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# Exploring the Affective Nature of Creativity

Michelle S.J Robert  
*Buffalo State College*

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*Exploring the Affective Nature of Creativity*  
by

Michelle Shanti Jeanne Robert

An Abstract of a Project  
in  
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2006

Buffalo State College  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

## ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

### *Exploring the Affective Nature of Creativity*

This project was about exploring and expanding my creative self; it explored how the creative process involved in artistic self-expression can help one reduce stress, increase self-awareness, achieve insight and break down barriers that hinder creativity. The project is based on creativity models and a few art therapy techniques. It contains tangible products of my artwork which include: a visual log, a series of photographs, a note book, a 'writing therapy' booklet, drawings and a collage. I used a wide variety of materials such as brushes, water color, crayons, chalk pastels, oil pastels, coloring pencils, markers, sketch book, construction paper, tissue paper, newspaper, food labels, spices, etc. The intangible outcomes are discussed in the 'Key Learnings' section.

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3<sup>rd</sup> May 2006

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State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

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Dates of Approval:

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Dr. Mary Murdock, Advisor  
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Michelle Shanti Jeanne Robert  
Student

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you Craig, my best friend, for being the force behind all my success.

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Thank you Professor Lucy Andrus, Professor Katherine Hartman and Dr. Akin-Deko – for helping so many students to heal mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Thank you Amy, for without your support, this project would be just a draft.

Thank you Lord, for caring about me and watching over me,

For lifting me when I slip and for catching my tears when they fall, and

For the new family you gave me in Buffalo.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND OF PROJECT

#### Purpose

Through this project, I hoped to find and enjoy my creative potential – in art and in life. I felt that I needed to do a project of this nature because I needed to get in touch with my spiritual self. I was at a point in my life where I needed to re-evaluate my goals and re-examine the quality of my life. I needed to de-stress and let my ideas and thoughts flow so as to express myself better. Most art therapists believe that as people tell their stories through art, hidden, suppressed issues surface and a person's understanding of himself or herself is altered.

For the last ten years, I taught students aged 7 to 17. I met many students who were troubled emotionally. Some were from broken families and undergoing depression and others were in danger of failing their subjects or dropping out of school. When I learn to maximize my creative ability through this project, I will be in a better position to encourage students to create art which will safely communicate their thoughts and feelings. Hopefully I will be able to assist students to surface any unpleasant experience they were to face with their family, friends, studies or a natural disaster such as the Tsunami or the Hurricane Katrina.

#### Description

This project is about exploring and expanding my creative self. For a long time now, I have had a huge writer's block. I believe that it is a creative manifestation of my family situation, about which I have kept my feelings unexpressed for most of my life. In addition, I taught Science in a high school for the last six years, and had little opportunity to be

engaged in expressive writing. As a result, I am unable to let my thoughts flow and express my personal feelings on paper. According to Naumburg's study (as in Feder, 1981), the communication function is the most important single function in art therapy. She also thinks that "artistic production is superior to verbal communication...because it permits direct expression of dreams and fantasies, it minimizes self-censorship, it provides for the preservation of the communication, and it encourages the resolution of transference" (as cited in Feder, 1981, p.71).

With the guidance of professors from Buffalo State's Art Education Department, I applied certain aspects of art therapy to this project; this will hopefully had an impact on my creative and artistic path.

#### Rationale for selection

I undertook this project to pursue a journey that led to self-discovery, personal growth and life transformation. I used the creative process of art making to enhance my physical, mental and emotional well-being. Through this project I also hope to discover how the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, achieve insight and break down barriers to writing expressively.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERTINENT LITERATURE

The literature contained within this section mainly consists of books on art therapy, the visual arts and creative expression, and concepts revolving around creativity. The books are highly recommended for those who seek to use art diagnostically or therapeutically. Many of the books listed in the bibliography and reference sections, have provided me with valuable knowledge that I could apply to many parts of this project. The other references listed are books and articles that could be useful where more information on creativity is needed.

#### Expanded CBIR Abstracts

Rubin, J.A. (1984). *The Art of Art Therapy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel publishers

Type of Resource: Book

This volume provides a thorough overview of the theoretical bases of the different approaches to art therapy. It describes the problems encountered by both the patient and the therapist in their roles as artists. The book is written with sensitivity while describing basic therapeutic techniques. By translating theory into techniques, this book enhances every art therapist's clinical skills. Rubin also describes the media, processes, and products of art therapy. She also covers applications of theory such as "Variations on a Freudian Theme". In short, the book is an attempt to describe what goes into making a good art therapist and is modeled on psychoanalysts, psychologists, psychiatrists, other therapists, teachers and artists.

Wadeson, H. (1987). *The dynamics of art psychotherapy*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.  
Type of Resource: Book

Wadeson explains in depth the underlying principles that inform readers about the art of psychotherapy. She provides her professional insight about crucial clinical topics such as the role of art therapists as leaders and creative facilitators, the phases of art therapy, factors involved in art expression, art therapy treatments, etc. The book describes in detail the structure, environment and materials needed for successful art therapy sessions. This book includes many recommendations that encourage art expression through applying the processes of removing roadblocks, creating the creative environment, and through provision of creative incentives.

#### Selected Bibliography

Cameron, J. (2003). *Walking in this world: the practical art of creativity*. New York: Penguin.

Cameron, J. (2002). *The artist's way: A spiritual path to higher creativity* (10th Anniversary Edition). New York: Penguin.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.

Davis, G. (2003). *Creativity is forever* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Gelb, M. (2004). *How to think like Leonardo da Vinci*. New York: Delta Trade Publications.

McNiff, S. (1998). *Trust the process: An artist's guide to letting go*: Boston, London: Shambala.

McNiff, S. (1992). *Art as medicine: Creating a therapy of the imagination* . Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Rubin, J.A. (1984). *The Art of Art Therapy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel publishers.

Wadeson, H. (1987). *The dynamics of art psychotherapy*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Wadeson, H. (1980). *Art: psychotherapy*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



## CHAPTER THREE

## PROCESS PLAN

Having taken the psychological inventory known as the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI), I discovered that I perceive the world as a ‘Sensor’. As a Sensor, I like clear and concrete information, details, facts and to-do lists because they help me create practical solutions. Hence, it is no surprise that I designed a very detailed timeline before I actually began on my project. It provided me with a realistic overview of the amount of work that was installed for me. It also provided me with the urgency to commence on my project and it served as a reminder to be consistent in my work for this project. Although the timeline below looks very different from the one I had crafted out initially, it shows me that I had been as conscientious as I had set out to be at the start of this project.

## Timeline

<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Hours</b>
January	14	Went to Buffalo Central Library to borrow books on Art Therapy	2
January	18	Met with a counselor from Weigel Health Center, Dr. Akin-Deko	1
January	19	Read library books on Art Therapy books	6
January	23	Met with a counselor from Weigel Health Center, Dr. Akin-Deko	1
January	27	Artist Date: Albright-Knox Museum – Chinese Exhibition	2
January	28	Artist Date: Walk in Delaware Park	1
January	31	Completed and submitted Concept Paper (First Draft)	3
February	02	Met with a professor from the Art Education department, Prof. Katherine Hartman to attain a list of pertinent literature for Art Therapy	0.5
February	02	Worked on creative product - photography	2

February	04	Worked on creative product - visual log	4
February	03	Completed and submitted Concept Paper (Second Draft)	1.5
February	05	Archived photographs of products in project write-up	3
February	06	Met with a professor from the Art Education department, Prof. Lucy Andrus to ask for permission to participate in her Art Therapy undergraduate classes	0.5
February	07	Met with a counselor from Weigel Health Center, Dr. Akin-Deko	1
February	13	Completed and submitted Concept Paper (Final version)	1
February	14	Attended an undergraduate Art Therapy class at Upton Hall	3.5
February	16	Met with a counselor from Weigel Health Center, Dr. Akin-Deko	1
February	17	Worked on creative product – visual log	4
February	19	Worked on creative product - collage	2
February	24	Read library books on Art Therapy	3
February	24	Took notes of interesting quotes from Art Therapy books	2
February	25	Archived photographs of products in project write-up	1
February	26	Worked on creative product - visual log	4
February	28	Attended an undergraduate Art Therapy class at Upton Hall	3.5
March	04	Worked on creative product – Art Therapy brochure	2
March	07	Met with sounding board partners at BSC bookstore	1
March	16	Worked on creative product – Art Therapy brochure	1
March	18	Worked on creative product - visual log	4
March	19	Worked on creative product - visual log	4
March	24	Artist Date: One Hour Gallery on Elmwood Avenue	1
April	06	Met with a professor from the Art Education department, Prof. Katherine Hartman to review creative products	0.5
April	10	Met with a professor from the Art Education department, Prof. Lucy Andrus to review creative products	0.5
April	11	Worked on creative product – Crayola Color Explosion Drawing	2
April	13	Borrowed books on Art Therapy from BSC's Butler Library	1

April	13	Read book on Art Therapy from BSC's Butler Library	1
April	14	Preparing for the first draft of the project write-up	10
April	15	Preparing for the first draft of the project	10
April	15	Read book on Art Therapy from BSC's Butler Library	1
April	16	Preparing for the first draft of the project write-up	10
April	16	Read book on Art Therapy from BSC's Butler Library	1
April	17	Preparing for the first draft of the project write-up	8
April	17	Read book on Art Therapy from BSC's Butler Library	1
April	18	Submission of the first draft of the project write-up	0.5
April	29	Revision of final write-up of the project	2
April	30	Revision of final write-up of the project	8
		Total number of hours	123

## CHAPTER FOUR

### OUTCOMES

The outcomes of my project are both tangible and intangible. In this section, I will showcase the tangible products. The intangible products are discussed in the ‘Key Learnings’ section on page 24.

#### Photographs

I took a series of photographs of Delaware Park which was designed by a famous architect, Frederick Law Olmsted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. My favorite part of the park is the lake and the Weeping Willows. Each time I take a walk there, I feel a sense of appreciation of the beauty of nature, and I also feel a deep sense of serenity. From the time I arrived in Buffalo last summer, I have seen the park undergo various transformations through the seasons. I had always wanted to take pictures of the park, especially in the fall. However, each time I went for a walk, I did not have my camera with me. During winter and spring, I was surprised at how the colors of the trees and surroundings have changed drastically but they still had a profound effect on me.

One glorious sunny day in January 2006, I had my camera with me and I had to capture the shots that had always been imprinted in my head for such a long time. Here are samples of photographs (Figure 1) I took at the park. The rest of the photographs in this of the park series can be found in Appendix B.



Figure 1





Figure 2





Figure 3



Figure 4





Figure 5

The next product is my visual log, a powerful product that is still in the process of gradually drawing out my emotions. The visual log is a sketch book which helps me to express my suppressed feelings through drawing, coloring and writing by using different media. I love the images I created in the visual log. I enjoyed turning to a blank page to draw something. I wondered about why it was so much easier for me to draw in the log about my childhood than it was to write about it. I came across what could possibly be the answers to my question when I read a book by Feder (1981, p.61) where she cited the words of a psychiatrist Mardi Horowitz (1979) in her study:

“Some types of information may be expressed and communicated in images better than in words”. Mardi explains that many childhood memories, and even repressed memories and fantasies “are accessible to consciousness in image representation, but are inexpressible in words, since they cannot be translated into verbal form”.

Here are a few sample pages from my visual log. The rest of the pages can be found in Appendix C.

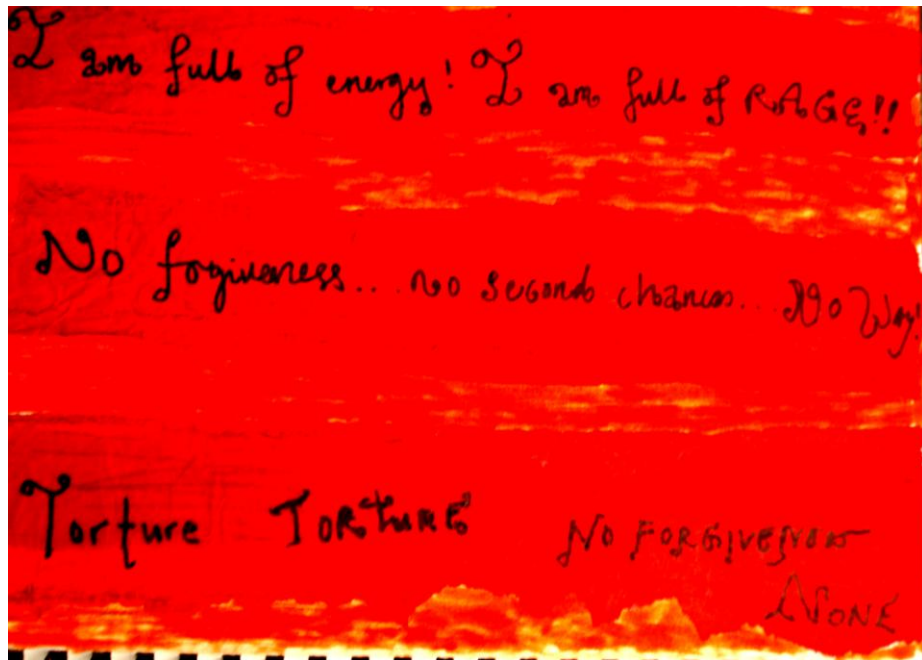


Figure 6





Figure 7





Figure 8



Figure 9

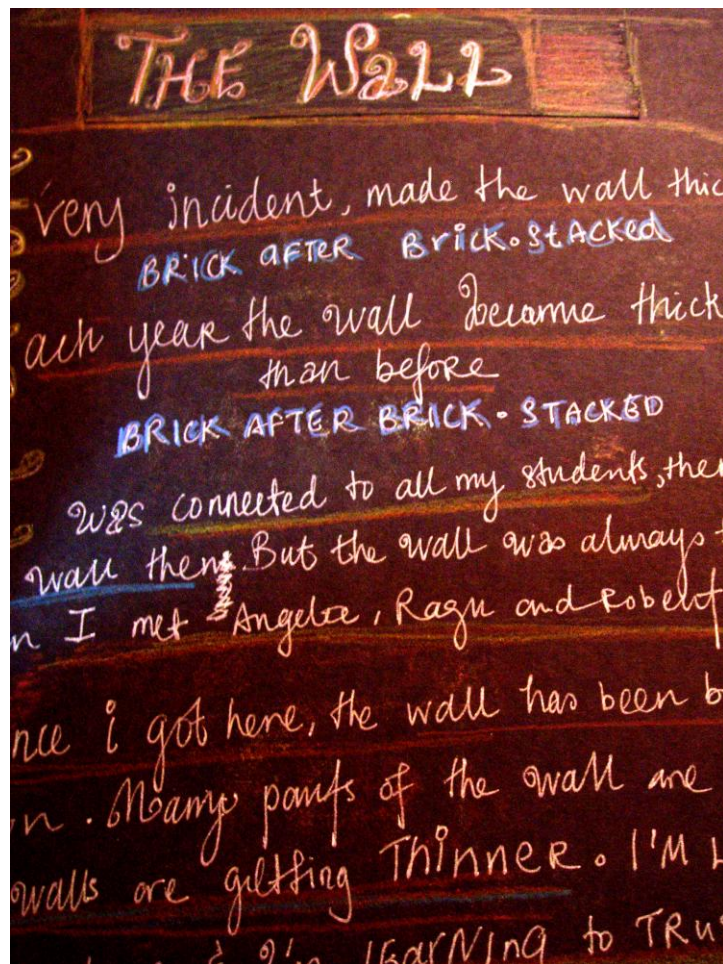


Figure 10



The next product is a little notebook (Figure 11) I made in the Art Therapy class for undergraduates. Professor Andrus, the instructor of the class, provided us with the history of bookmaking and showed us many samples that she had made. Her creativity spurred everyone in class to think of unique ways of making our own notebooks. Below is a photograph of the notebook I created using tissue and scrap papers. Following this are photographs (Figure 12-14) of the book making session in the undergraduate class at Buffalo State College.

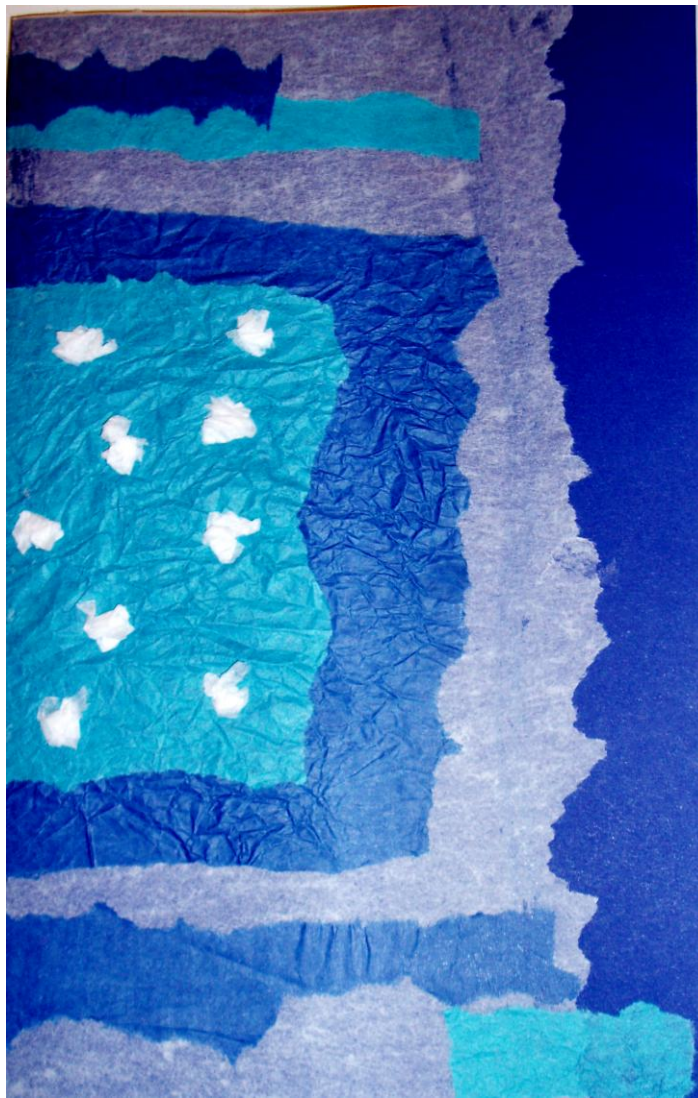


Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

My next product is a collage. I had a really great theme to work with. I was excited to make a collage as my good recollections of creating them as an adolescent. I thought making a collage was just collecting a bunch of materials and sticking them on a surface. As it turns out, this is the toughest project in my art making endeavors. The collage is still in its making. There are still plenty of experiments I would like to try out with it. Below is a photograph (Figure 15) of how I planned to create my collage by placing materials on the canvas first, followed by photographs (Figures 16-17 and Figure 35) of how it looks like right now in the intermittent stages. I must say that it now looks very different from what I had initially envisioned it to be. I sought the help of Professor Andrus when I felt a block coming on and she encouraged me by saying that I am on the right track and gave me a couple of suggestions as to how I can move forward with this mini project of mine. I hope to continue to work on the collage, keeping in mind her recommendations.



Figure 15



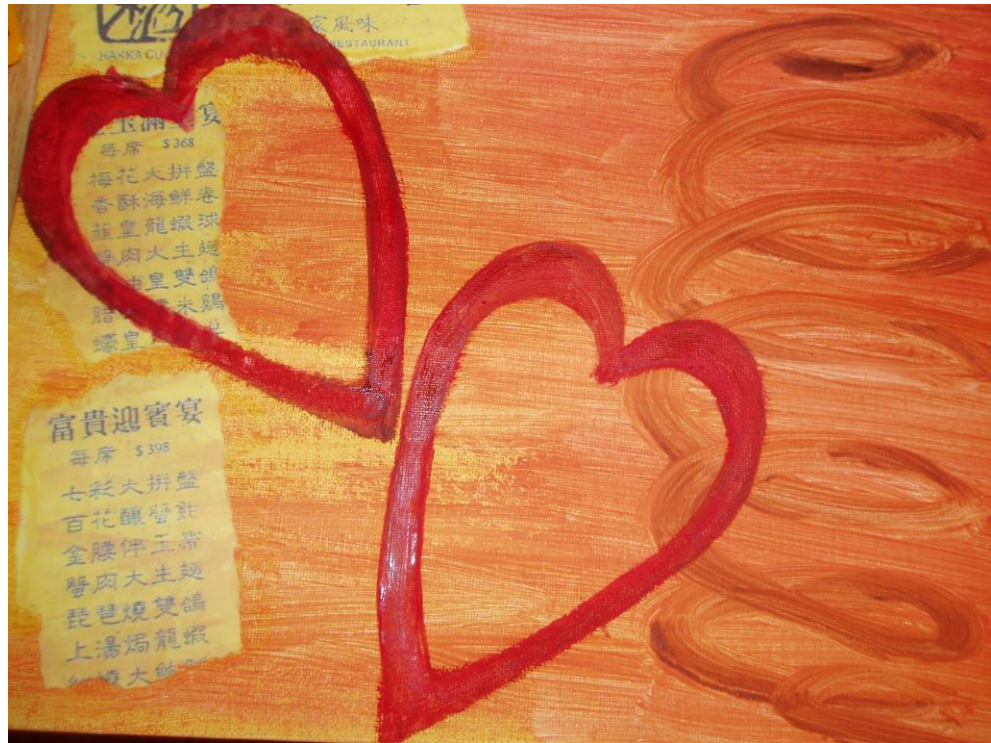


Figure 16



Figure 17

During one of my meetings with Dr. Murdock about my project, I informed her that I was not making very good progress with my writer's block. With concern in her eyes, she asked me how I create ways to make it easier for me to write. We discussed several possibilities of the types of resources I can have with me most of the time, so that it becomes convenient for me to write when I feel like it. That is when I recalled that I had recently bought a Crayola Color Explosion package from Office Depot. This is an exciting line of stationary created by Crayola. It contains a notebook made out of special black paper and it also comes with a 'magic' marker. When you write or draw on this special paper, it gives rise to an explosive and exciting range of colors (Figure 18), making it really fun to write. I loved using this tool and could not stop wanting to play with it all the time. Not long after, I was out of my special paper! So, I learned that making writing fun for me has helped me start to break down a tiny part of the writer's block I am experiencing. Here are a few sample shots of my 'explosive' journal! The rest of the pictures from the journal are attached in Appendix E, Figure 36-38.

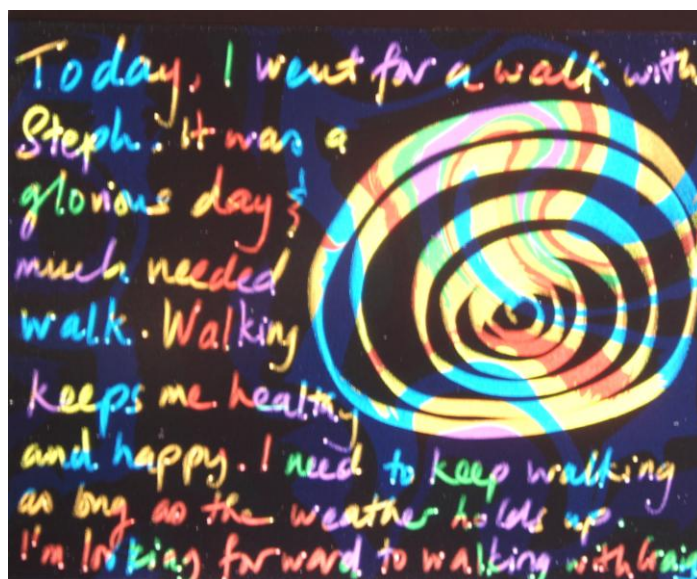


Figure 18



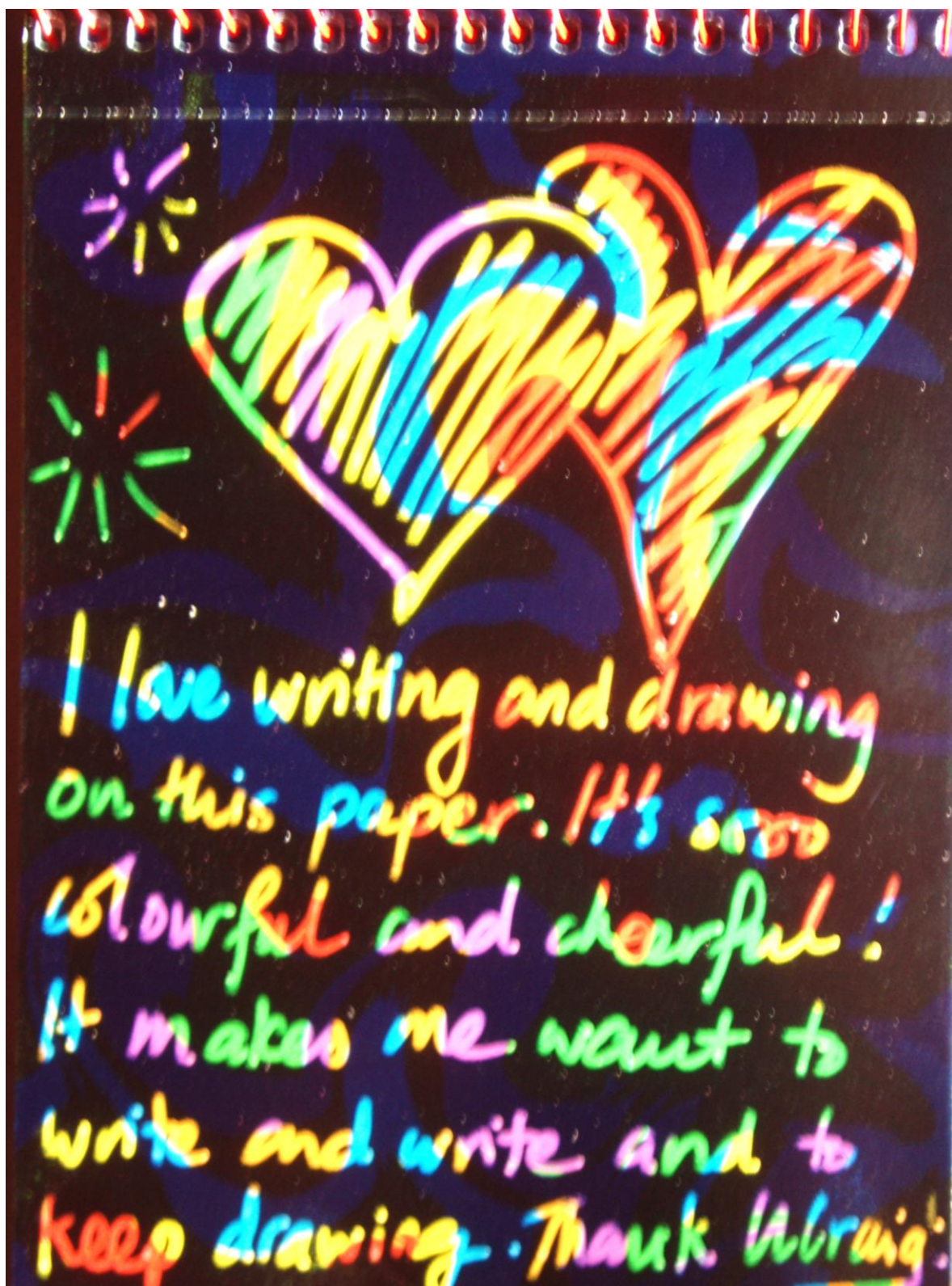


Figure 19



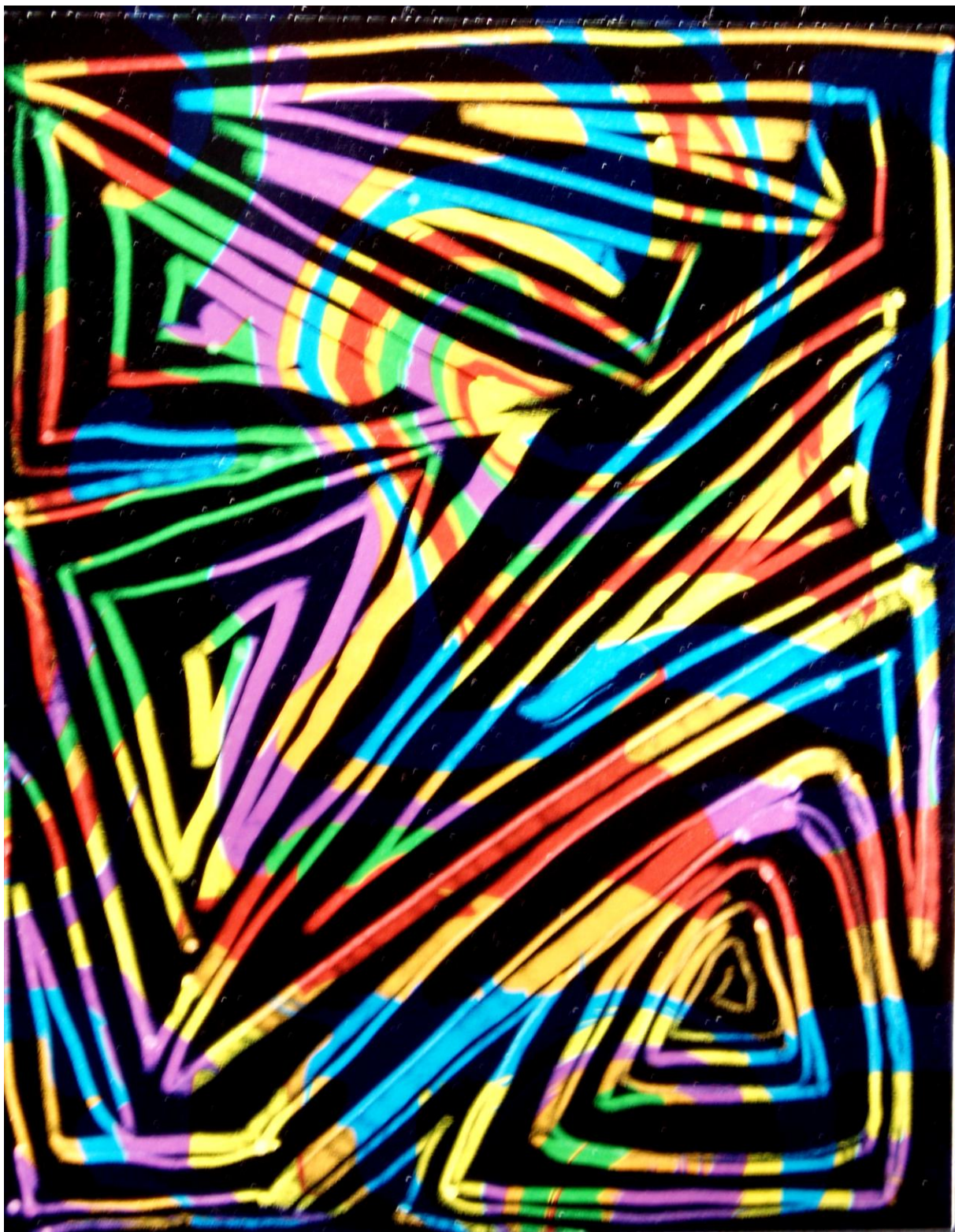


Figure 20



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Key Learnings

I achieved most of the personal goals I had set out for myself in this project. Through artistic self-expression, I learned how to reduce my stress level tremendously and manage my frustrations better. Kramer (as cited in Feder, 1981, p.74) thinks that “the act of creating an artistic product involves the channeling, the reduction, and the transformation of aggression and potentially dangerous energies”. I was amazed at how much self-awareness I have gained from doing this project. Although I had initially hoped to break down the barriers to writing expressively, I realize now that should be a long term goal. I need to work through a few of my emotional barriers before I can make vast improvements in my writing skills. In this section, I discuss how the people, the press, the products and the process have helped me to achieve success in this project.

### Person

I had a tremendous amount of assistance from the Art Education department at Buffalo State College, especially from two professors who taught Art Therapy to undergraduates: Professor Katherine Hartman and Professor Lucy Andrus. I first met with Professor Hartman. She was really helpful in terms of providing me with the basic information about art therapy. She also identified some pertinent literature that would be of help for this project. After that meeting, I met her again very soon to look at some of the books she had in her possession. I browsed through many of the books and was really impressed by the work created by the authors. I wrote down the reference information of the books that I was inspired by and went to the Buffalo Central library to borrow them and many other books on art therapy as well.

The other professor who has been such an inspiration to me is Professor Lucy Andrus. She took me under her wing and provided me with so much guidance for this project. Professor Andrus was teaching an undergraduate class that had 21 students in it and yet, she selflessly told me to attend and participate in her classes. She introduced me to her students and provided me with the same knowledge, space and materials that she provided the others. I will elaborate more about my learning from her classes in the next few sections. Beyond the classroom experience, she met me in her office and provided me with valuable feedback on my creative products and my progress with this project.

Dr. Modupe Akin-Deko, a counselor at Weigel Health Center, spent an hour weekly with me addressing personal issues that were of concern to me. During the therapy sessions, she would look at the visual log that I had produced and ask me very meaningful questions about some of my drawings. From there, she would make suggestions to help me address some of the thoughts that have been repressed in me for a long time. Sometimes, she would draw a mind map with me to help me understand the root of my problems and from there, we would work out a short and simple action plan to tackle the issue. She would often look at my products and reaffirm the fact that I am indeed a creative individual. Each week, she worked with me on my affirmations tirelessly. During the sessions, she would also evaluate my progress with the action plan and would reassure me that it is okay to fail every now and then when I am working hard on breaking down some of my blocks.

My best friend, Craig, was the force behind my motivation to create art. He set the 'stage' for my paintings by sharing with me all of his art materials in order to give me a good start. He also fed me with knowledge that I needed about art materials and media in order for me to create some pieces. More importantly, he provided me with the emotional support and

motivation that I needed. For such a long time now, I had lost touch with my creative self. Craig placed a brush in my hand and gave me the much needed push to start painting. I always knew that I could count on him for feedback about my products. Craig only gave me positive comments about my project. Whether I wanted to make a vase out of clay or paint a wooden jewelry box, he would always support my enthusiasm with his own. With his support, the creative process was a lot easier for me.

The other person who spurred me on is none other than me. I keep a log of the things that I have done for this project and when I did them. As I look back at the timeline now, I realize that I have been consistently working on my project. It took a lot of discipline, self-motivation, commitment and hard work. Most of all, I was really engaged in the creative process and was just glad to have this project as a legitimate excuse for me to immerse myself in art making. I refer to the creative process of art making as an excuse because many of us get caught up in the hustle and bustle of life and think that putting time aside for ourselves and our creative growth as a waste of time. I was certainly one of those people; however, I have gained so much from this experience that I am determined to make time for creative expression from now on.

#### Press

Rubin (1985, p.80) says that ‘the amount, location, and kind of space available are relevant when setting the stage for art therapy’. I certainly agree with her. I felt like I could not get started on my artwork because there was hardly any space for it in my apartment. I was also unsure if the materials I had were suitable and sufficient for me to get started. Craig, helped me break down some of my roadblocks by converting the dining table into a work space for me; He also took out all his basic supplies for artwork such as watercolor

paints, crayons, pastels, coloring pencils, sketchbooks, etc. This created the appropriate mindset for art making sessions at home.

When I joined the undergraduates in their Art Therapy class, it was a little intimidating at first. All the students were taking Art as their major in college and they were being trained to become Art Therapists. I had absolutely no background in Art. However, Professor Andrus always spent a lot of time in class providing background knowledge, books and slideshows that led smoothly into the art making process itself. I was also given a large variety of art materials to work with for each session. The students in the class were very kind to me; they helped me with any queries I had and they also had a lot of faith in me. They frequently complimented my work and encouraged me. They also gave me permission to take photographs of them and their products. All of these were supporting factors that provided me with a creative environment to work in.

### Process

I discovered that a couple of resource barriers stood between me and my creativity. Van Gundy (1988) refers to resource barriers as a type of organizational block to creative innovation. These resource barriers may be a variety of things but those that were relevant to my project were: shortage of time, art supplies and information or knowledge on art making.

More importantly, when I began working on this project, I was very certain that one of the reasons behind doing this project was to break down the writer's block that I often experience. However, through the counseling sessions with Dr. Akin-Deko and my evaluation sessions with Professor Andrus, I realized that I had more than a writer's block. I had several emotional blocks. Davis (2004, p.25) says that emotional blocks often



interfere with clear thinking, “sometimes by preoccupying and distracting our creative minds, other times by making us “freeze” in our thinking”. I have very often experienced that “freeze” and I now realize that it was caused by emotional blocks such as anger, fear and anxiety. Some were temporary states but others may be caused by chronic sources of insecurity and anxiety, fear of failure, fear of rejection, etc.

Davis (2004) suggests that if emotional blocks interfere with thinking, then dealing with it by taking a creative problem solving approach may be helpful. That was the approach that I took for this project. I used creative problem solving to work on some of my blocks.

A major part of my creative processes was based upon the three basic building blocks of the Creative Problem Solving Model (Figure 5) by Miller, Vehar and Firestien (2001). The first component of this model is Exploring the Challenge. During this phase, I tried to understand the challenge at hand as much as I could by taking a close look at the personal goals I set for this project.

I had initially decided on a project which involved facilitation sessions for a strategic planning unit on campus. While working with the staff from Residence Life, Student Life, the Orientation Office and Dining Services, I gathered plenty of data needed to give me a good start for that project. However, taking a closer look at the components of the Explore the Challenge phase, I realized that I did not have ownership over that challenge. More importantly, I did not feel intrinsically motivated or passionate about that project. I wanted a project that had a need for imagination. I worked on identifying my goals, wishes and challenges again. I decided on the rationale and the use of art as the primary modality in pursuit of increasing my self-awareness in a more than momentary manner.

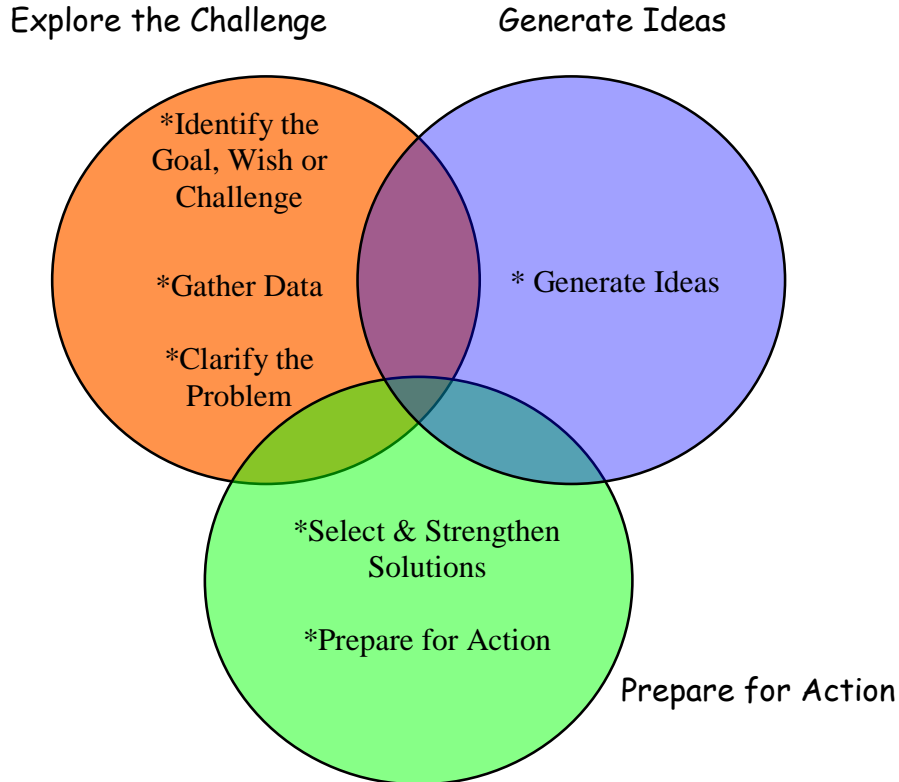


Figure 21: Creative Problem Solving Model (Miller, Vehar & Firestien, 2001)

Many of the books that were recommended by the professors from the Art Education department served as my source of inspiration. I learned about the invaluable works of many prominent art therapists such as Judith Rubin (1985), Cathy Malchiodi (2003), Florence Cane (1983), Shaun McNiff (1992); all of whom have written many books about the creative process involved in art making. This gave me a smooth lead into the Generating Ideas stage. One particular book that I took a lot of joy in browsing through many times is called, “Spilling Open: The Art of Becoming Yourself” (2000) by Sabrina Ward Harrison. It was such a creative and colorful journal that it gave me a brainwave of starting a visual log of my own. I absolutely enjoy creating images that describe my personal feelings in the log. Some books gave me ideas about taking photographs to

express myself creatively. Another book that served as a huge motivation was Julia Cameron's (2002) "The Artist's Way". That powerfully provocative and inspiring book was in fact the deciding factor that led me to select this project. Cameron revitalized my potential to create! Excursions to shops and attending the undergraduate classes gave me more ideas about the variety of media that I can use in creating my products.

The final stage in the Creative Problem Solving Model is - Prepare for Action. I did very well during the first part of this phase. I evaluated and refined the ideas I had selected and decided to work on the most promising solutions. I also had a really detailed timeframe so that I could adhere to the schedule that I had set out for myself. I was consistent in carrying out my artwork regularly, attending the art classes and capturing photographs of my products. I would transfer all the photographs into my project write-up on a weekly basis. I also started on some parts of my project write up at an early stage. However, in early March, I fell extremely ill and that threw me off- course for a few weeks. It took me a long while to recuperate and recover physical and emotional strength. After about three weeks, I got back on course with my project.

Creating is soulful work for me. It enabled me to lose myself in the creative act and to really manifest my potential. It gave a sense of fulfillment! Maisel (2000) describes this by saying that 'if we want to create things that live, we need to access our feelings as well as our thoughts and be willing to pour our blood into our creative efforts' (p.138). This is what the visual log has helped to accomplish. In my visual log, I talk about my past and present. I describe things that have been very personal to me and have kept buried for a long time. The visual log, along with the other products, enabled me to gain access to the thoughts and feelings that I had suppressed since I was a child.

The first time I picked up a crayon to start drawing in my visual log, negative thoughts were racing across my mind. “What will Craig think of my work? What will Professor Andrus say? I’m sure my work will not be up to their expectations!” I had so many concerns and anxieties even before I began drawing. Rubin (1985) says that these concerns of mine are prevalent in most adults who are afraid of losing control or performing badly. She attributes the anxieties to inhibitions present in grown-ups. However, I realized that it was not them who were the critics. I was my own worst critic. The advice they gave me was the same as the one that McNiff provides in his book: “When the harsh critic speaks up and you begin to paint and your insecurity and fear take hold, relax and observe. Look the intimidator in the eye and say, “Hello. It is time for us to talk. Let’s get to know each other” (1992, p.13).

Abraham Maslow (1968) and Carl Rogers (1969) strongly believe that creativity and self-actualization are related. They refer to self-actualization as maximizing one’s talents. A self-actualizing person may have characteristics such as being mentally happy, self-accepting and fully functioning. Maslow also mentioned that a person who is heading towards self-actualization seeks unity, integration, and synergy within oneself. As I progressed with this project, I recognized some of Maslow’s characteristics of self-actualization becoming a part of me. Some of these traits had always been a part of me, while with others I am acquiring during my learning journey in Buffalo. I still have a very long way to go before I become a self-actualized individual but it is indeed delightful to acquire some of the traits now. I have the capacity to always appreciate simple and common-place experiences; I certainly have the zest in living and an ability to handle stress; I have formed very strong friendship ties during my day to day encounters with



others while at work and at play, I really enjoy the process of creating products and not just the end products. I also tend to do most things creatively, and it is not always attributed to my talents, I am not self-centered and I certainly have a philosophy of life and a mission in life. I truly hope to continue working on many aspects of this including self-actualization project even after submission.

I think that Amabile's (1983) three-part model of creativity (Figure 22), reflects my creative productivity in this project.

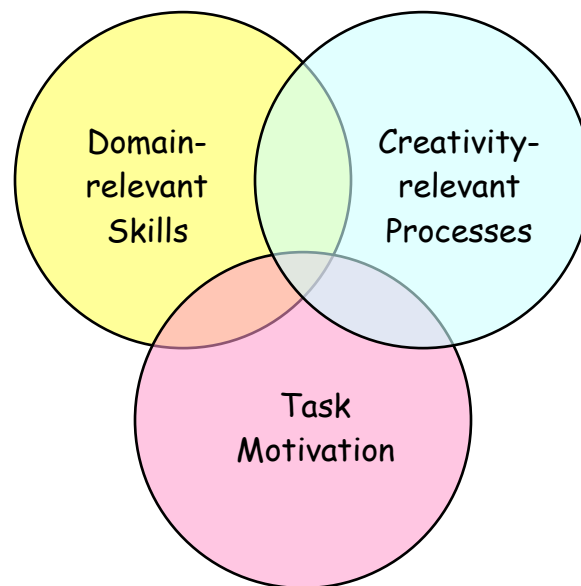


Figure 22: Amabile's (1983) three-part model of creative productivity

Her first component is domain-relevant skills, which give rise to proficient performance within a domain. I have acquired a few of these skills as I made progress in this project and thus have been able to create novel products. I choose to disagree that high level domain-relevant skills are a necessity for creative production as I have gotten good results from

playing with materials. My personal goals for this project were to be able to express myself better, to reduce stress, to increase self-awareness, etc. through my drawings and paintings. It was stressed again and again in many art therapy books that domain-relevant skills are not required in order to achieve goals such as mine. It was, however, exhilarating as I gained knowledge of this particular domain of art while experimenting with different media and was able to create products that were of a higher complexity than what started out as a scribble (Appendix C, Figure31).

Amabile's second component is creativity-relevant skills which include appropriate cognitive styles, favorable working styles, and divergent thinking styles. Having acquired many creative problem solving skills through this course, I was able to break the old perceptual and cognitive mindset that I used to have. I am now able to look at, perceive and analyze a situation in a different way than I used to. Though 'deferring judgment' is the underlying principle in the divergent phase of problem solving, I struggled between judging highly versus creating freely. However, as I acquired more of the domain-relevant skills, I learned to suspend judgment as I gave my trial-and-error art-making techniques a chance. I also think that I was successful with adopting a work style that was conducive to creativity. I was able to concentrate efforts for long periods of time as I 'lost' myself in the art making process. I was also able to show resilience and persistence in the face of adversity by always displaying a high energy level, willingness to work hard and attaining a high level of productivity.

Amabile's third component of creative productivity is 'task motivation'. I absolutely agree with her that without intrinsic motivation it is very difficult to reach the highest level of creativity. As I have mentioned earlier, I was going to do a project about strategic

planning. However, I felt absolutely no energy or motivation to work on that project.

However, as I started to read *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron (2002), I thought about how I have become disconnected with the creative side that has been lying dormant within me for so many years. I felt the passion, the drive and the motivation to do a project which will help me to express myself better.

### Products

My artwork is an expression of myself, and an extension of myself. I realized that I could stand back and admire the products that I had created. As Wadeson (1987, p.55) describes it, the artwork 'has been created by one's own master, out of one's own uniqueness. There is a sense of personal power here – I did that!' I strived to produce creative products as they promote cognition, comprehension and integration as well, especially since this project is about the translation of my personal experience into art expression. I have been reassured many times that it is the self-expression and not the artistic excellence that is important. However, as an adult with a compelling incentive to create, it was difficult to refrain from thinking about the artistic accomplishment and to pull my attention away from envisioning the finished product. All the products from this project can be found under the sections: Outcomes and Appendixes.

## Conclusion

I have gained self-awareness through this project. I am able to express myself about painful issues a little more easily, and I realize how much I miss working with my hands to create crafts, draw and paint. I want to continue to create, to play with plenty of colors and to fill the sense of fulfillment I get each time my creative juices are flowing. For some time now, I have realized that there are certain parts of my authentic self that I have lost from my childhood to what I am now. For example, I love the Indian classical dance known as Bharatanatyam. I taught myself the Indian classical dance and as my first next project, I am going to use photographs of the dance postures in Appendix G for art making.

The creative process involved in my art making experience in this project has helped me to reconnect with some lost parts of my personality. Taking Maisel's (2000) advice, what I now see myself doing is identifying the parts of my personality that have submerged overtime. Through counseling and art making, I hope to dig deep within myself and find out why some parts of my personality have submerged. I am glad that certain undesirable traits in me have disappeared, but I would like to work on bringing my more pleasant attributes to surface again. I realized that I needed to nurture and care for that creative side of me more than anything else. I realized that I need to become myself again. The following quote sums up my thoughts:

‘When you finally become yourself, you reap many benefits. You have more of you to use for future creative efforts and for all of life's challenges – more energy, more passion, more flexibility, more discipline, more imagination. You become multifaceted, not one-dimensional, and whole, not fractured. When you manage this reintegration, you become the very embodiment of an everyday creative person’ (Maisel, 2000, p.155).



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## Appendix A: Concept Paper

# Title of Concept Paper: Exploring the Affective Nature of Creativity

Name: Michelle Robert

Date submitted: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2006

Project Type:

Developing a Skill to Improve the Quality of Life

## **What is This Project About?**

This project is about exploring and expanding my creative self. For a long time now, I have had a huge writer's block. I believe that it is a creative manifestation of my family situation, about which I have kept my feelings unexpressed for most of my life. Another reason for my block could be that I was teaching Science in a high school for the last six years, and have had little opportunity to be engaged in expressive writing. As a result, I am unable to let my thoughts flow and express my personal feelings on paper. I have no formal training in art although I have always loved making it. In this project, I am hoping to reflect on my thoughts and feelings, to express them through creating artwork, and then to write about them.

During the summer of 2005, I was a volunteer at the Kids Fest tent at the Elmwood Festival of the Arts. I worked with two women from a private organization which provides art therapy to students; I became intrigued when I learned about its benefits. With the guidance of professors from Buffalo State's Art Education Department, I will apply certain aspects of art therapy to this project; this will hopefully have an impact on my creative and artistic path.

## **Rationale for Choice:**

I want to undertake this project to pursue a journey that leads to self-discovery, personal growth and life transformation. I would like to use the creative process of art making to enhance my physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Through this project I hope to discover how the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, achieve insight and break down barriers to writing expressively.

## **What will be the Tangible Product(s) or Outcomes?**

I would like to create at least four pieces of artwork, which may include photographs, drawings, paintings, collages, masks, etc. I would also like to keep a visual log of writing and artwork. I would also like to produce a brochure which provides a brief overview of art therapy and its effects. I will also include a bibliography of art therapy books.

## **What Criteria Will You Use to Measure the Effectiveness of Your Achievement?**

The first criterion that I will use to measure the effectiveness of my achievement is by completing the four pieces of artwork. I will refrain from analyzing the quality of the artwork; instead, I will focus on the processes that I engage in by maintaining a log of my thoughts, feelings and growth during the creation of the artwork and analyze my progress regularly.

## **Who will be Involved or Influenced; What Will Your Role Be?**

Professor Katherine Hartman from the Art Education Department has agreed to guide me through this project and also constantly provide me with feedback about my progress.

I will also be working with Dr. Modupe Akin-Deko from the Weigel Health Center. She will also provide me with informal feedback and guide me in assessing my mental and emotional well-being.

The third person who will be playing a key role will be Craig Puffer, who has completed his Master of Fine Art in Painting. He is also a graduate student of the Creative Studies Department. He will assist me in selecting the appropriate materials for the products that I will create.

Dr. Mary Murdock will be my faculty advisor for this project. Patrick Carr and Christine Faust, CRS 690 students, will be my sounding board partners, and will provide me with advice that would keep me sane while I embark on this journey.

I had the opportunity to work with a director of an art therapy organization during the Elmwood Festival of the Arts. I hope to seek ideas from her for the types of product that I could create for the project. It would be great if she could share with me the evaluation methods she applies in assessing her customers' progress.



### **When Will This Project Take Place?**

This project will take place over the next three months from February to April 2006. If the project produces great effects on my mental and emotional health, I will move on to stretch my creative ability by continuing this form of instruction.

### **Where Will This Project Occur?**

The entire project will take place in the city of Buffalo, New York, the United States of America. Discussion with faculty members from Weigel Health Center and the Art Education Department would take place in Buffalo State College, New York. Craig Puffer would be coaching me the basics of artwork at my house on Delaware Avenue.

### **Why Is It Important to Do This?**

I feel that I need to do a project of this nature as I need to get in touch with my spiritual self. I am at a point in my life where I need to re-evaluate my goals and re-examine the quality of my life. I need to de-stress and let my ideas and thoughts flow so as to express myself better.

For the last ten years, I have been teaching students aged 7 to 17. I met many students who were troubled emotionally. Some were from broken families and undergoing depression and others were in danger of failing their subjects or dropping out of school. When I learn to maximize my creative ability through this project, I will be in a better position to encourage students to create art which will safely communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Most art therapists believe that as people tell their stories through art, hidden, suppressed issues surface and a person's understanding of himself or herself is altered. Hopefully I will be able to assist students to surface any traumatic experience they were to face with their family or a natural disaster such as the Tsunami or the Hurricane Katrina.

### **Personal Learning Goals:**

- To express strong and sometimes sensitive or destructive feelings in a safe way.
- To manage stress and anxiety more effectively.
- To lessen my difficulties with written and verbal communication about deep and personal thoughts.
- To instill confidence and promote life enhancing changes in me through counseling and art therapy.

## How Do You Plan to Achieve Your Goals and Outcomes?

I plan to be very conscientious about working according to the projected timeline. I hope to get in touch with people who are involved in the field of art therapy and seek their advice. I also plan to read a wide variety of literature to help me broaden my knowledge of art therapy. Most importantly, I have to be willing to re-evaluate my goals as I proceed through this project.

### Evaluation:

Professor Katherine Hartman and Professor Lucy Andrus will provide me with feedback about my progress. I will seek formal feedback from them by comparing my artwork and sense of personal impact at the beginning of the project to those from the end of the project. I will also get informal feedback from Craig Puffer, my mentor, throughout the project to obtain new ideas for each new product that I will create. I will maintain a portfolio of images that are dated in order to receive feedback. I will use a creative problem solving tool or technique to evaluate my key learnings of the project.

### Prepare Project Timeline:

Month	Week Number	Activity	Number of hours required
January	4	Draft of concept paper	6
January	4	Presentation of concept paper drafts to classmates and discussion	2
January	4	Contact key personnel involved in project and meet to discuss approach towards project	1
February	1	Final version of concept paper	2
February	1	Literature search, photocopy journal e.t.c.	1
February	1	Literature Review	2
February	1	Artwork session 1	3
February	2	Formal meetings with faculty from Art Education to discuss progress and get feedback	1
February	2	Literature search, photocopy journal e.t.c.	1
February	2	Literature Review	2
February	2	Artwork session 2	3
February	3	Literature search, photocopy journal e.t.c.	1
February	3	Literature Review	2
February	3	Artwork session 3	3
February	4	Formal meetings with faculty from Art Education to discuss progress and get feedback	1
February	4	Literature search, photocopy journal e.t.c.	1
February	4	Literature Review	2

February	4	Artwork session 4	3
March	1	Literature search, photocopy journal e.t.c.	1
March	1	Literature Review	2
March	2	Artwork session 5	3
March	2	Formal meetings with faculty from Art Education to discuss progress and get feedback	1
March	2	Literature search, photocopy journal e.t.c.	1
March	2	Literature Review	2
March	3	Literature search, photocopy journal e.t.c.	1
March	3	Artwork session 6	3
March	3	Literature Review	2
March	3	Formal meetings with faculty from Art Education to discuss progress and get feedback	1
March	3	Collate feedback	5
March	3	Draft of project write-up	25
April	1	Literature Review	2
April	1	Artwork session 7	3
April	2	Literature Review	2
April	2	Artwork session 8	
April	3	Final version of project write-up	5
April	4	Prepare presentation for class	5
April	4	Prepare original sets of all signatory pages	2
April	4	Copy, bind, submit 4 final softbound projects to instructor	1
April	4	Submit Microsoft Word CD version of complete project	0.5
April	4	Submit title of project to Department Secretary	0.25
		Estimated Timeline	106

### Identify Pertinent Literature or Resources:

#### Books:

Cameron, J. (2003). *Walking in this world: the practical art of creativity*. New York: Penguin

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Journals:

*Art Psychotherapy*

*Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*

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*Updated: Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006, 10:30 pm*

Appendix B: Photographs of Delaware Park





Figure 22





Figure 23





Figure 24



Figure 25





Figure 26





Figure 27





Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30\

## Appendix C: Sample Pages of a Visual Log



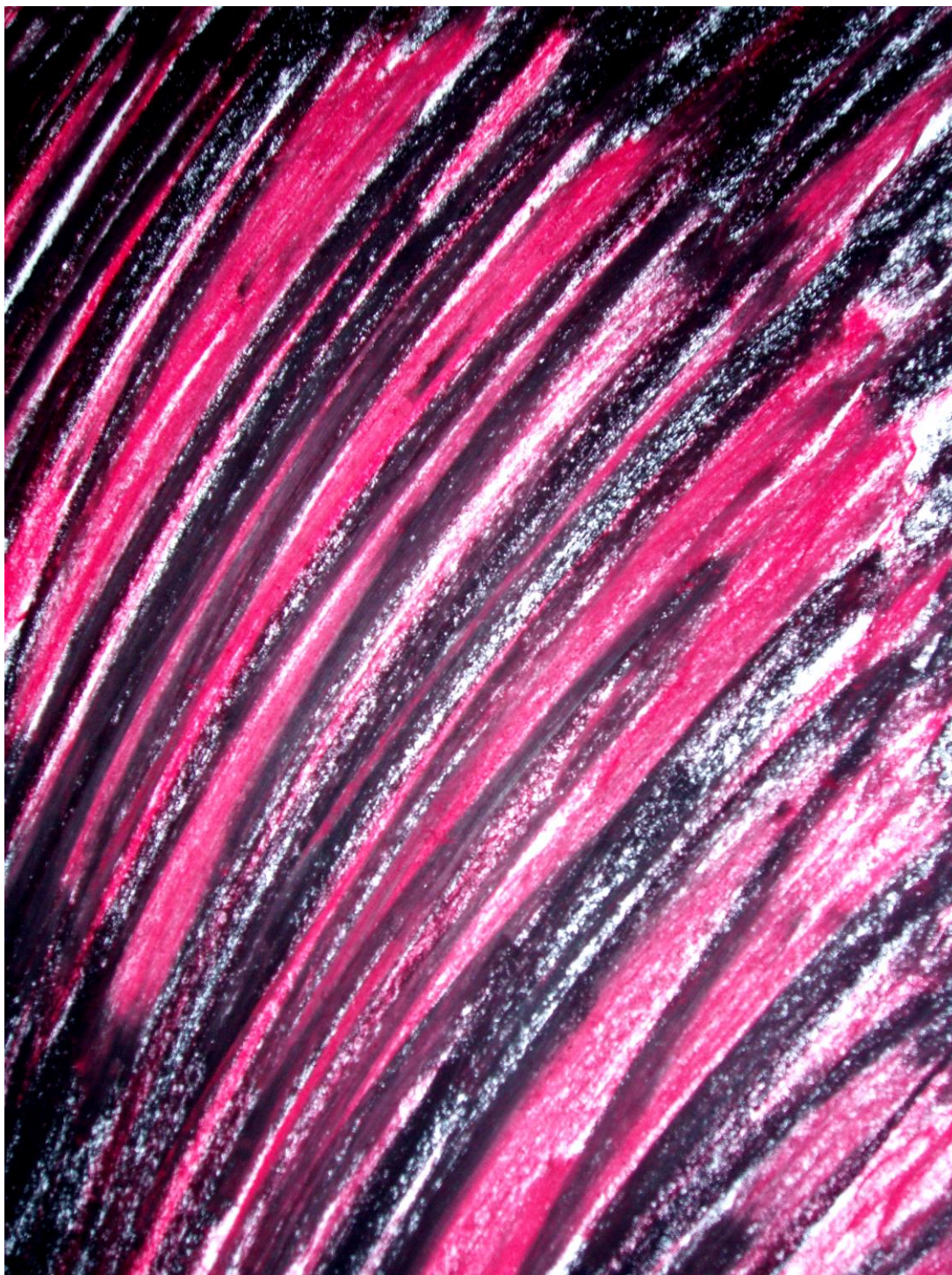


Figure 31





Figure 32





Figure 33



Figure 34

## Appendix D: Collage



Figure 35

## Appendix E: Crayola 'Explosive' Notebook



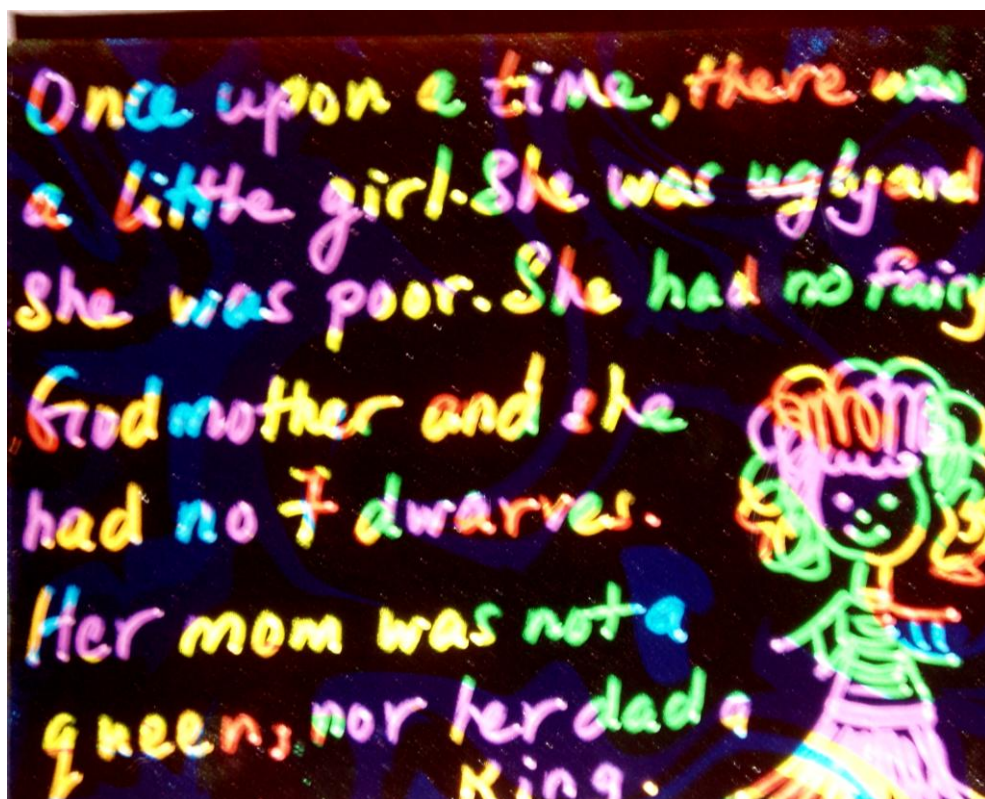


Figure 36

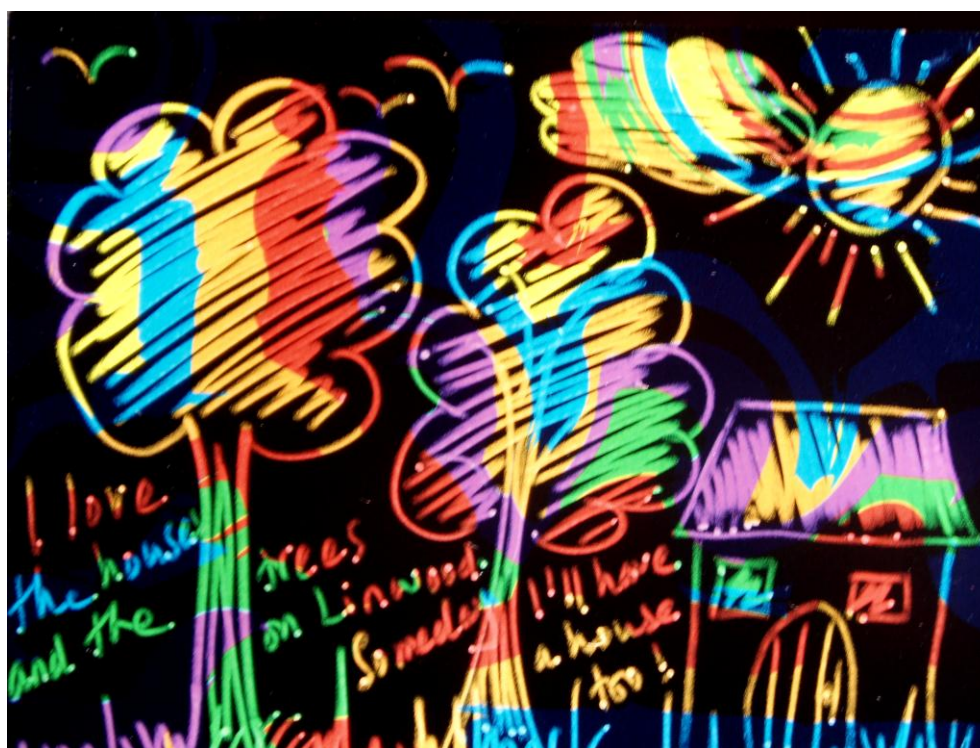


Figure 37





Figure 38



## Appendix F: Art Therapy Undergraduate Classes



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



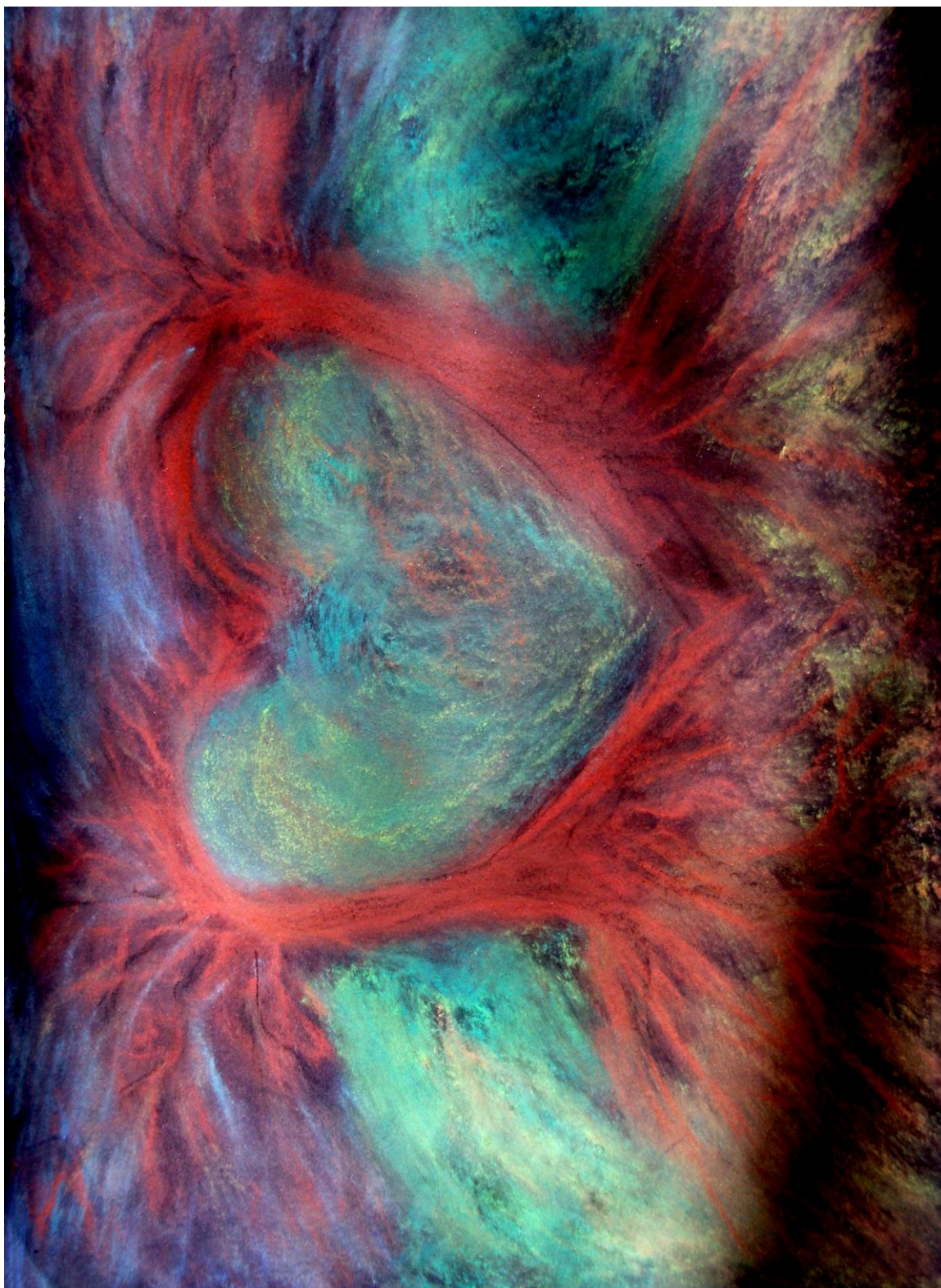


Figure 42



## Appendix G: Indian Classical Dance Postures



Figure 43



Figure 44



Figure 45

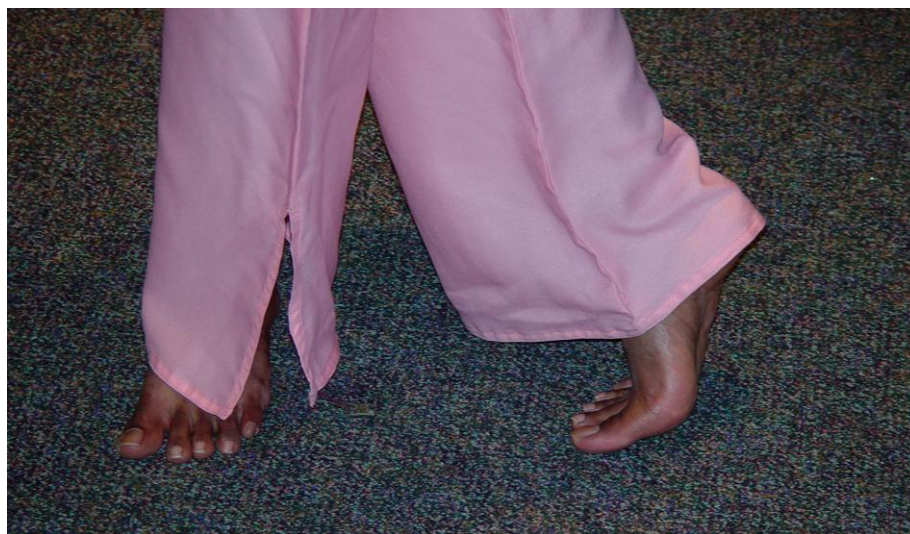


Figure 46





Figure 47