access. This data collection tool has the added benefits of automatically filing entries chronologically as well as making all entries searchable through text or date references. It has a very user-friendly interface, as illustrated by the screenshot image above. I initially used this tool to log photographs and small amounts of text, but progressively used it more for longer text entries, including extensive personal reflections. In a medium-sized workbook, my second tool for data creation, I employed both journaling and sketching approaches. In this space, I documented and

reflected upon visual, textual and theoretical considerations. The benefit of a non-digital documentation form is that it can contain actual artifacts of material and experimentation, and it feels more personal and private. I believed these features would be beneficial to my material and reflective processes; however, after employing Evernote I found the digital tool more usable than its non-digital counterpart in terms of accessibility and organization. The notebook entries were dated and scanned into Evernote so they could easily be considered as part of the created data.

The specific patterns of process-based learning that I encountered and the implications of this inquiry are further reviewed and critically analyzed below in the Data Analysis chapter.

DATA ANALYSIS

Concept Mapping and Further Reflection

To answer my research question concerning the process-based learning techniques of documentation and reflection, and how they can be applied in various learning environments, I deciphered and evaluated three months' worth of image and text in both digital and analog forms. As a point of departure, I found Scrivener's (2000) creative research project outcomes useful for visualizing how my data analysis would unfold. Scrivener suggests that "at the end of the project there should be a final reflective stage" primarily concerned with the documented data recorded throughout the research phase (2000, n.p.). The content reflected upon during the data analysis phase should include "pre-, within, and post-project reflections" in addition to visual and textual records of each artwork's progression, including decision-making moments (2000, n.p.). In reviewing my own data, I found it important to highlight specific reflections that occurred during memorable learning moments and thematic discoveries.

To adapt Scrivener's broad outline of data analysis for visual practice research projects to my project modalities, I have used visualization strategies. I adopted visual mapping in addition to Scrivener's mainly reflection-based approach because the latter did not suffice for my studio-based research with respect to investigating and engaging with the educational applications of documentation and reflection. Graeme Sullivan defines visualizing data as a process "used to capture the features inherent in a body of information created within a research context" through "mapping, indexing and[or] modelling" (2010, p. 199). Mapping is described as "a process of locating theories and ideas within existing conceptual frameworks so as to reveal underlying structures and

systems of connections” (p. 199). Mapping appeals directly to my project because it allows for both visual and textual media to be connected and represented at once. It will also be useful for identifying prominent themes within my collected data. To organize and extend the observations of the documentation and reflective procedures I undertook during my series of work, as well as to reveal the links and limitations of those learning processes, I integrated mapping as a means of data analysis.

Chris Hart (1998), qualitative procedures expert, contributed to my understanding of how mapping would help me to answer my research question and uncover possible outcomes. Hart argues that “mapping enables analysis and synthesis to be undertaken; in mapping work on a topic, you undertake the task of construction, putting together the different strands and elements of work that make up the body of knowledge on the topic” (p. 142). As I began to link together documentation and reflection processes, as well as to connect them directly to my own work, mapping proved vital in rendering the knowledge I had accumulated over the course of the project and positioning me to move forward with my learning. Hart also mentions that “a concept map can be useful because it can be constructed to show the relationships between ideas and practice and include, if necessary, reference to relevant examples” (p. 155). Because my data creation was based in personal experience, this definition is especially relevant in that it describes how mapping has aided me in contextualizing and analyzing personal examples in critical and relational ways.

In the context of visual art research, Lynn Butler-Kisber and Tiiu Poldma (2010) utilize concept mapping to inform their qualitative research. They argue that collages and concept maps are similarly “experiential ways of doing/knowing that help to get at tacit aspects of both understanding and process and to make these more explicit to the

researcher and more accessible to audiences” (p. 1). Similarly, I approached the task of concept mapping in ordered steps to ensure that I captured fleeting tacit knowledge within the created data from my art making process.

I first began to analyze my created data by identifying which key information to include in the concept maps. Combing carefully through my digitized data one artwork at a time, I listed important benchmarks that had occurred and noted final observations about the project that stood out to me as particularly striking or influential after having completed the entire project. At first, my approach to identifying which concepts to include was not systematized. During these first steps of data analysis, relevant concepts emerged through careful recollection, reflection and instinctual identification. Naturally, my artistic concerns were evident within the data; thematic, material and environmental concerns were most prominent. When highlighting these concepts, my ingrained position as an artist came forward. In relation to these preliminary concerns, I also pinpointed significant experiences in my process of using the tools of documentation and reflection. The experiences I identified were most often feelings or observations that had greatly influenced the process of making the work. Identifying these concepts and noting them in a written list allowed me “to make sense and keep track of data interpretations as they first [began] to emerge” (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010, p. 6).

I considered this step of concept mapping the first layer of my process of data analysis. Similarly, artist and researcher Michelle Tupko works with collected data by choosing a series of pertinent written and visual information, both technical and personal, most vital to the articulation of a given topic (Tupko, 2008). In her work *Ring Road 16 Days*, her layered working process is particularly apparent due to the transparent collage

method she uses to map her data. Tupko's work is an exemplary reference because it reveals her working methods. In my own concept mapping data analysis, my aim was to maintain a transparent approach to benefit the viewer/reader and the educational applicability of the research.

The second step of my data analysis involved organizing the intuitively synthesized created data. The task of visually mapping/organizing the data is key to the data analysis process and is employed to build new meaning and knowledge from the created data (Mers, 2008). Deciding which concepts went where on the page was an important task. I typed my notes of synthesized data and cut out each piece as a box of text. First, I approached each work individually and chronologically to keep order and continuity in my intuitive approach. Each concept was printed on its own small piece of paper, and the concepts were then sorted according to whether they reflected artistic or documentation and reflection experiences. Adding directional arrows from one concept to the next clarified and made visible the connections between concepts; this aspect of data analysis is seen in all of my concept maps. I then added handwritten notes in pen between the concepts, and these notes helped me more clearly describe and offer examples to illustrate connections. It became apparent to me that reflection played a key role in the emergence of new knowledge during this second layer of data analysis, the organization and connection of concepts. I gained vital understandings and a broadened viewpoint as familiar concepts were linked visually.

The sequential work of adding and expanding on content helped me to further reflect on the process of making a series of paintings while utilizing the process-based learning tools of documentation and reflection. By visually reorganizing my experiences, I

was able to complete more logical and contemplative reflection outside of the activities of art making, documentation and reflection. As in the artwork and research of Iain Kerr, the diagramming of events or experiences is an abstract means of pinpointing emergent ideas (Kerr, 2008). Instead of concept maps being a finalized and holistic representation of research activities, they are a “working through of ideas in relation to” a particular set of concepts (p. 108). In the case of my own concept maps, I worked through the analysis of my created data by expressing connections and extensions both textually and visually. This highlights the necessity of concept mapping to the process of making new knowledge. The physical concept maps represent the working through of analysis rather than the entire research process.

By positioning myself as an interpreter of the data that I created, and by using concept maps as a form of data analysis, I was better able to make new connections, build new knowledge and analyze complex topics (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). I extended my concept maps toward new conclusions, ideas and questions that still remained unanswered; these extended and unanswered branches highlighted the genesis and evolution of my process-based inquiry. For example, while analyzing my difficulties with reflecting continually and consistently, I came to the conclusion that there are times during the art making process when reflection is sub-conscious. I posed the question, “What do I reflect on when my art making seems effortless?” This is a valid question that can lead down many avenues of inquiry. It is interesting to investigate what is going on inside the artist’s mind when they are ‘in the zone’ and instinctually able to respond to their work in progress. Instances of unanswered questions like the one described above foreshadow the various issues my research and artistic practice will move towards in the future.

Concept mapping appeals directly to my visual sense, but also to the visual and tacit quality of the knowledge I am seeking within art education. Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) argue that,

with the increased interest in reflective practices in qualitative research and in giving meaning to voice in research texts, concept mapping can be used as a way of conceptualizing emergent ideas before they take form by giving a visual sense to messy thoughts during the analytic process, and by helping researchers to represent visually ideas that emerge from the data being analyzed. (p. 7)

My main concern in this endeavour was the ability to combine my instinctual and intrinsic practices of learning and art making into a clearly defined space where they could be analyzed and interpreted. Specifically, the processes of documentation and reflection under analysis, which are often acted out by the learner unconsciously or through habit, were suited to a means of data interpretation that allowed for many types of data to come together in one space.

Practically, “concept maps work when they are read alongside textual analysis as a juxtaposition of the verbal and visual together, and as a means of reconstructing ideas in their relational manner” (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010, p. 12). Pairing the concept mapping of my data analysis with my final research text furthers the accessibility and transparency of my research. In using concept mapping as a method of data analysis, my hope was to further uncover pertinent knowledge from my collected experiences of reflection and documentation. I describe this process and its pertinent effects with reference to each of my artworks below.

Learning with Process-based Tools in the Studio

To further document and reflect on my working process in the studio, and to connect each work to the research question more clearly, I used mapping procedures to extrapolate the strengths and limitations of the process-based learning tools I uncovered while making each artwork. Described directly below are the key discoveries about each individual artwork. The process of making these artworks and their effects became more apparent after concept mapping the accumulated data. Please view each analysis alongside the corresponding image of the artwork and the figure correlating to the concept map created during the analysis. After these findings were articulated, they were organized and connected in other concept maps that covered and extended beyond specific instances and general outcomes; the results of these analyses are also reviewed below.

Artwork #1: *THEY ARE THE MORTAR (Elsie and Kathy)* – Developing Habits

When beginning *They are the Mortar* (Figure #10) I was still comfortably situated in my familiar studio practices; I focused mainly on the rendering and material aspects of the work. In hindsight, this was a good jumping off point because it gave me a reference for contrast and comparison to works created later on in the project. Mapping the data created from reflection and documentation of this work revealed initial concerns about the amount and clarity of the data collected. When further considered and analyzed, this work and its corresponding data illustrate the difficulties of taking on new skills in an already formulated artistic practice. Specifically, the action of unearthing and changing engrained unconscious habits and trying to integrate new, more critical habits was a struggle. Processes of documentation and reflection became slightly more integrated as the artwork progressed, although I often found pausing to document or reflect hindered my workflow as I had previously understood it.

Figure #10

This image depicts a view of my studio with the first painting of the series, *They are the Mortar*, in progress on October 16, 2012.



Photo by Sarah Lickley

Artwork #2 + #3: *BEHIND THE CURTAIN OF THE ANOMALOUS UNION*

(Christiane and Peter Diptych) – Changing Pace

The next two works I created simultaneously, as my intention was to have them hung together as a diptych. Through concept mapping, I became aware that these works were planned in response to the previous work; based on the successes and trials of my first work, *They are the Mortar*, my concerns in this work changed accordingly. This choice was not consciously reflected upon during the making process. It was only revealed through data analysis and post-project reflection. For example, these works are an intimate view of singular subjects that are placed on simplified backgrounds; this is contrary to the much more detailed yet emotionally distanced traditional portrait view of the first work I created. My colour choices changed as well; I integrated more blue and yellow tones in the acrylic under-painting, which carried through to the additional layers of oil paint (Figure # 11). Nonetheless, the theme remained the same: positive representations of family. The intentions behind the decisions were uncovered in hindsight through concept mapping; analysis revealed most reflection to have been unconscious at this point in the project.

Figure #11

This image depicts a view of my studio with the second and third paintings of the series, *Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union*, in progress on October 30, 2012.

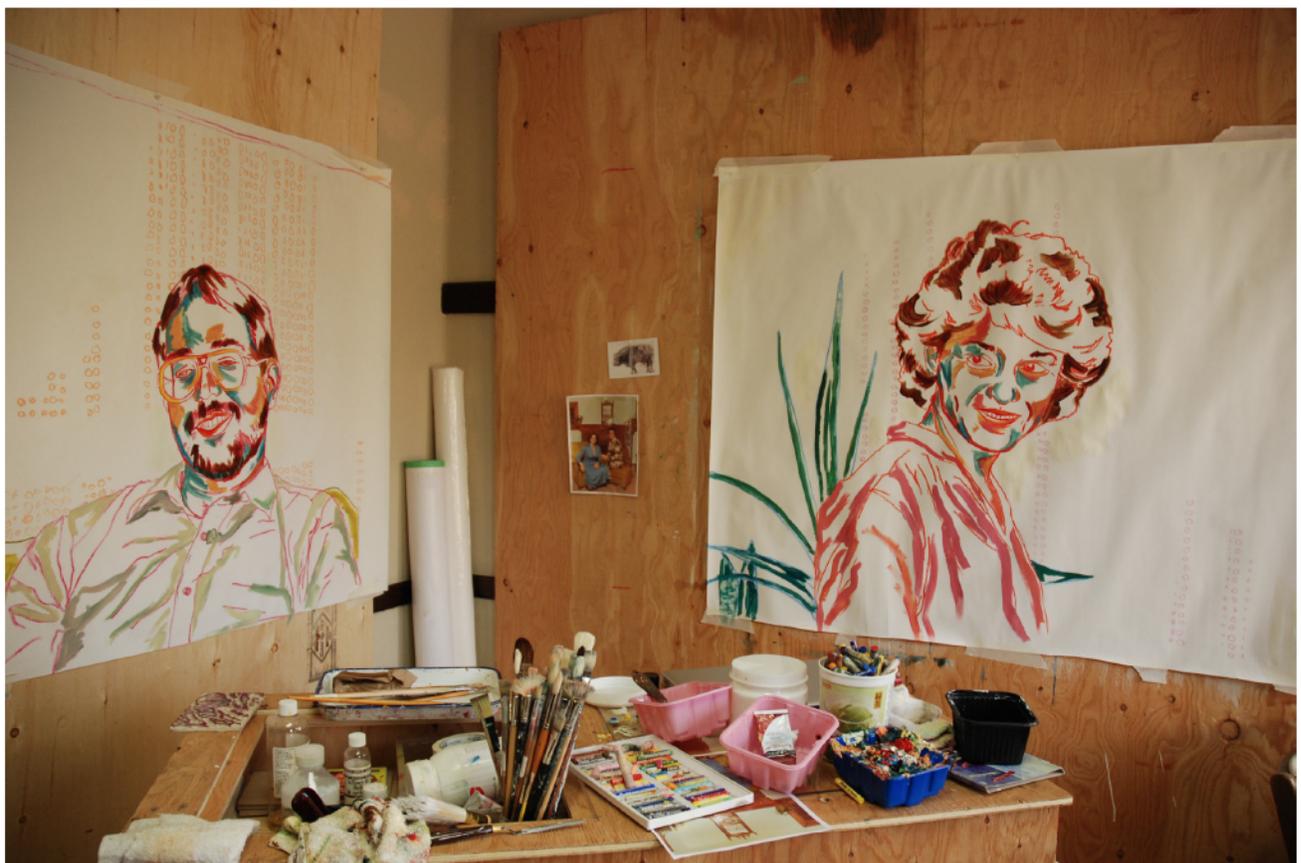


Photo by Sarah Lickley

Although some decisions were unconscious, during the making of these two artworks reflection and documentation became easier to integrate and thus more frequent (Figure # 12). Through concept mapping I was able to discern that this was in part due to the Evernote tool which allowed me to upload and write anywhere that I had internet access: studio, home, cell phone. However, as previously mentioned, I was still missing some pertinent aspects of my creative process as it unfolded. As an extension of my experiences in the studio and my subsequent analysis, I reconsidered the research I referenced to inform my documentation and reflection processes (Figure # 13). Why had the research not mentioned the possible difficulties in developing the use of process-based learning tools? My personal answers at this moment focused on the researchers' intentions: perhaps because they were experts in their field, they were too entrenched to see the downfalls of their methods. Furthermore, it is possible they did not want to discourage the use of documentation and reflection and thereby negate their own beliefs. I address this question further in the conclusion of this chapter.

Figure #12

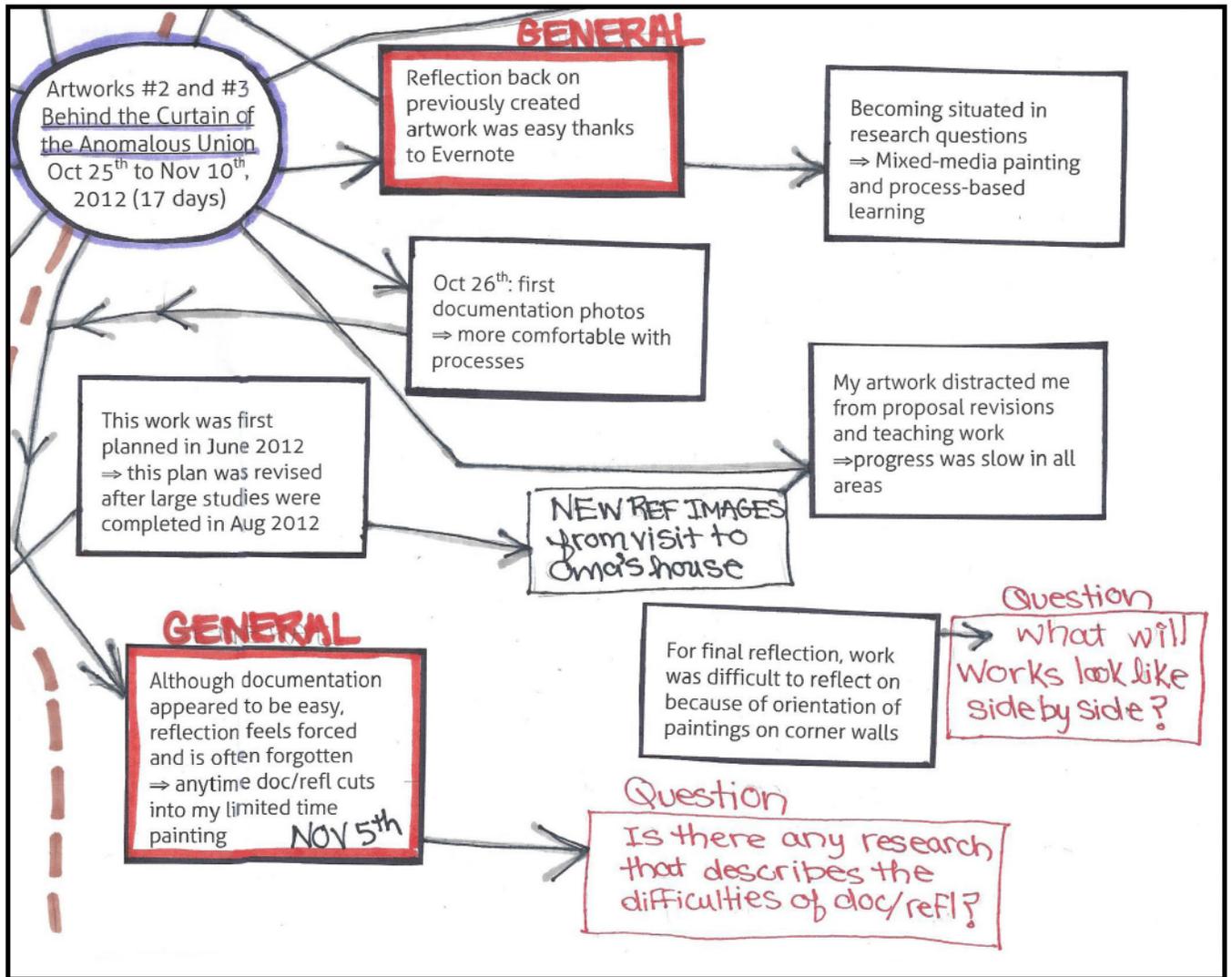
This image depicts a detail of *Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union (Peter)* during its early stages on November 2, 2012.



Photo by Sarah Lickley

Figure #13

This image is a detail of a concept map I created in December 2012 concerning *Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union*.



Artwork #4: *SINKING THOUGHTS OF A RECAPTURED BASEMENT* (Peter and Joseph) – Reflection and Reworking During the Process

Again, through post-project reflection and concept mapping, my next work revealed a change of pace compared to the previous works. I began *Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement* (Figure # 14) with an excessive amount of collage to compensate for what I understood to be a lack of collage in the diptych *Behind the Curtain of the Anomalous Union*. However, this time the change in my approach to starting a painting was more apparent to me during the process, since I noted while documenting earlier works that, “the under-painting of my next painting needs to have an exorbitant amount of collage to make me satisfied.” While reflecting through concept mapping, I discovered that daily documentation and reflection had become well integrated into my practice for the purpose of seeing the work from afar at regular intervals.

Daily reflection allowed me to change direction during the making process rather than just when commencing a new artwork. For example, I reworked a section of this painting using sandpaper to remove layers of paint after reflecting upon documentation images from the previous day's work. As I began developing the ability to consciously see and react to my work in progress through the use of documentation and reflection, my work began to develop more efficiently. Using Evernote as my main database, I finally appeared to be getting comfortable with the process-based tools I had adopted.

Figure # 14

This image depicts the fourth painting of the series, *Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement*, in progress on November 14, 2012.



Photo by Sarah Lickley

Reflections on and documentation of my working process prior to creating *Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement* had avoided others' perceptions of the work and focused on my own personal perceptions. A visitor in the studio reminded me of the universal quality of my photographic references of family by guessing nearly all the relations correctly without hearing about or seeing the work beforehand. It was a lucky accident that a visitor dropped by my studio; due to the personal and challenging nature of my thesis inquiry, I had not thought to consider informal peer feedback. This broadened my concern to once again include the perception of the viewer. By engaging with old photographs as well as first- and second-hand accounts of my family history, my conception of family morphed throughout the project. Barbara Bolt (2004) argues that in the contemporary era, most art has lost its universal qualities of preciousness or the "dynamical force akin to a relic" (p. 181). However, family photographs serve as a placeholder for the human subject, especially if that subject is absent or dead (p. 181). In my painting process, I find the aura of the family photograph that Bolt describes present and even heightened in the painting of the photograph. As described by the surprise visitor's brief comments, my paintings maintain the relatable and familiar qualities of the original family photographic source (Figure # 15). For both the viewer and myself the artworks transform into a new but familiar form, with colour and meaning beyond what the original photographic reference possesses. I now recognize that domestic photography is a critical and rich area of study and artistic engagement.

Figure # 15

Depicted below is the finished painting *Sinking Thoughts of a Recaptured Basement* and the reference photographic of which it was created from. These images are provided side by side to reveal the link between the domestic photographic reference and my finished painting product. The original photographic reference is from 1986.



Artwork #5: *MY EARLY EXCHANGES OF ABSTRACT BELIEFS* (Gisela and Sarah) – Facing Problems with Process-Based Tools

After reflecting on the previous work, I introduced changes of approach with the conscious intention of improving my newest work. Unfortunately, the main change that I introduced—to use a textured handmade paper ground—proved to be an obstacle to rendering accurately in pastel and paint (Figure # 16). I dealt with this obstacle by documenting and reflecting multiple times per day; I stepped back and evaluated the problem in different areas of the painting. Although the paper ground proved to be problematic, it pressured my documentation and reflection skills to develop quickly. Through data analysis it became evident that I had formed habitual ways of using process-based tools in my artistic practice. I made this extrapolation based on the growing number and length of entries I created in comparison to my notes on previous works.

Additionally, scheduled weekly reflections became critical to both capturing ephemeral tacit knowledge overlooked during the week and responding to the learning processes taking place without interrupting them. For example, when reflecting on the work I completed during the previous week, I was able to note the differences in the implementation of documentation and reflection in the studio. Documentation is clear and repetitive; it is much easier to implement consistently because a structured system can be developed to support it. On the other hand, reflection is more critical and involved a process; because it is often sub-conscious, bringing it to the forefront can be difficult and frustrating. While concept mapping the processes of *My Early Exchanges of Abstract Beliefs*, I began to understand the benefits and limitations of the process-based tools as they apply to my studio practice (Figure #17).

Figure # 16

This image depicts a detail of *My Early Exchanges of Abstract Beliefs* in progress on November 28, 2012.



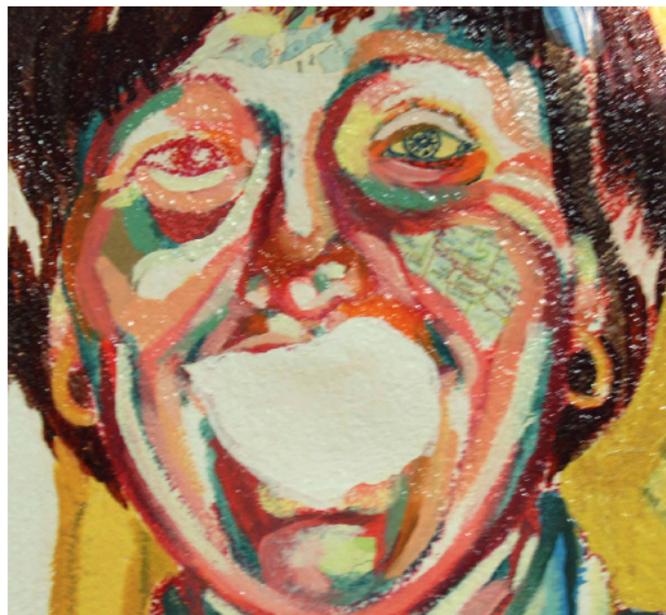
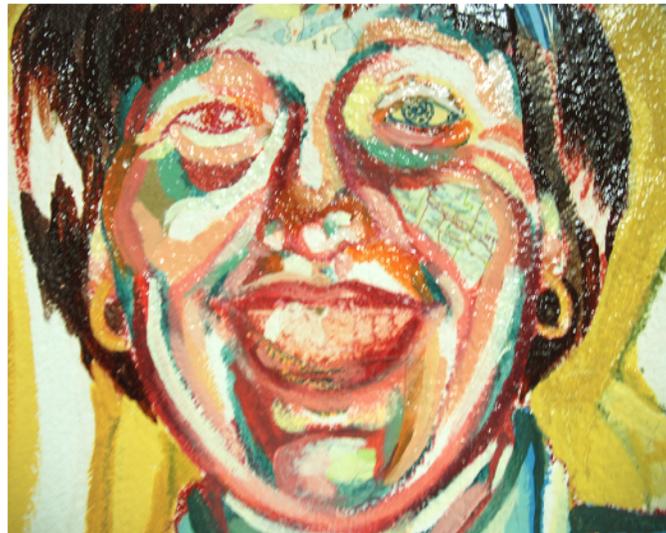
Photo by Sarah Lickley

**Artwork #6: *A RARE OUTBURST UPON EXITING INTO THE NIGHT (Gertrude)* –
A Surprising Last Artwork**

The final work in the series of large scale paintings, *A Rare Outburst Upon Exiting into the Night*, proved as productive in terms of learning opportunities as all the previous works. Initially, I naively expected it to be a cumulative ‘masterpiece’ that represented all the learning I had acquired throughout the project. However, the difficulties of working with the textured handmade paper ground continued, forcing a large amount of reworking throughout the creation of this piece (Figure # 18).

Figure #18

These images depict my decisions in the process of creating *A Rare Outburst Upon Exiting into the Night* on December 8, 2012. I ripped away a section of the painting surface that was proving difficult to resolve. The first image shows the problematic area, the bottom shows the work after a layer of paper is ripped away.



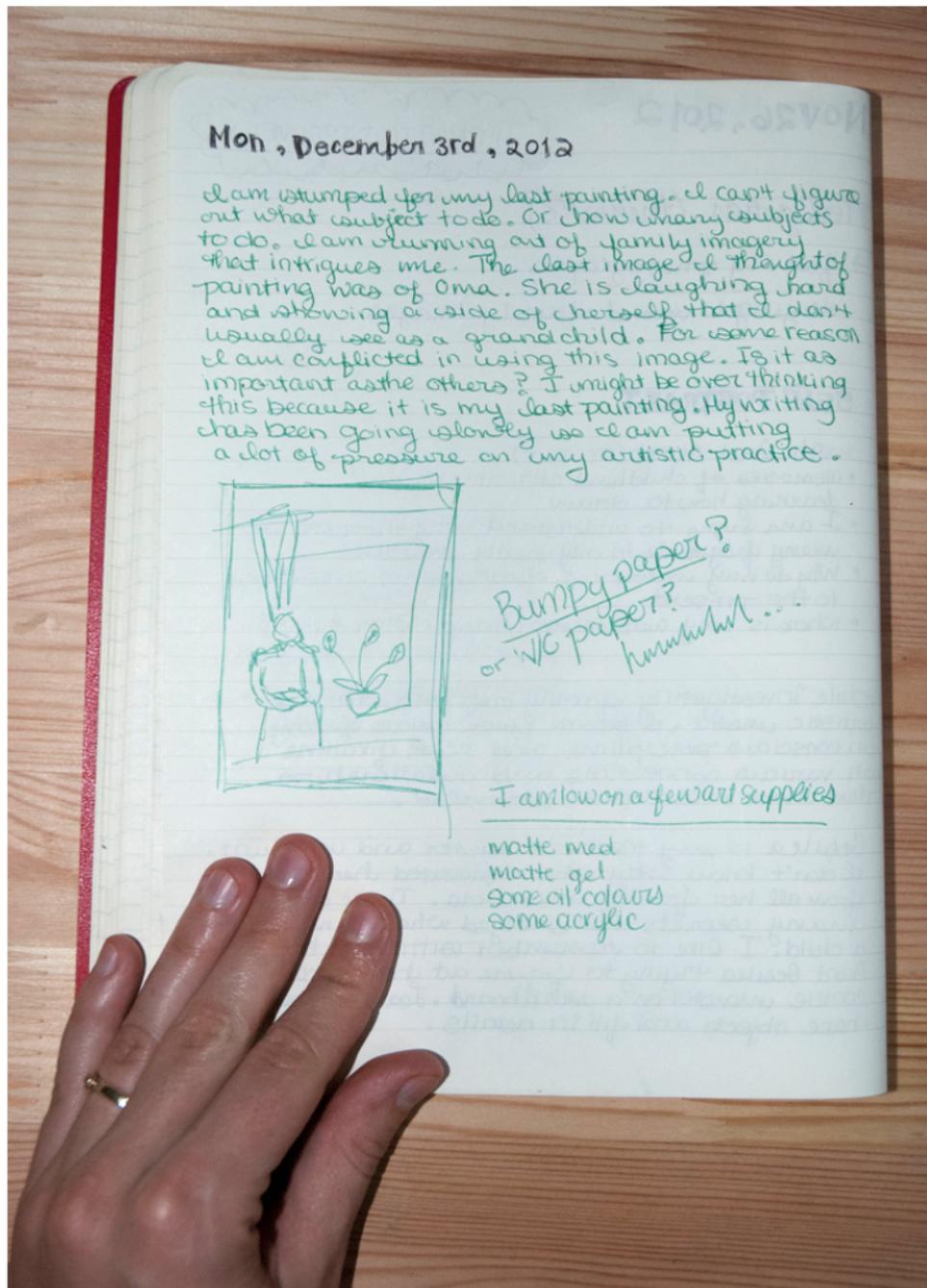
Photos by Sarah Lickley

After concept mapping the created data from this work, it appeared as though I had placed more pressure on myself in the form of time constraints and other work commitments outside of painting. I also extrapolated through mapping that I may have overcompensated in trying to prevail over the textured paper: colours, lines, thickness of paint and the expression of the figure were all heightened. After this analysis of the work, I concluded that this specific paper ground did not suit my working methods and use of media, and I would therefore not be using it in the future.

Another surprising outcome of the concept mapping analysis concerned the means by which my documentation and reflection had progressed. The physical notebook that I began my records in had proven to be less useful than the Evernote tool that I used most often. Within the creation of this last artwork I had rarely used the notebook at all—employing it mainly for sketching the initial plans for the artwork (Figure #19). From this I can determine that convenience is important to ensuring records are made regularly. Evernote became the most usable and adaptable recording and organizing device for my data during this project.

Figure # 19

This image shows a page from my written documentation book. It shows my first plans for the work *A Rare Outburst Upon Exiting into the Night*.



Other Artworks: *Linoleum Print Series (UNTITLED #1, #2 and #3) – Quiet*

Intermissions

Throughout the series of larger mixed-media paintings, I created linoleum stamps which I printed multiples of and collaged into smaller works. Aspects of these prints also ended up collaged in some form into the larger works. Working on the smaller collage artworks served as intermissions between large scale paintings; they brought a meticulous meditation and quiet to my normally messy and active practice.

After concept mapping the created data from the three linoleum print collages, I discovered my choice of subject matter for each was a result of unconscious reflection on material concerns (Figure # 20 and #21). Often my intentions were to use another subject; however, many of the older photographs were difficult to use as references due to their lack of quality and detail. Linoleum cuts rely on clearly defined lines and shapes; thus, without a detailed reference image, defining the aspects of the subjects was nearly impossible using the medium. The choices I made in the reflection process directly correlated with the specific representational devices of the medium.

Figure # 20

This image is a detail of a concept map I created in December 2012 concerning the *Linoleum Print Series (UNTITLED #1, #2 and #3)*.

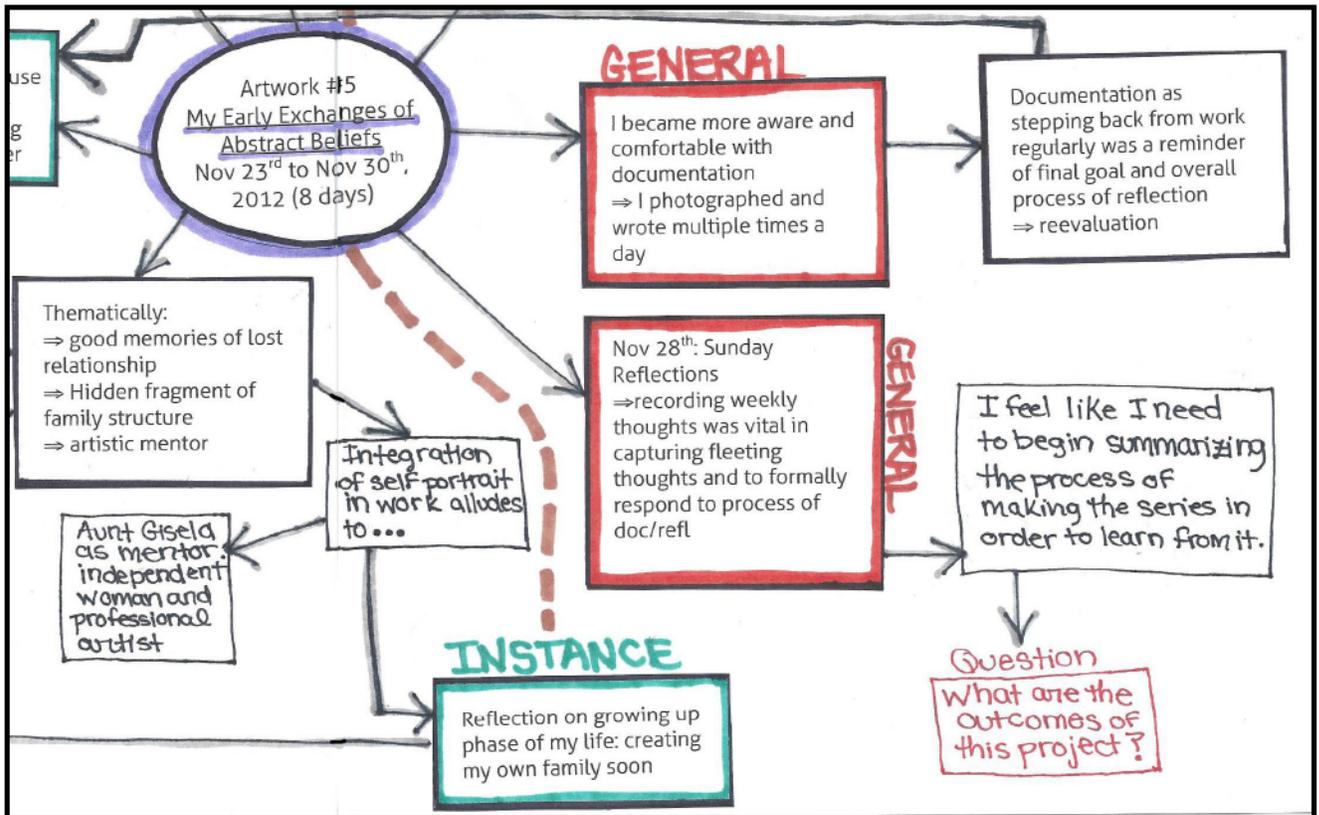
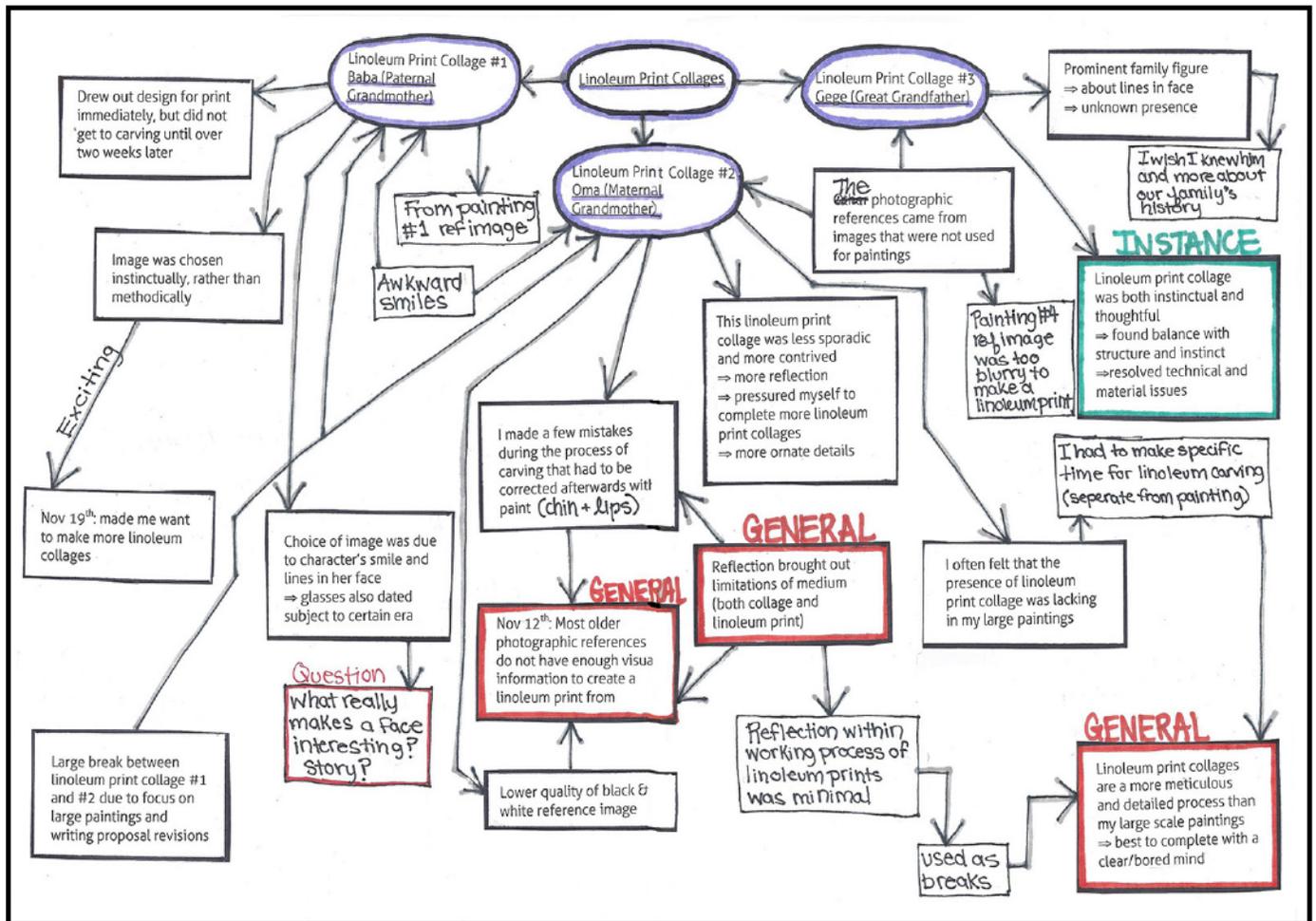


Figure # 21

This image is a concept map I created in December 2012 concerning the *Linoleum Print Series (UNTITLED #1, #2 and #3)*.



Specific Instances of Lasting Effect

During the art making process and in my analysis through concept mapping, I made sure to highlight specific instances that proved to have had lasting effects on my practice. These individual events centered on formal and aesthetic discoveries that accumulated to form more general outcomes. Specifically, four events or types of events emerged as having had lasting effects: sanding, changes in approach or experimentation, thematic use of family photographs, and material problems and solutions. These instances are reviewed above and further developed below.

General Outcomes and Initial Conclusions

Through analysis (i.e., concept mapping) of the created artworks and effecting instances of discovery described above, general outcomes of the project emerged. These outcomes were then further analyzed in more specific concept maps. These general outcomes helped me to draw conclusions that apply to the use of documentation and reflection tools in the studio and to answer the question, “What are the strengths and limitations of certain documentation and reflective practices in process-based learning and art making within a studio inquiry project?”

A consistent overarching theme that emerged throughout my project was one that highlighted the learning process involved in using documentation and reflection tools consciously and efficiently. As my series of paintings progressed, I documented and reflected more frequently; eventually it became an integrated habit in my artistic practice to record images and words while making art. However, there were difficulties in taking on documentation and reflection tools in my studio, none of which was mentioned in the

literature I reviewed on process-based learning initially.

Upon further investigation, I discovered that the various difficulties of process-based research projects are described briefly by Nancy De Freitas. In her early research, De Freitas describes three hurdles within process-based methods and offers one general solution to these challenges. Both the hurdles and the solution she describes are relevant to my project. First, her research reveals the typical confusion in process-based research projects in differentiating between “personal intentions, critical orientations and working or studio methods” (De Freitas, 2002, p. 5). I encountered similar issues when writing the first draft of my thesis proposal. My theoretical and personal concerns had taken over more critical orientations of the process and methods of making work in the studio. Luckily, my issues regarding the complex overlapping of intentions were resolved during the proposal stage with the help of my thesis advisor and committee members. Second, De Freitas reviews the very common difficulties of graduate and post-graduate students in finding a balance between creative and analytic thinking during the research project (p 5). When making artworks for this project, I grappled with the problem of balancing my engrained creative methods and engaging with new process-based methods. Most notably, I remarked that I had succeeded in finding a balance in methods during my final linoleum print collage by reflecting on previous linoleum print collage works.

Finally, De Freitas notes that active documentation—documentation that is undertaken regularly and rigorously—was often difficult for students to relate to and integrate successfully into their daily working routines (p 5). At the beginning of my project, especially during the first artwork, I reported challenges in making documentation and reflection a habit. De Freitas notes that often this hurdle is concealed by the

student/researcher—an action that can gravely effect final research outcomes and make the final thesis paper appear contrived. She suggests that “through systematic reflective practice, as part of active documentation” these hurdles can be overcome and utilized as learning opportunities (De Freitas, 2002, p. 5). For my own research project, reflection was paramount as I continually sought improvement and growth. Although De Freitas addresses the problems encountered in process-based learning projects and a solution to these hurdles, I would like to see more situation-specific and hands-on learning aids for new researchers undertaking these methods.

There is certainly a considerable learning curve in integrating these processes into an already situated artist’s practice. The changing of habit presents difficulties in adapting and refining where and when to document/reflect, as well as what to reflect on and how. For myself, developing the understanding of these tasks and practicing their implementation was part of learning a skill. Documentation and reflection are process-based learning skills that I will continue to develop in the future to enhance the learning I do in the studio. Here it becomes clear that one limitation of process-based learning tools is the artist/student’s own experience and skill with the tools of documentation and reflection; it takes time to develop and master these tools so that they work within an artistic practice and so that their learning benefits can be seen. An additional factor may be that of the user’s disposition; discipline in using documentation and reflection and the motivation to continue may be barriers to others less committed and focused than myself.

One of the main frustrations I had during the early stages of my project was the cessation of flow when I felt forced to document and reflect. Because my research demanded that I investigate the uses of documentation and reflection, I couldn’t neglect

integrating them. I set up a schedule of documentation/reflection so that this practice would happen daily, weekly, and pre- and post-project. After some time of following strict guidelines and learning the basics of the tools, I began to loosen up and let the documentation and reflection happen more instinctually. What I concluded from this line of inquiry is that there has to be a balance between systematic and instinctual record making. Often things happen by surprise and are best recorded immediately. Other times they are subtle, and if regimented reflection is not scheduled they can go undocumented. Developing process-based learning tools within the art practice helps the artist to find a means of recording the most relevant information most of the time. If these processes are either over-systematized or neglected, valuable information may be missed.

As I demonstrated above, it can be difficult to know how to organize and store process-based learning. Specifically, finding a system that works within my artistic practice and learning environment was vital for the reflection and documentation to take place. Within my project, I found Evernote to be an invaluable tool for structuring my records. It allowed me to create a system by which I could document from most locations with an internet connection and organize my observations in a way that made them accessible and useful in my reflection process. I would encourage any artist to experiment and find the appropriate system to document and reflect. Artists who limit themselves to one system of recording data may miss valuable information. For example, a notebook is great for sketching, taking notes and journaling, but integrating photographs into it is time consuming and inefficient. Also, organizing the data after it is recorded is much more difficult than having it indexed, filed and searchable using a computer program. With new technologies emerging, I would highly recommend an artist investigate the many

possibilities for keeping records of documentation and reflection. In the future, I plan to continue the use of documentation and reflection in my studio practice as well as remain up to date with research developments in the field. I believe this will help propel my process-based learning in the studio and my teaching practice.

An observable benefit of regular documentation and reflection is the unearthing of tacit knowledge. Much of the research on process-based learning argues that tacit knowledge of one's practice is initially vague; however, it can be fleshed out and verbalized through the use of reflective tools (Schön, 1987, p. 162). The previously gathered documentation is not to be neglected, because without its effect of triggering the artist's memories of initial experiences, reflection would not be possible (De Freitas, 2007, p. 7). In my own practice, I found that the most pertinent tacit knowledge emerged from weekly or summative reflections. In these instances a review of early and later documentation uncovered hidden or overlooked discoveries vital to the progression of the work. These new reflections were recorded and served to affect the development of the future work. When used consistently, documentation and reflection prove beneficial in revealing tacit knowledge that arises from artistic practice.

Rigorous documentation and reflection serve as a means to connect the artist to their own work. A very prominent outcome of using documentation and reflection as process-based learning tools is the enhanced knowledge of the artist's intentions. This knowledge is made more apparent to both the artist and the audience as the artist aims to enhance his/her communication with his/her viewership. As I progressed through this project and became more familiar with the process-based learning tools of documentation and reflection, I became aware of the intentions behind the aesthetic, material and

thematic aspects of my work. This enhanced understanding will inform my future working choices as I continue to learn in a process-based way in my studio.

Overall, the impact of this project on my personal artistic growth has been extensive. The experience of working through the project was invaluable for teaching me the effectiveness and possibilities of process-based learning. While investigating my learning process and developing my level of skill with the tools of documentation and reflection, I developed a keen critical eye for my own artistic practice. This personal benefit will carry through to my future artistic work. My work as a teacher has also been greatly informed by this project, as I have gained a first-hand perspective as a learner using process-based learning tools. Through this research and my various experiences as a teacher thus far, I was able to extend my theoretical knowledge to concrete applications in the classroom. My suggested applications are described in the following chapter.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

In considering the outcomes of my research, I have reflected on the possible applications and significance they have for artists, teachers and the field of art education. This reflection relates directly to my second research question: “What are the specific qualities of my own learning process through studio practice that can be transferred to the teaching of art?” Below are four recommendations that can be applied in various learning settings and that are exemplified through my own pedagogical and studio experiences. These recommendations include making material practices a focus of reflection, implementing continual documentation, cultivating sustained critical and creative inquiry, and rigorously integrating reflection and documentation into professional practices. These recommendations prove to be interconnected and often mutually beneficial. I describe which experiences in my studio inquiry and analysis can be attributed to the development of each suggested application in order to further make transparent my experiences of process-based learning.

1. To enhance their self-understanding and aesthetic outcomes, artists and educators should make their material processes a focus of reflective inquiry.

A portion of my findings described in the previous chapter demonstrates that reflective action can promote growth in an artist or student in a variety of ways. Particularly, my research shows that reflective processes make an artist more aware of their artistic choices and actions with respect to particular art media.

Reflection during the creation process at meaningful junctures can make an artist or student more aware of the qualities and limitations of a specific medium. The lasting

influence of the initial learning experience is often enhanced when the learner utilizes critical reflection (Dewey, 1938). Reflection requires the user to ask: Why didn't this work? What could work better? What worked and was beneficial? How can I improve my use of this medium based on my accumulated experiences? Accordingly, educators should guide students' focus toward assessing material concerns while they work through artistic projects. As educators do so, they ensure students uncover and digest the limits and possibilities each medium has to offer. Also, when a student critically contemplates the parameters of the medium they are working with, they gain knowledge and skill advancement more quickly and are able to communicate this knowledge to others more readily.

I uncovered acute examples of the benefit of reflection during my research when I was having the most difficulty working with particular media. For example, while creating linoleum block prints I often found it difficult to find images that were detailed enough to render in the very specific lines and shapes that the medium demanded. I did not at first understand why I could not recreate a certain photographic reference as a linoleum image. However, when I reflected upon my three successful linoleum print collages, I realized that my subject choice had been unconsciously guided by the quality of my photographic references. I could only use high quality, detailed images as references—a fact that only came into view while completing post-project reflections and data analysis. In contrast, I did realize during the art making process that I was having difficulties using a textured ground, and I attribute this early realization to the more regimented reflection I was completing while making my larger works. For the artworks *My Early Exchanges of Abstract Beliefs* and *A Rare Outburst Upon Exiting Into*

the Night, I reflected daily in order to troubleshoot and re-consider my use of the handmade paper ground. Although this reflection helped my last two artworks progress, after their completion I concluded that the textured paper ground was not worth using in the future because it slowed and even inhibited aspects of my artistic process.

I propose that reflective material inquiry be integrated as a post-project assignment that directs the artist or student to reflect on and evaluate material processes. This work would be especially relevant for the late high school and early college level students who are readily developing their skills and exploring multiple media. Over the course of my own experiences completing a Bachelor in Fine Art, I found that experimentation with media and reflection happened naturally. Often these processes were revealed in more detail through peer review and critique. I believe that if experimentation and reflection were made more apparent and were more critically taken up by the student, their benefits would grow and accumulate much more rapidly. Researchers utilizing practice-led research methods to conduct material inquiry projects further exemplify the benefits of reflection to enhance learning outcomes (Mäkelä & Routarinne, 2006; Nimkulrat, 2009; Vaughan, 2005).

2. To help guide an artistic project and illustrate a continual process of learning, artists and educators should take up continual documentation.

Becoming familiar with and skilled at documenting my working process was a huge undertaking and an aspect of my research methods. However difficult this first task appeared, it helped me to situate myself within my artistic process and proceed effectively. Accumulation of documents/records helped chronicle progress and directions

that might otherwise have remained unclear or unconscious. From an educational standpoint, the information provided by documentation may help to illustrate to a student how her work has developed, where to venture next, and how to understand her own learning (see De Freitas, 2002). In conjunction with reflection, documentation requires the user to ask purposeful and process-oriented questions that help guide the direction of the work. These questions may include: How often should I document my artwork in order to illustrate its process of creation? What important aspects of my work does documentation capture? What aspects of my working process is documentation missing? Am I recording my thoughts and actions regularly? Constructivist educational theory links directly to my recommendation in its holistic view of the learner and its desire “to provide learning situations that connect new information to the student’s base of experience” (Simpson, 1996, p. 54). Documentation provides a record of prior experience to both the teacher and the student and thus ensures that there is a visible platform of knowledge from which growth may emerge.

During my research project, documentation often helped me reflect on completed works and start new artworks with different goals in mind. As reviewed within my data analysis section, examples of changes of approach that emerged from reflection on documentation records included the simplification of background, a move toward larger scale figures, a move away from excessive collage, the introduction of textured ground and a change of tones in under-painting. Changing the pace of my working process, by experimenting with new approaches to mixed-media painting, indicated my desire to challenge my usual working methods. Although not all of these experimental attempts created successful artworks, they did help me better understand where I was going

overall with my series of artworks.

From my experiences in the studio integrating documentation processes, as well as from working in the classroom with mature students, I have found documentation a valuable tool in helping situate and guide an art project. Although documentation is applicable to all levels of development in art education, it is especially beneficial in introductory classes. Often, when teens or adults approach an art form for the first time they feel overwhelmed and uncomfortable experimenting or expressing themselves in unique ways because they have not had that freedom before. Introducing an ongoing process of documentation can help the student visualize the process more clearly. If this documentation is made available to the instructor, it can be used to start a dialogue between the student and teacher so that the teacher may guide the student artistically or make available to them possible future avenues of inquiry. Constructivist education theorist Judith Simpson (1996) describes that “it may also be necessary for the teacher to become a researcher in order to find the best media and appropriate activities to satisfy the objectives within a conceptual unit” (p. 57). I have experienced the effectiveness of a research/documentation approach in introductory classes with adult students, and I would also promote its use with teens and young adults.

3. To accelerate progress and strengthen connections between projects, educators and artists should cultivate sustained critical and creative inquiry.

For this research project I worked within similar parameters as those described above. Upon analyzing my collected and created documents and reflections, I was able to map a trajectory of growth and learning. Artists naturally find their works in series,

investigating a theme, subject or material in multiple works of art. Through this means of working, artists or students can refine their artistic skills and voice. Therefore, I would like to recommend to educators that projects be assigned as a series with similar inquiries, and that those instructors take into consideration both previous and future projects in order to ensure that connections and progress can be made.

From my research, it is apparent that completing multiple similar projects with reflective components promotes growth in process and problem solving. The repetition of processes through multiple projects allows for meaningful conclusions to be made and preconceptions to be weeded out through repetition. Generally the first artwork is a trial, the second is a test of preconceptions and the third puts the findings to use.

Working within similar parameters for multiple projects raises the questions: What have I learned by doing this project and where can this knowledge be extended in my next project? How do I redefine my next work? How can I improve the work? What new issues can I tackle in my next work? It is important for purposeful direction to be taken in any endeavour, especially when trying to engage students or inspire a lifetime of artistic practice. By structuring artistic projects to promote growth and build on prior knowledge, teachers will help students learn to sustain critical and creative inquiry.

As aforementioned, my research project is a good example of how this process can work, as is the practice of many contemporary artists. Sustained critical and creative inquiry on one topic, explored in a series of similar projects, is unusual in the classroom due to curriculum constraints. However, thematically, a topic can be explored through many lenses to gain a more varied perspective: for example, a historic event explored through writing, painting and sculpture. The reverse approach can also be considered,

although it may be less effective in the classroom: reviewing multiple different topics in one medium can give a student the chance to build varied skills in utilizing one means of communication. These examples reveal the possible applications for traditional elementary and secondary classrooms; however, they can also be applied easily in introductory-level college or university education classrooms. Artists could easily benefit from a more conscious approach to sustained critical and creative inquiry because they already naturally create works in rigorous sets or series and they have unlimited control over their processes and products.

Art education researcher Barbara Bolt (2007) emphasizes the importance of working with tools or within topics for a sustained amount of time in order to gain knowledge. She argues that artists gain knowledge and understanding “through the process of handling materials and ideas” (p. 34). She defines the reflexive knowledge that arises from extended handling as “practical knowledge” (p. 34). Although mirroring sustained inquiry in the classroom as exemplified by the practices of artists seems a very broad or vague recommendation, constructivist education theory can be helpful in defining a practical application at other levels. Unlike traditional classrooms, the constructivist art educator “is expected to work cooperatively to reinforce knowledge ... and [to] work across disciplines to weave a cohesive thread of understanding” that maintains sustained critical inquiry (Simpson, 1996, p. 57). This means that the teacher is always working to make connections and build on students’ previous knowledge. Depending on the teacher’s role and control over learning material, long term sustained critical and creative inquiry may not be possible. However, it is important for the teacher to help make connections and links for students, whether or not inquiry can be sustained.

When teachers use this approach, measurable progress can be made and extensive knowledge on one topic or medium can be gained.

4. To ensure continual growth and rewarding learning experiences, artists should regularly integrate documentation and reflection into their personal and professional creative projects.

The overall outcome of my studio inquiry was the extensive growth I gained personally, artistically and educationally by taking up and developing the process-based tools of documentation and reflection. Sustained self-directed learning is a valuable skill that can aid individuals in pursuing their goals once outside of the traditional education system. My final recommendation is that artists regularly take on documentation and reflection within their artistic projects.

Continually practicing reflection and documentation processes makes an independent artistic practitioner more critical of their practice. In combination with peer feedback, this working method can ensure the artist continues learning and growing even when working outside an academic institution. The habitual use of process-based tools in self-directed projects raises the questions: What can I do to become more aware of my artistic or research goals? How does my documentation ensure that I will not make the same mistakes over? How does reflecting on my records inform how I describe my artworks to others? As was evident in my research, the longer I sustained the use of process-based learning tools, the more they became part of my artistic process and the more profound the learning outcomes I experienced.

I believe that introducing the use of documentation and reflection in self-directed artistic projects is a viable approach for most levels, particularly high school and above. The more independent and self-directed the learner is, the more possibilities there are for process-based learning to occur. It is especially critical for higher education students to practice and develop a habit of using process-based learning tools before they become independent art practitioners because they have to learn how to sustain their practice without the guidance and encouragement of their teachers. Art education researcher Sydney R. Walker (2009) describes how a high school teacher had “her graphic design students each select a big idea and explore it for an entire semester through various art making and research projects” (p. 192). Although this approach is a perfect exemplar for sustained critical inquiry in that it encourages the investigation of one topic from many viewpoints, it is unique because of the self-propelled position of the student. In this case students chose their own path, examining the topic by way of means of their choosing; the vital parameters of this classroom structure were the documentation of progress, dialogue with the teacher and class, and self-assessments or reflections (2009). I believe that it is these types of projects that prepare and empower students to learn in a self-directed and critical manner when outside of the classroom, which ultimately prepares them to take up careers and fulfill goals—whatever those might be.

Artistic researchers, as described by Sullivan (2010), use unique arts-based means to address questions and problems. Sullivan describes the roles of artists, researchers and teachers as intertwined, and writes that these professionals “see structures that define traditional discipline areas, not as boundaries or barriers, but as potential pathways that can link ideas and actions in new braided ways” (p. 156). For the

artist, work is self-directed and about new visual forms and structures emerging from old knowledge, since “the studio is a place of inquiry that is not bound by walls or removed from the daily grind of everyday life” (p. 72). Educators, researchers and artists cannot be active in their continually evolving roles without the ability to practice self-directed learning. Artists often work instinctually towards new progress; confidence and endurance to sustain inquiry are necessary skills to attain this progress. The applications of self-directed learning in the classroom are still evident when extended into other fields of inquiry, such as the sciences or humanities.

CONCLUSION

In reviewing my recommendations, I have organized them from the most concrete to the most abstract in order to mirror the way the learner or teacher will likely engage with them. The learning process often begins with tangible facts in order to form a base of knowledge; from there, the learner moves into experimentation and theoretical inquiry in order to extend the knowledge base. Having engaged in sustained studio inquiry, as I conclude this text I feel as if I am myself reaching for and learning new things that build on my previous education and experience. There is value in completing a studio-based inquiry thesis because it will enhance my reflective artistic skills, “the assumption being that reflective practitioners will produce better results than their unreflective peers” (Scrivener, 2000, n.p.). Over the course of this studio-based thesis my experiences guided me, a reification of the theories of John Dewey on the connection between subjective experience and learning. He argues that there is an “organic connection between education and personal experience” and “that education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 247, 251). Although not all experience is educative, it is experiential learning that is the most conducive to lifelong learning (Dewey, 1938). Subjectivity serves to connect my work more closely to process-based learning and education because within my thesis research it is critically acknowledged and contextualized. The goal of my research was not to uncover universal facts, but to investigate personal and specific questions and to learn from the process.

However, the outcomes of this inquiry are not purely for my own personal benefit. The innovative ideas and unexpected knowledge that I encountered during my

project have enhanced my ability to produce meaningful artwork. In terms of this project's broader applicability, "the communicable outcomes of the activity will serve as examples, images and understandings" to others in my field in the form of a case study (Scrivener, 2000, n.p.). Methodologically, both my artwork and research text reveal the uses and the possibilities of process-based learning tools that can be applied at a variety of educational levels. It was important for me to be extensive and transparent in my use of concept mapping for data analysis in order to provide a more usable and valuable case study for other researchers. By focusing my written and artistic inquiries onto the evaluation of process-based learning techniques, I aimed to create artistic research that will prove useful to art educators and other self-reflective artist-teachers.

Going forward, I will integrate this newly gained knowledge into my teaching and art making practices in various ways. I will continue using documentation and reflection in my everyday professional life as an artist, educator and researcher. I now see that it is vital to document my work in progress in order to maintain direction, perspective and thoughtful records for future reference. I foresee this being especially beneficial when I am working on multiple projects simultaneously over larger periods of time, which is often the case when I juggle multiple roles, commitments and jobs as an artist-educator. Extending this approach into my professional activities, I have already begun documenting my teaching workshops and commissioned artwork extensively with photography.

Looking back at my research questions, I see that my learning process was conducive to demonstrating the benefits of documentation and reflection. Above, I described the applications and benefits of documentation and reflection to both the

professional artist in the studio and the art educator in the classroom. The benefits are numerous and widely applicable, and it is clear that more research is needed on process-based learning within art education to further develop and promote its use. In only three full months of directed studio practice, I was able to discern multiple positive effects of the process-based approach. However, it is apparent in my data analysis outcomes that multiple difficulties can arise when an artist first integrates documentation and reflection into studio practice. In my own work, the limitations of process-based learning arose when documentation and reflection took over artistic processes or disrupted the flow in thought during the making of an artwork. There was also some difficulty when learning the skills and integrating them seamlessly into my artistic practice. Although with practice I was able to alleviate these issues, it would be prudent to consider how these issues can be avoided. In my future research, I intend to focus on developing practical trouble-shooting guidelines for educators and independent artists using process-based learning approaches.

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