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ARTS PRACTICE AND PROCESS: A BASIS FOR A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO ART
EDUCATION FOCUSED ON ISSUES OF SOCIAL RELEVANCE.

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine and analyse a creative arts practice and to consider its potential application as a pedagogical approach to teaching visual art in order to engage students with responsibilities as global citizens. This falls in line with the Sustainable Development Goals focused on providing a blueprint for shared prosperity in a sustainable world “... so people can live productive, vibrant and peaceful lives on a healthy planet” (United Nations 2019). Teaching visual art in primary schools is surrounded by diverse practices and is often undertaken by teachers feeling a lack of preparedness in delivering high-quality art education (Cutcher & Boyd 2018). The most effective arts education is derived from knowledge about educational practices based in art, culture and communities from artists and teacher practitioners (Sullivan & Gu 2017). While all states and territories fall under a national curriculum in Australia, each State has determined its own direction on how the curriculum is enacted throughout schools and across the state or territory. The rationale of the curriculum, its flexible direction regarding implementation, the broad achievement standards, pathways to teaching, learning and assessing are all fairly open-ended and so allow for flexibility, noted in the curriculum intent. However, the repertoire of diverse practice used by teachers in classrooms, would benefit from pedagogical approaches stemming from artistic practice. This in turn would, potentially clarify a direction from which to approach the teaching of Art for those feeling inexperienced or a lack of ability in this subject area, or as a supplement for those feeling confident but not connecting practice to the broader art context and society. The research aims to analyse and document a visual art practice from beginning to end for potential application to visual arts pedagogy in future research.

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Key Terms

Achievement Standard

The P–10 Australian Curriculum achievement standards describe what students typically demonstrate at the end of each teaching and learning year. The achievement standards for each learning area are organised as Understanding and Skills and describe a broad sequence of expected learning across P-10. They emphasise the depth of conceptual understanding, the sophistication of skills and the ability to apply essential knowledge. The Year level achievement standard should be read in conjunction with the content descriptions (*Standards elaborations 2018*).

Curriculum

Since 2010, Australia has been moving toward a national framework for schooling aimed at raising education standards and achieving nationally consistent curriculum, assessment and reporting. The Australian Curriculum includes the 8 learning areas outlined in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (*Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians 2008*). The curriculum requirements include: rationale, aims, Australian curriculum content, and achievement standards (*Implementing the Australian Curriculum in Queensland 2018*).

Global Citizen

There is no universal definition of the ‘global citizen’. Global citizens have obligations, such as ‘demonstrating an awareness of human rights issues, concern for the environment and sustainability, and being active and informed about global issues’. (Year 7 & 8 HASS Curriculum). These attributes engage often with the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a universal call to action aimed at improving the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere contained in the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019.

Pedagogical Framework

Each Queensland school is required to have a pedagogical framework that is collaboratively developed with the school community to ensure high quality, evidence-based teaching practices focused on student success. The evidence-based teaching practices are selected from quality research by each school. Pedagogical frameworks however, are largely implemented across Maths, Science, English and HASS leaving other subject areas great flexibility when being taught. It is desirable that each framework will function within the Core Systemic Principles (CSP) of a school’s pedagogical framework. The CSP includes: student

centred planning; high expectations; alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; evidence-based decision making; targeted and scaffolded instruction; and, safe, supportive, connected and inclusive learning environments (*Pedagogical Framework* n.d.).

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is a method and practice of teaching and refers to the way teachers deliver content of the curriculum to a class. It includes the style of teaching, theory of teaching and the process of feedback and assessment.

Rationale

A curriculum rationale is a shared vision and way of working for a curriculum area, which inspires learning and provides a future vision.

Unit of Work

A unit of work for the purpose of this research is a unit plan covering a term and focused on The Arts – Visual Art. The unit includes the achievement standard, curriculum descriptors, cross-curricular priorities, a sequence of lessons and experiences and assessment demands.

The Arts and arts

Reference is made throughout to both The Arts and arts. When 'The Arts' is used, this refers specifically to the subject area of The Arts, which is named as such in the Australian Curriculum. When referring more generally to the field of the arts, it is not capitalised.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

Art as a means of expressing and communicating, ideas must be reflected in the teaching of art, with some consideration, contemplation and enactment of those ideas. As an art teacher and artist having viewed the teaching of art in primary schools for over 20 years, it is clear that art teaching does not often reflect the way in which artists practice. It also does not often relate to what is happening in the real art world. Biesta (2019) says there is ‘...a disappearance of art from education ... [and] the disappearance of education from contemporary art education’ (p. 10). Additionally, ‘... there is a strong tendency to see education in terms of the production of a small set of measurable ‘learning outcomes’ – a rather bizarre phrase, hence the quotation marks – in the service of economic competitiveness in the global marketplace’ (Biesta 2019 p10). However, guiding the education of students in schools, the rationale for *The Arts: Visual Arts in the Australian Curriculum*, advocates students creating representations which “...communicate, challenge and express their own ideas and the ideas of others” (*Rationale* 2018). This broadens the narrow ‘learning outcomes’, or achievement standard approach predominantly undertaken in primary school classrooms in Australia. The Arts curriculum rationale, seeks to develop the capacity for students to ‘engage, inspire and enrich’ their lives by thinking creatively, imaginatively, innovatively and intellectually when developing their understanding of world culture, and their responsibilities as global citizens becomes evident (*Rationale* 2018). How the curriculum transitions to classroom practice and learning experiences, from The Arts rationale and achievement standards, is open to individual school interpretation, as the curriculum has a strong focus on flexibility. The greatest impact in art education is derived from knowledge about educational practices based in art, culture and communities from artists and teacher practitioners (Sullivan & Gu 2017) and yet this is rarely found in practice. Teaching visual art in primary schools is a diverse practice, undertaken by teachers often feeling a lack of preparedness in delivering high-quality art education (Cutcher & Boyd 2018). Curriculum flexibility aims to provide schools with opportunities to develop their own programs according to local context and resource availability, with the understanding that process and practice, as well as reflecting and rethinking are integral components (*visual art final for esa* 2013). This provides scope for pedagogical opportunities, which respond to the

existential ideals inherent in the responsibilities as global citizens. While the scope creates possibilities, this can only occur when an understanding of the subject context exists. Often this understanding is not evident.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to examine and analyse a creative arts practice for its application to a pedagogical approach to guide visual art in educational settings, which engages students with the broader arts context and responsibilities as global citizens.

1.3 Research Question

To what extent and purpose can experimentation and reflection of an arts practice be analysed and considered, towards development of pedagogy for teaching visual art in primary schools?

1.4 Overview of the Study

This exegesis is organised into four chapters, which document and summarise an artistic practice and elucidate a common process applied to a pedagogy for The Arts: visual arts.

Chapter 1 introduces the research context. It aims to clarify the focus of the study, which is limited to the analysis of a single artist's practice within a Queensland context.

Chapter 2 considers the current position of art education and research into visual arts practice. It notes the lack of confidence and professional expertise of art teachers along with the variation in approaches to teaching visual art, as a subject. This chapter identifies the need for research into artistic practice through a literature review, and establishes a foundation for examining artistic practice, to apply to an educational setting and practice.

Chapter 3 explores the approach to researching in the visual arts and the use of a hybrid research approach to examine and document practice over an extended time. This considers the myriad of aspects evident when undertaking and documenting a creative process, which takes a variety of forms. Research in creative arts is not simple or clear-cut, and understandably mixed approaches which may combine both practice-based and practice-led processes in varying combinations and forms, thus ensuring nuances of the practice are captured. These nuances could be lost through other means. This chapter elaborates on practice undertaken over five years and across two iterations of practice, including two

exhibitions, designed to enact the methodology undertaken in a practical manner. In these iterations art teaching and arts practice are entwined and documented in two ways, firstly chronologically and secondly as iterations. This was necessary because each approach demonstrated experimentation and reflection identifying thinking and processes that the other did not. In addition to these documented forms, experimental works, journal entries, articles read, social media posts, academic writing, and workshops have also recorded the practice.

Chapter 4 discusses the research and elucidates a core process from the artistic iterations. It also summarises the research findings and proposes further research through recommending the application of the identified process (SIP) to a pedagogical trial teaching visual art in a primary school setting.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

2.1 Education in The Arts

Education in The Arts: visual art in Australia includes a diverse range of practices, which allow for substantial flexibility in implementation. This can be beneficial when teachers feel confident when teaching visual art. But, with the lack of preparedness many teachers feel in delivering high-quality art education impacting on beliefs and approaches (Chapman, Wright & Pascoe 2019; Cutcher & Boyd 2018), delivery in classrooms often lacks authentic and valuable visual art experiences.

Art Education Globally

While this lack in delivery could be attributed to forces of accountability and compliance, as is the case in the United States (Hanawalt 2018), it could also be the heavy curriculum load of teaching eight different learning areas (Chapman, Wright & Pascoe 2019) which is Australia's experience. The prevalence of outdated approaches to teaching and learning, despite modernisation of visual arts education theory, are said to be a contributing factor in Croatian schools (University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education, Rijeka, Croatia & Tomljenović 2018), while curriculum understanding and interpretation, and the need for greater detail and further clarification is the case in the Russian Federation (Alekseeva 2018). These two aspects are possible contributors to the issues faced in Australian primary school art classrooms too.

Gert Biesta, the author of *Letting Art Teach*, contemplates curriculum, advocating for a move away from the focus on knowledge, skills, and identity in art teaching, towards an approach focused on human existence. Danny Gregory, an artist and author of a number of books on creativity, likewise endorses an alternative focus for curriculum requiring thinking where, "... Instead of teaching kids to paint bowls of fruit with tempera, we'd show them how to communicate a concept through a sketch, how to explore the world in a sketchbook, how to generate ideas, how to solve real problems." (Gregory 2017, p. 22). These approaches fall in line with Gude's work on the writing team of the new visual arts standards in the United States, where she states, "One of the things that I think is very important is that the visual arts standards begin with the sentence 'Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.'" (Berglin 2017). Likewise, Singapore contemplated this two decades ago with the development of the 'Thinking School, Learning Nation' initiative which

reduced subject content, and infused critical and creative thinking skills into the school curriculum (Amponsah, Kwesi & Ernest 2019). In Australia, critical and creative thinking are embedded attributes in the curriculum. They are evident in the rationale for The Arts, written as *responsibilities of global citizens*. However, enactment in classrooms is elusive, and understanding possibly unclear for those lacking familiarity in the broader arts field.

2.1.1 Responsibilities as Global Citizens

Within a context of art education grasping the concept of responsibilities of global citizens particularly in the current climate of climate activism is a critical aspect of art teaching. While 'global citizen' has its complications as a term (Osiaadacz 2018), in the case of education and in Australia's context, it relates to a call for global advocacy. Hartung (2017) states, 'Global citizenship encompasses a wide range of dimensions, from the political, moral and economic, through to the social, critical, environmental and spiritual.' (p18). What is evident is that the expectation that students will be responsible global citizens has grown exponentially (Hartung 2017). Responsibilities of global citizens rely on the development of particular skills, knowledge, ways of thinking and values, which will prove beneficial in their present and future lives. The focus of those values revolves around, "...respect for human rights, social justice, diversity, gender equality and environmental sustainability ... that promote a better world and future for all." (Hartung, 2017, p18). These are vital skills and ways of thinking.

Global Citizens in Schooling

Enactment of skills of global citizenship in schools, varies from classroom to classroom – at times as: discussions within class; to speakers with experience; to visits within and beyond the local area focusing on topics and issues affecting the local and broader population; to excursions beyond the school gates and local community with participation in activities of cultural relevance and significance. Essentially, the responsibilities of global citizens promote the need for individuals to be responsible for finding solutions to broader problems. Lilley, Barker & Harris (2017) refer to metacognitive capabilities as opening the mind to reflexive, relational and critical thinking, which can foster a moral and ethical response to ambiguity and adapt to changing and complex situations. These are required to engage in transformative learning to become a global citizen.

Global Citizens and Art Education

The idea of the global citizen and the responsibilities which go with this, are tied to The Arts curriculum in the Rationale. What needs to be further considered is the type of voice each student chooses to use while working with these responsibilities as a global citizen within the Arts curriculum. There is no one, ideal, single style of voice and no, one form of agency. Like the artworks and approaches taken in visual arts, students will create and direct voice that meets their needs and means of advocating. This is consistent with artists and the voices they use. For some art is a method of thinking, for some a means of shouting as well as the myriad of approaches in between – no single approach is more right or successful than another, it is an individual means of expression and communication.

2.1.2 Australian and Queensland Curriculum Context

While all States and Territories fall under a national curriculum in Australia, each State has placed its own direction on how curriculum is enacted throughout their schools and across their state or territory. The rationale of the curriculum, its flexible direction regarding implementation, the broad achievement standards, pathways to teaching, learning, and assessing are open-ended and so allow for the flexibility noted in the curriculum intent. How this is enacted across Australia, Queensland, each region and in each school varies dramatically.

The Queensland Context

Education Queensland introduced a *Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C)* resource to support Queensland state school teachers in the form of “... a comprehensive set of whole-school and classroom planning materials for single level and multi-level classes, students with disability and for students who study through the schools of distance education.” (*Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C)* 2018). C2C implementation and use, varies across Queensland regions, schools, and classrooms. Teaching these unit plans are optional in some schools, while in others it is mandated. Education Queensland does state however, that C2C resources are designed as a starting point for school curriculum planning and can be adapted to meet individual learning needs and school contexts (*Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C)* 2018).

The Arts Australian Curriculum Achievement Standard

By the end of Years 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 an achievement standard in The Arts is stated which reflects the expectations of students attaining that year level juncture. For example, by the end of Year 2, students focus primarily on describing artworks and expressing ideas, while the

Year 10 achievement standard requires students to “... evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view” (ACARA 2017), and “... analyse connections between visual conventions, practices and viewpoints that represent their own and others’ ideas and manipulate and refine materials, techniques and processes to represent ideas and subject matter in their artworks” (ACARA 2017). When considering the cognitive verbs in the achievement standards, the curriculum expectations increase in complexity the higher the year level achieved. This increasing complexity necessitates increased higher order thinking which should translate across into pedagogical approaches enabling this and later into artworks expressing thinking.

The C2C Assessment Environment

Increasing expectations are evident in C2C units, as Guide to Making Judgements (GTMJ), a form of rubric, which are derived from the achievement standard. Each GTMJ expresses aspects of the achievement standard with the entire standard being achieved by the end of the banding juncture, at times a single year level, but in the case of The Arts, the first juncture is from Prep to Year 2. A judgement is then made based on these standards as to each student’s level of achievement.

Teaching and Assessment can be Challenged by Educational Context

The context within which visual arts exists, being connected to the world, can be complex. If the aim of teaching Art in schools is to enable students to achieve advocacy and responsibilities as global citizens, the context within which art is being taught and assessed is vital. Consideration must be given to the school culture and purpose of education within which it must function (Hanawalt 2018). This can have an impact and effect on the way in which art is enacted in the classroom.

2.1.3 Art Teaching

Often teachers of art in primary schools are not expected to be practicing artists or arts-trained, beyond the completion of a single subject covering all 5 strands (Visual Art, Drama, Dance, Music and Media Arts) in The Arts in initial teacher training courses at university. Without more comprehensive art specific training, visual art is often relegated to isolated activities focused on arts elements and principles of design, generic pre-planned unit plans or teacher directed projects that neglect student input (Hanawalt 2018) inhibiting student voice. Additionally, whole class directed activities with similar student output requiring the

acquisition of skills for representation, or approaches to multiculturalism which are tokenistic, homogenizing or misrepresentative are also evident in classrooms (Hanawalt 2018). These activities exist with limited to no consideration of the curriculum, community, or broader arts context within which they are created, and function and often value, product over process.

Arts Knowledge Impacts Arts Education

Some studies have considered why art teaching is undertaken in this simplistic manner and reference, inadequate arts knowledge, misalignment of purpose in relation to the Arts and lack of knowledge of pedagogical practices (Chapman, Wright & Pascoe 2019). While it is acknowledged that the Arts play a role in education, it is often for its flow on effect, such as music being useful because it increases students' cognitive performance, drama as it increases empathy, morality and pro-social behaviour and fine arts because they stimulate creativity and imagination (Biesta 2019 p11). While acknowledging that teachers have competing demands on their time and that the allocation of preparation time for teaching is limited, art remains a mandated subject, and as such, is entitled to the same commitment and integrity as other subject areas. Limited awareness of pedagogical practices and approaches to art, means these are established and built through experience in the classroom. These approaches are also often adopted from teaching other subject areas and are not appropriate for the range, materials, noise levels and movement required in the arts. Additionally, many of these subject areas do not embrace the creative thinking and context vital to arts experiences (Berglin 2017; Biesta 2019; Chapman, Wright & Pascoe 2019; Gregory 2017; Ward 2019). Working without these aspects, makes enacting the responsibilities of a global citizen near impossible.

2.1.4 Art Pedagogy

The need for pedagogy which is responsive, relevant and applicable to the broader world is vital. Sullivan & Gu (2017) view the greatest impact in art education as being derived from knowledge about educational practices based in art, culture and communities from artists, and teacher practitioners. The decisions made about how to enact these aspects are usually undertaken through teacher consideration and learning, within a reflective and reflexive process. This process is referred to as criticality and includes the process of selecting appropriate and worthwhile activities which are age and developmentally appropriate, while

fitting the context in which one works (Chapman, Wright & Pascoe 2019). In addition to criticality, connoisseurship is the state of being informed about what is "... important to the students, the requirements of the curriculum, and the significant and fundamental elements of an activity ... add[ing] a layer of richness and discernment to choices ... and improv[ing] student learning"(Chapman, Wright & Pascoe 2019, p. 959). It is through research, connoisseurship, and consideration, that visual art education is enriched. So, aiming to avoid an approach to teaching visual art which is prescriptive - and responding to the call for an approach which engages students thoughtfully within a broader arts context in a meaningful way - is imperative. Through these experiences students gain a voice, or a sense of agency as well as a sense of belonging to a community larger than the classroom.

Agency

Agency is often defined as the capacity to act independently, as opposed to being shaped by society. In Sweden the early childhood education curriculum emphasizes that children should "... trust in their own ability to think autonomously, to be active, move, learn and to be educated from different perspectives, such as intellectual, linguistic, ethical, practical, sensual and aesthetic" (Häikiö 2018). These opportunities to think in a variety of settings and experiences promotes children's agency, which is now evident as a child's right to act on their own terms, make choices, and use their voice amongst other things. These aspects lead to future citizens who are engaged with democratic principles. Following this line of thinking, pedagogy then needs to consider the ways in which a child with agency can engage with The Arts: visual art, to use and access their agency and responsibilities as future global citizens.

Connecting arts Practice with Pedagogical Approach

This research considers the use of an arts practice which engages with issues of social relevance as the basis for a pedagogical approach to art education. Therefore, an understanding of what arts practice is, becomes a vital component of this research.

2.2 Arts Practice

The examination of the way that art is constructed, has occurred in four main ways, through: the person; product; environment; or, process. Of this, the creative process is the least researched (Botella, Zenasni & Lubart 2011). Linear stage models have dominated the description of theories of creativity and how new ideas are generated (Sawyer 2016) to the detriment of further understanding the intricacies of artistic process. More recently models

have begun to acknowledge the nuances of creative actions (Botella, Zenasni & Lubart 2011) and the importance of looking at a body of work in depth, and at process, over time. It is through these approaches the real intent and processes of artists are documented and understood.

2.2.1 How Artists Work

Artists have a history of exploring concepts through artistic processes, which are often reflections of and reactions to, values and changes in society. These artistic means can provide an active resistance to aspects of the world that surround them, by providing a questioning of conscience and challenging everyday held assumptions and events, not unlike the advocacy role and responsibilities of global citizens encouraged in art education. Artists that undertake this advocacy role, do so in unique ways. Dr Marcus Bunyan (2011) says, "... every society on Earth needs outstanding unique figures ... in order to stay awake, to be shaken awake, to be made to recognize their own obstinacy, and to be able to avoid tunnel vision.". Many artists reflect on this bigger picture of the world. Weiwei, Mutu and Abramovic are three contemporary artists working in spaces, which question the everyday assumptions around them, changing as artistic practice and societal issues change. At times, these changes foresee trends while at other times, they reflect on occurrences.

2.2.2 Issues of Social Relevance and Change

A change over the last 40 years in fine arts has seen, "... a major shift in Fine Art pedagogy from the exploration of aesthetic and expressive principles ... towards ideas and concepts communicated through discursive channels." (Morley 2017, p. 91). Consequences of this shift have been moves away from "... issues of aesthetic judgment, the training of sensory-motor skills, and the encouragement of individual expressive intentions, towards the promotion of a corpus of theoretical methodologies of an explicitly intellectual and text-based nature ..." (Morley 2017, p. 91). This encourages metacognitive skills, introspection and an awareness and understanding of thought processes undertaken during the process of art making for a purpose and use. This was prevalent in the recent photographic work by Justine Varga, *Maternal Line*, which won the Olive Cotton Award. Commentary became preoccupied with the infant-quality of the scribbles, saliva and embodied process that comprised the work. Varga openly stated in an interview with Shaune Lakin from Artlink that she deliberately subverts conventions to make people think. This is evident and deliberate in some of today's artwork - the thinking behind it, which conveys a broader story or context, creating

tension between the original use or context and the reinterpretation of the material or context (Manco 2012). Stephenson & Zanotti (2017) see scholars as refocusing attention from author intention to understanding forms of engagement which arise in art in specific social contexts leading to social change. How social change and social engagement occur is not a simple construct. There are varying approaches to how this can be undertaken.

2.2.2.1 Socially Engaged Art

Art revolving around social change often falls in line with forms of socially engaged art or art which addresses issues of social relevance. While known by a myriad of terms, "... activist art, dialogic art, collaborative art, community-based art, participatory art, public art, relational aesthetics and, most recently, social practice, the core of this movement is certainly the social aspect of artistic practice." (Wang 2016, p. 16). Socially engaged art, with its historical groundings in twentieth-century art has recently surged. However, Bishop (2012) remains selective around what should be included in this art category. Her questioning challenges the depth of contemplation of the 'social inclusion' aspect. In the case of digital media artists Bishop questions how much thought is given to what it means to think, see, and filter through the digital. How artists thematise this or reflect deeply on how they experience and are altered by, the digitalization of our existence. These are aspects which are questioned (van der Meulen 2017). While there are varying approaches, there are also varying degrees of engagement and contemplation about what it means to socially engage with the world.

2.2.2.2 Is all Art Social?

When considering whether all art is social, consideration is focused on art being termed social due to it being placed or enacted in a social context. However, delineation between works and artists' intent need to be considered (Wang 2016, p. 16). Discussing art which engages with social aspects requires an ongoing conversation and deliberation considering the variety of views contributing to the parameters surrounding it.

To say that art simply reflects social structure is viewed as too passive by some artists, who see art as part of a broader and more complex dynamic, in which specific artworks actively symbolise the social system. These works aim to produce, as well as be produced by, the ideological framework of a society (Riley 2013) which works capturing aesthetics alone, are deemed not to do.

The work by Schubert & Gray (2015, p. 1351) who consider the form from a social work perspective, refer to art as involving a social process that depends for its ethical and aesthetic content on living through contradiction and articulating ambivalent interests and identities. This research has largely been framed by social workers, and clients are encouraged to participate by expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Riley (2013) uses a broad-brush approach and sees art as addressing a lack of social coherence in a social structure. While Bishop (2012) refers in her writing to the direct engagement or collaboration of social events, workshops or publications, rather than simply 'works', which is similar to Wehbi, McCormick & Angelucci (2016) who discuss SEA (socially engaged art) as '... interactions and social relations as its forms' (p51), being distinct from practices that produce saleable objects. Like the experiences undertaken by Schubert & Gray (2015) the difference in practice lies in the form of interaction and social relation.

Wang (2016, p. 15) sees socially engaged art as not, "...understood in [a] general sense such as the common saying: human beings are social animals." (p15-16), but rather using Helguera's concept of 'social practice', another term encapsulating the socially engaged art area of practices which share common strategies, rather than being a specific movement (Wehbi, McCormick & Angelucci 2016). Social practice is particularly porous but falls within the traditions of conceptual process art and remains a working construct (Helguera 2011). The benefit of this working construct is a continual evolution of the concept allowing responsiveness to societal changes.

Despite debates among critics, "... about the role of the artist as author, the role of audience as participant, and the place of aesthetics, all agree that at the root of these practices is a desire to use the transformative power of art to shift social relations." (Wehbi, McCormick & Angelucci 2016, p. 51). It is the degree and form that this takes which is more openly questioned and debated by artists and the broader art community.

2.2.3 Approaches to Socially Engaged Art

Through analysing the variety of art forms which engage with social aspects of society, three main thematic approaches seem evident: two are made clear through the theory written on the subject, and the third through arts practice. What is also evident, is that artists are not clearly confined to one approach alone but can work within and across the different

approaches to engage with a social issue. The three main approaches are: engaging an audience; engaging a social idea; and, engaging resultant objects.

2.2.3.1 Engaging an Audience

Engaging an audience and providing opportunities for them to interact with, and contribute to the work in some way, has become more common as art galleries look for ways to create interactive experiences. Not all interactive installations attempt to engage the audience with social issues, and so this section deals with those which do. In these works, while artists are politically and socially motivated, they move away from the representation of an idea and move towards one of creating affect in a deep and meaningful way.

Artist: Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei is an activist artist, also referred to as a dissident artist, who has spent time living overseas to continue his arts practice along with periods of detention and 24/7 video surveillance in his home country of China. Trained in New York he moved back to China, shortly before, the Sichuan earthquake occurred. He'd been keeping a Blog up until then but stopped when this disaster occurred as he could not find the right vocabulary to express what had happened (The Guardian 2018).

His work revolves largely around human rights and has considered government corruption and cover ups, particularly that of the Sichuan Schools corruption scandal where over 7 000 schoolrooms collapsed in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The collapse was related to poor building structure connected to allegations of corruption resulting in the deaths of around 5 000 students, although some report the figure to be twice this amount, as well as injuries to 15 000. The Government coordinated a campaign to silence the public through monetary contracts, but Ai Weiwei set up a 'citizen investigation team' after receiving no response to numerous phone calls to the Education Department. This team went door to door and asked for names, birth dates and the name of the school where the child lost their life. While being arrested many times, after a year 5 219 names had been collected. This was all documented on the blog which was shut down later as Ai Weiwei states '... there were too many people reading it and following us.' (The Guardian 2018). Later, at a show in Munich, Ai Weiwei covered the Haus der Kunst museum's façade, in the sentence from a mother interviewed, saying 'All I want, is to let the world remember she had been living happily for seven years'

(The Guardian 2018). This sentence was written using children’s backpacks in the in a show titled *Remembering* (Figure 1: Weiwei 2009).

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Figure 1 Ai Weiwei 2009, 2009 – *Remembering* (detail) installation, 100x1000cm

While all of Ai Weiwei’s work is socially engaged, not all his work engages an audience through participation, such as in the interviewing and reading of names in *Remembering*. The intention in this work, which is clearly evident, is to prompt the community into action against Government corruption. While the backpack aspect of the work could be viewed as symbolic, the collection of names and the reading of them involved participation.

Another of Ai Weiwei’s works which involves direct audience participation is *Sunflower Seeds* (Figure 2: Weiwei 2010). This installation is made up of millions of sunflower seeds of hand-made and hand-painted porcelain, one of China’s prized exports. Noted as a powerful comment on the human condition, the work references a combination of mass-production, traditional craftsmanship, the ‘Made in China’ phenomenon, the relationship between the individual and the masses, population explosion, the environment, personal freedom, compassion, friendship, kindness and power. The positioning in the exhibition space for the audience also continues these themes speaking of hierarchy as the audience chooses to look down upon the space or to walk on it, crushing the craftsmanship of the work beneath them. Regardless of choice (upper or lower), the audience is forced to participate in some way.

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Figure 2 Ai Weiwei, 2010, Photo of *Sunflower Seeds*, Installation

Artist: [Roman Ondák](#)

Ondák’s artistic practice is described as merging everyday life with art. While a much quieter form of social engagement than that of Ai Weiwei, Ondák’s installation work relies heavily on

audience participation. Explained as a performance exhibition, In *Measuring the Universe* a white gallery space is marked with black felt tip pens by museum attendants after asking attendees if they would like their height measured (Figure 3 & 4: Ondák 2007). The interaction between the elements is scripted and the procedure repeated continuously with each visitor who enters for the duration of the exhibition. Eventually a distinctive wall drawing appears documenting the shift of passive onlookers to active participants. Ondák's practice considers concepts of relocation, representation, and shifting and sharpening the focus on the everyday. He specifically looks for new patterns of behavior and alternative social and political realities. While Ondák's work clearly engages the attendees, the reason beyond *Measuring the Universe* is not made clear. This involves the viewer in drawing their own conclusions as to what the exhibition is saying or concludes.

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Figure 3 & Figure 4 Roman Ondák, 2007, *Measuring the Universe* installation

Artist: [Marina Abramović](#)

Rhythm O was remade in 2009 as part of Abramović's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It involved a series of objects laid out on a table, including a gun, hammer, metal spear, lipstick, perfume, cotton, and flowers among other items. The instructions were simple, 'There are 72 objects on the table that one can use on me as desired ... I will take full responsibility.' (*'Rhythm O', Marina Abramovic, 1974 | Tate* 2017). Attendees were, for 6 hours, invited to

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Figure 5 Marina Abramović, 1975, *Rhythm O*, performance

use the objects on her, with the artist taking full responsibility. She later stated that ‘the experience I drew from this work was that in your own performances you can go very far, but if you leave decisions to the public, you can be killed’ (*Rhythm 0*, Marina Abramović, 1974 / Tate 2017). This was evident when during one performance the gun was loaded and placed in her hand, ‘He moved the pistol toward my neck and touched the trigger. There was a murmur in the crowd, and someone grabbed him. A scuffle broke out. Some of the audience obviously wanted to protect me; others wanted the performance to continue.’ (Marina Abramović with James Kaplan. 'Walk through Walls. A Memoir.' Part Three' 2017) (Figure 5: Abramović 1974). While her works in this series *Rhythms* looked at the physicality of the body, endurance, pain and the personal risk and suffering that goes with that, the work also made the audience active within the space, particularly with the removal of responsibility from the viewer. In this performance a focus on collective action and responsibility for those who chose to act became the reality. Nothing about Abramović’s works are quiet. Her work is confronting and challenges the role one plays in society and the responsibility that goes with that.

2.2.3.2 Engaging a Social Idea

The next more controversial approach, is one in which the art considers, contemplates and/or interprets social issues and/or realities without involving the participants directly in the creation of the work. Examples of this include the war work by both Ben Quilty (Afghanistan series) and George Gittoes, who both examine the aspects of war by painting people participating in it and/or from the side effects of it, but beyond being a ‘sitter’ or subject, the participant makes no actual contribution. The work by Paula Rego on abortion and Wangechi Mutu on stereotyping in media representation. The work by all of these artists are vastly different and serve different purposes.

Gittoes’ ongoing work for instance includes substantial amounts of time moving around and between countries at war independently, documenting life through images and film and creating spaces for others to create. Ben Quilty however, went to Afghanistan, behind the lines, to document Australians at war. Both artists engage a social idea which is generally, politically or socially motivated and enacted through the representation of ideas or issues in allegorical, metaphorical, or symbolic ways (Helguera 2011). In these cases, the work creates

an awareness of the social element or issue but in a less strategic or instrumental way. This does not mean it has less of an effect, however, just that it takes a different approach.

Paula Rego, additionally, has addressed many social topics and 'shames', and is considered here for her work around abortion. Again, she has not openly stated having had the experience personally, but clearly feels a referendum in this largely Catholic country, Portugal, is not an adequate response to this issue and for this reason has addressed it in her artwork. Wangechi Mutu also addresses the view countries have of her homeland Africa and its people. She works with materials which objectify and stereotype the African women, as an artist in America. Her position has changed from being part of the experience to somewhat now being a viewer of and commentator of it.

Artist: Ben Quilty

Ben Quilty spent three weeks in Afghanistan talking to servicemen and women as an official war artist commissioned by the Australian War Memorial and attached to the Australian

Defence Force. His works consider the danger and emotions encountered in Afghanistan and on

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returning home. Using nakedness as a way of expressing both the strength and frailty of the human condition during wartime (Quilty 2012), Quilty found when sitters sat, they opened up about their

Figure 5 Ben Quilty, 2012, *Captain S, after Afghanistan*, oil on linen, 140 x 190 cm

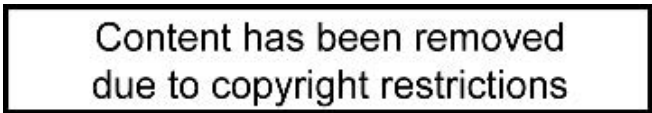
experiences. The challenge of Quilty's work regarding social engagement is that he is portraying an issue he

does not have a personal experience with, beyond having talked with people about it and having visited its location for three weeks. When engaging with a social idea an additional layer is placed between the artist and the issue. While Quilty has shed light on the impact of war and those affected psychologically by it, which was not something really considered by the general public at large in Australian society previously, he also addressed an issue which he has no personal exposure to and limited experience of. This then provides an outsider perspective, albeit a more informed one than someone who had never been there or spoken to the soldiers, on this as a social issue.

Artist: George Gittoes

George Gittoes confesses to being at home when he is back at war (George Gittoes 2016).

Whether that war is the one that surrounds him and includes the Taliban in Afghanistan or is the war he has fought over the last 30 years in Jalalabad at Yellow House, which teaches creativity defying the forbidden art, film, music, dance and mingling of men and women rules, remains uncertain.



He clearly distinguishes the

Figure 7 George Gittoes, 2015, 2015 Jalalabad, Afghanistan, April 18 2015

difference between himself and

soldiers however saying, 'Their job is to follow orders and not ask questions. But when I go into harm's way, it's not a directive passed down from politicians and generals, it's on my own initiative. I'm an artist. I carry cameras, pencils and brushes - not guns - across the frontline.' (Gittoes 2016) . He documents the life that he sees around him as he travels (Figure 7) - the orphans and disadvantaged, the refugee camps, the deaths from explosions, civil war, and the struggle for life. He engages with the social issues of Afghanistan by living amongst the people there but carrying with him a letter hand delivered to the Australian Embassy declaring him a Taliban enemy who will be decapitated on live TV if caught. Does this make him a part of the war, by being singled out by the Taliban? Is this war the one he is documenting? George Gittoes' positioning within socially engaged art is a complex one. His work provides evidence of a crossing between socially engaged art practices and demonstrates the complexity of labelling socially engaged art practice. He has worked at becoming part of the space which is Afghanistan and teaches and encourages all forms of creativity following beliefs of never backing down and the freedom of expression through art.

Artist: Paula Rego

Paula Rego works along two lines: one of narrative and storytelling responding to feelings she has; and, the second around seeking truth (McEwen 2008). Paula has difficulty speaking her mind, so through her artwork shares many opinions using inspirations from the past, working with existing issues in the present while also considering the futures and what that might

look like in 100 years' time. She addresses issues such as shameful events and actions, revealing and banishing fears, exorcising ghosts, and avenging wrongs with her freedom of expression through art. Her works seem to convey a tangible terror of evil and an acute feeling of guilt.

In the studio Rego creates scenes using real objects, then paints them again, referencing past and present and imagining possible futures. Paula Rego's paintings socially engage an audience. Her drawings are intimate, personal and truthful, whereas her paintings are public. Rego says, '... if you turn it [a drawing] into a painting it becomes something else. It becomes public, it becomes a show-off, but those little things you do for yourself mean the most.' (McEwen 2008, p. 12).

Rego's *Abortion* series (Figure 8: Rego 1998) were created having seen the devastating effects of a lack of birth control due to poverty, damnation or premature deaths from backyard operations in her youth. She says,

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Figure 8 Paula Rego, 1998, Triptych

'I did these new paintings for Portugal. In my village I saw the secrecy, the pain, the shame. Women came to me asking for money for abortions. They died, sometimes, of septicaemia. Or they washed up on the beach with all their guts hanging out, like an old blown-up cow' (John McEwen 2008 p56).

Rego's anti-clerical feeling from youth poured out in the political pictures she made for an exhibition which had record attendance but no discussion of the content, in response to the Portuguese referendum for the legalisation of abortion. Being a Catholic country, the referendum provided a choice between the rule of the Government and the teaching of the

Church. Ninety percent of the population abstained from making that choice and the ten percent who voted, the majority were against the legalisation of abortion (McEwen 2008).

Rego's work is not created from her personal experience of an abortion, but from those she knew, and had seen experiencing one. This was not a quiet approach due to the timing of this exhibition and the nature and content of the works, particularly in a Catholic country. But, Rego's work engages with a social idea. The works above (Figure 8) are created in her studio from models re-enacting experiences or imagining them and clearly engage the viewer with the subject.

Artist: Wangechi Mutu

Wangechi Mutu drives home her very strong social message using collage and sculpture. She tackles the stereotypes of media representation through the interplay between living organisms, humans and nature. Her work looks at the questions surrounding identity through trans, historic, ancestral and contemporary lenses (Schoonmaker 2013). The collages use a

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narrative rather than spatial structure in a hybrid complex around the representations of femininity. Described as a creator of fantastical worlds, Mutu's works are opportunities for cultural, psychological, and socio-political considerations (Schoonmaker 2013).

Figure 9 Wangechi Mutu, 2006, *A Shady Promise* mixed-media collage on mylar, overall: 87.5 x 108.75 inches (222.25 x 276.23 cm).

Mutu's work contemplates social issues. It is confronting as one of the sources for her work is pornographic magazines (Figure 9: Mutu 2006). Her work is also large. While visually the images are loud, the social aspect takes some consideration before becoming clear, giving the social voice a quieter form. Mutu is of African descent now living permanently in America, meaning she has been, but is no longer part of the social aspect that she portrays. Adding to this complexity, the

forms that she creates are not realistic, at times not even human, but still she manages to address social issues.

2.2.3.3 Engaging Resultant Objects

This approach to socially engaged art involves audience participation, but often unknowingly, by contributing to the work through their everyday actions, which simultaneously address a social issue. Monica Canilao's (Figure 10: Canilao 2010), Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger (Figure 12: Steiner and Lenzlinger 2009), and Ai Weiwei 's (Figure 11: Weiwei 2008) works are examples which show how people can participate without knowing or actively choosing to do so. In Monica's work, she collects materials used by others and reuses and repurposes them to create artworks, which comment on this use. The works make a statement about society through the materials used which have been unknowingly contributed by people. Canilao uses a very quiet approach, while works such as Ai Weiwei's *Straight* (Figure 11: Weiwei 2008) and Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger's work *The Water Hole* (Figure 12: Steiner & Lenzlinger 2009) are more direct and have a stronger voice around social issues.

Artist: Monica Canilao

Monica Canilao uses materials in her holistic approach to comment on the use and discard of

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material things. Her focus is on reusing and repurposing materials (Figure 10). Her social message is subtle creating visual records of personal and communal living histories. Canilao uses people's efforts and the subsequent decay of those efforts, stating 'My community and collaborators, my roots and their

Figure 10, Monica Canilao, 2010, *Treasure Nest* chandelier in the top floor of the Treasure Nest which can be turned by hand, installation

nearly lost traditions, my neighbourhood and its trash piles are all integral, necessary parts of my life and art.' (About | Monica Canilao n.d.). She sees waste as having a history as well as a link to personal experience which is why she uses the things that people have discarded (Manco 2012). As she collects, a tactile memory is created and the objects become markers of where she has been, what she has seen and what she has experienced. The compositions redefine the original subjects creating totemic structures and contemplating the notion of

reversing colonisation (Manco 2012). While this approach to socially engaged art appears less public, it is equally effective in its quiet approach.

Artist: Ai WeiWei

Straight was a sculptural installation at the 2013 Venice Art Biennale. It was composed of 150

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tonnes of steel rebar straightened by hand after being recovered from Sichuan's collapsed schools, which killed more than 5,000 students. No-one willingly participated in this work, but the steel bars (Figure 11: Weiwei 2008) were the remains of what was said to be cost cutting efforts making the school buildings less safe than required. This work was a reminder of

Figure 11 Ai Weiwei, 2013, *straight* by Ai Weiwei, zuecca project space,venice, steel reinforcing bars, 6 x 12m, installation view

the lives lost and the impact of decision making. The straightening of metal was a metaphorical way of straightening things out or making them right.

Artists: Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger

Contemporary artists Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger create works which combine both art and science in a process of reproduction and creation (Gerda Steiner & Jorg Lenzlinger, n.d).

Their work *The Water Hole* (2009) (Figure 12: Steiner & Lenzlinger 2009) uses everyday items like buckets, toilets hand basins and PVC pipes to feed water to a drying dam in the centre of a bed. Bunyan (2009) explains,

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'The waterhole is fed by water dripping from a medical bag suspended high in the air above the dam, a nice touch. The rest of the forest and pipes are dry. The installation comments on our water supplies and the 'technologies of production' (Foucault) that permit us to

Figure 12 Gerda Steiner and Jörg Lenzlinger, 2009, *The Water Hole* installation

produce, transform or manipulate things. We might install rainwater tanks to catch water but if there is no water to catch in the first place then we are in trouble: we make our bed and have to lie in it, the empty basins like our catchment areas, dry and bleak. ... Other elements of the forest have an environmental theme, the installation developed by the artists in response to the extensive drought most of Australia (and in particular Melbourne) is experiencing.' Steiner and Lenzlinger enable viewers to turn objects viewed every day, into thoughts and to make connections and further readings of them which may have otherwise been quite beyond them.

2.3 Arts Practice and Art Education

Engaging with the social context in art production creates opportunities to consider, contemplate and interpret social issues and realities. Teaching functions within a context of ethics requiring the need to be impartial or unbiased when considering issues of social relevance. However, this does provide opportunities for student agency and voice to develop and for students to present thinking around issues of relevance to them. How this arts practice is undertaken and documented then comes into question. Documenting artistic process in detail provides opportunities to understand how artists deal with ill-defined problems through a more cyclical or recursive approach when researching (Sawyer 2016). The creative process is not, '... a simple sequential phenomenon.' (Botella, Zenasni & Lubart 2011 p33) and it is evident that artists utilise different methods, means and degrees of approach, to achieve varying purposes.

2.3.1 Visual Art Practice

The most dominant models influencing school teaching in visual art come from research situated in the sciences rather than arts practice or those that have no educational but aesthetic foundation only. Considering the current state of art teaching, it is possible that the plethora of approaches used in classrooms will continue to exist. However, an improved approach is vital. Towards this end, basing art teaching on pedagogical approaches that enact arts practice, can only be a positive beginning. While working towards a pedagogy for visual arts is a small piece of a much larger puzzle, it is a beginning. In an ideal world, teaching teachers at the outset to approach all areas of teaching with inquiry and social context in mind, with their classrooms as space for experimentation and student voice at the centre,

would encourage an education which is proactive and socially engaged – preparing students for their roles and responsibilities as active global citizens.

Chapter 3: Enacting a Methodology of Practice

In a space where process and practice are paramount, viewing, reading about, working beside, and trying to understand my own practice, and the practice of others has been vital to broadening perspectives on art making. This chapter examines two iterations of practice as research. This practice-led hybrid methodology to research accounts for an epistemological unknown which is central to an evolving art practice. This unknown is generative and throughout the research is mapped by analysing critical literature, critical events (waves), experiential iterations and arts practice. This unknown aspect accounted for as a documentable process within a practice, considers issues of social relevance. The practice driven through the importance of questioning and experimenting rather than definitive conclusions is part of a continuing research process following further personal and professional pathways.

As the methodology examines my own practice as both artist and art teacher the documentation moves between first and third person in order to record thinking and nuances of stories and experiences undertaken. This is not uncommon in autoethnographic or narrative inquiry methods, both which work with narrative as a form of documenting research stories (*Alsup 2006; Lyons & LaBoskey 2002*).

In some ways the lack of smooth sailing or a calm sea, has made it difficult to know where to begin telling this research story. As the very early stages of the research looked at a very different form which was built around a trip taken by my Nan and had me follow in her footsteps: it has moved to a place so far removed from that direction, it makes it seem like an irrelevant beginning. This beginning is a vital part of the artistic process however, and while it may seem unconnected demonstrates the importance of the *community* and *ideate* phases in situating the artist in authentic practice which is often drawn upon when identifying connections in critical events. Through this direction, there were structures that impeded the creative direction I wanted to follow. These roadblocks or waves as I refer to them, enabled a more complete and authentic practice to evolve. It has been through this reflective, reflexive and infra-reflexive working, utilising a critical event method (Webster & Mertova 2007) that the research has evolved and grown. While documented chronologically in the hope that the unfolding will demonstrate the artistic process undertaken, consideration focuses on the

process at times moving backwards, sideways and sometimes leaving a direction completely. This practice while simplified in a linear form was not always linear in its execution.

3.1 Art as a Process and Form of Inquiry.

As spectators, most view art with a 'like it or not' approach. Often there is little movement beyond, what one would hang on their lounge room wall at home, leading to a lack of consideration around what is seen, or more importantly, what is being said. As a form of language, art can become reflexive, turn on itself, invite us to question our own premise, to ask, 'How do I see? What can I know? How do I know what I know? What is being said? Do I agree? Why?' It is at this point, that art becomes a process and a form of inquiry. Art can be representational, but it can also be evocative, embodied, sensual, and emotional. Art can be viewed as an object or a product, but it is also an idea, a process, a way of knowing, a manner of speaking, and/or an encounter with others. Art can reveal an artist's perceptions and feelings, but it can also be used to recognize one's own (Bochner & Ellis 2003 p508). This research considers art from the perspective of an inquiry.

3.2 Documenting Artistic Practice

Artists undertake the documentation of artistic practice in a myriad of ways, just as they approach the creation of artworks in a variety of ways. As a guide, regarding approach and structure, a number of books written about artist's practices were read, including, but not limited to: *Blood Mystic* (George Gittoes 2016), *Process and Practice: the fabric workshop and museum* (ed Talbott 2017), *Janet Hawley: artists and conversations* (Hawley 2012), *PR: Paula Rego* (Bradley 2007) and more recently *Song of the Cicada* (Garside 2019) by Suzanne Archer. Each of these demonstrated unique approaches to writing about practice, mostly chronological, but all identifying critical turns and thinking. For this reason, this research follows an approach requiring reflexivity and reflection.

3.2.1 Thinking and Inquiring Narratively

Narrative is a form of documenting inquiry and a method which collects evidence, then rearranges and pares it to arrive at understandings of phenomena, with a level of subjectivity (Pinner 2018). Because of this, further discussion and viewpoints need to be considered to vary the perspectives and forms from which an idea can be viewed and understood. Additionally, narratives, like other text forms are not stationary (Allan 2012; Coats 2014) so the form is also subject to continual change (Allan 2012). For this reason, the way in which narratives are presented also change and require understanding. This becomes evident in

this research through the variety of means used to document the research. These forms, for instance social media, artists journals, research journals, academic writing and artforms, all record the research using narrative forms, but also collectively contribute to a broader, more complex and more comprehensive narrative form.

This research, through fragmented progressions, documents the process undertaken and aids both the researcher and reader in gaining a level of understanding of what was experienced. The value of narrative data is the perspective that it provides through its validity and verisimilitude (Pinner 2018). Through altered points of view specific perspectives can be concentrated on, over other views of the same event. It is through this process that explanations and the facilitation of understanding occurs. Nunning (2015 p.107) sees narrative as moving towards a self-reflexive narratology, '... that not only looks at the cultural variability and historical development of narrative forms and genres, but also considers historicity, and cultural specificities of its own approaches, concepts and methods.' (p117). This is vital, as viewing narrative in a simplistic, beginning, middle and end form will not adequately create understanding of the material gathered to build comprehensive and deep understandings that this research relies on.

Acknowledging the aspects and contexts in which these texts are created and situated is of importance (Raj 2015). Narratives have styles and forms which continually increase in variety. This requires the understanding that approaches like classical narratology, based on structuralist analyses of narratives, are revised and developed to bring rise to post-classical narratologies of which there are varying categories (Thon 2015). These in turn are continually questioned as narrative continues to morph into new approaches and forms, extending into new media and interdisciplinarity, into gaps and blind spots (eds Alber & Fludernik 2010). That is the case with this research. Contextual versions move beyond the novel structure to include more experimental forms and approaches to literature (eds Alber & Fludernik 2010). Stories become reality, representing multitudes of story possibilities. These affect the way in which narratives are told and represented and inevitably impact the way narrative within an inquiry is presented.

Narratives, are not stagnant forms (Allan 2012; Coats 2014; Neumann & Zierold 2010), and readers and creators are increasingly exposed to resources from other countries and sources. So, defining this cultural and social space is becoming more complex. While classical forms

are aimed towards a universalist science, Nunning (2015) states that ‘What is crucial is intellectual reflexivity and adaptability.’ (p107). This means the cultural boundaries which narratives were previously restricted by, are expanding, changing and blurring (Allan 2012; Armstrong 2014), as are the expectations and requirements of the reader when interacting with these texts (Armstrong 2014; Coats 2014). This has an impact on how narrative is treated within this research methodology.

While, some research methods are characterised as narrative based ethnographies (Crouch 2007, p. 106), narrative as an inquiry and method needs to ensure representation **and** analysis, to move the method from being purely narcissistic to self-actualising (Crouch 2007). This is particularly the case in this research, as it is conducted through lived experience, in the first person, and with the artist being both researcher and researched.

3.3 Research in Arts and a Framing Methodology

The author opines a holistic and pluralistic approach to research which foregrounds the interconnections between epistemology, theory and methodology, with the stance that no method should be privileged as intrinsically superior to another, but rather, the selection and indeed combination of methods must be based on the value afforded to address the particularity of the problem situation.’ (Eaves, 2014, p150).

The research and investigation have enabled new insights into:

- different ways of engaging with issues of social relevance artistically
- the complexity of creative practice
- deepening of understanding with further iterations of practice
- identification of a more general underlying process with potential application to educational settings

While extensive experience in art teaching and arts practice as an artist has played a role in teaching art to date, the introduction of the Australian Curriculum and the focus on responsibilities as global citizens in The Arts rationale has made updating this practice a pressing issue. Updated approaches to pedagogy in the visual art classroom, which consider issues of social relevance, are required to progress visual art teaching practices.

To date, my art teaching has been directed by pedagogy from other subject areas. These are predominantly; psychological approaches using age-stage models and more recently some minor attempts at inquiry approaches. None engaged effectively with the broader arts

community beyond teaching art movements and art history and none engaged with issues of social relevance. Throughout this research, attempts were made to imbue issues of social relevance into the pedagogical approaches undertaken in the classroom.

Using a hybrid methodology, engaging epistemological pluralism, which provides more than one way of conceptualising practice and process, a richer worldview and broader community of practice (Hawkins & Wilson 2017, p. 82) and way of understanding from both fields becomes evident. Using both creative arts and art education lenses and experiences within a contemporary and socially relevant context, a depth of understanding can be realised, that is not as evident with a single lens or with creative arts or arts education experiences alone.

The ensuing methodology of this research involved two iterations of practice from which two exhibitions evolved. The methodology is named the Social Issues Process (SIP) (Table 1) and is detailed more fully in Appendices 1, 2, 8 and 12.

Phase	Quest	Focus	Pathway	Evidence
Phase 1: COMMUNITY Phase	Get to know your community. What is happening? What challenges you?	Find a problem. Draw what is troubling you or stuck in your thoughts. Document something you cannot find fit with mentally. Journal. Question. Document. Experiment. Create work.	Living in a community it is evident ideas are encountered, and processes or concepts challenge and are not fully comprehended. These influence thinking and provide opportunities to question, receive feedback and draw further conclusions (Amponsah, Kwesi & Ernest 2019). Thinking can further assist finding fit or understanding. These thoughts can become experimental works as ideas are mulled around, played with, and processed. It is from these things that works are created as a way of processing thoughts and ideas. Drawing ideas from the community can be a way of thinking through concepts. The community can be virtual, geographical, psychological or any combination of them all. COMMUNITY is the first aspect to undertake.	Appendix 1 Appendix 2 Appendix 3 Appendix 4 Appendix 5 Appendix 6
Phase 2: IDEATE Phase	What more can I find out? Can I answer this question already?	To dig deeper and seek out other sources regarding the topic. Create more work from varying perspectives. Get your ideas on the page. Expand your thinking.	Try understanding more deeply a view that exists in thoughts and/or the community. Usually this is something difficult to comprehend. From this a concept or narrative idea may occur from a myriad of sources – newspaper articles, personal experiences, conversations with others, conversations between students at school, exhibition experiences etc. These ideas come from varying contexts for instance school, home, sporting events etcetera. Document these ideas by creating further works or editing and altering earlier ones. It is important to consider a variety of thinking, not just one point of view. These narratives move beyond the written narrative, although these are included too, to include visual narratives, material narratives and exhibition narratives as well. These narratives work together but often by telling a different part or aspect of the problem or issue being considered. Each narrative multiplies the ideas on the topic, by adding its own nuance to the way the topic is understood.	Appendix 7 Appendix 5
Phase 3: SHARE Phase	What am I thinking? What would they say or add if I shared it? Have I found fit in my thinking? Do I have a position?	Put work out to a broader audience to gather other opinions to assist with broadening thinking to create a positioning	By this point some exploratory or experimental artworks should be evident. Sharing the work/narratives and thinking created with a broader audience moves beyond the passive approach to understanding, which is largely within personal space. If the ideas settle and are no longer problematic, move back to COMMUNITY and find another problem to solve. If the ideas have not settled after being shared through creating preliminary artworks, writing units of work, blogging, posting, talking to close friends and/or writing about them academically continue along to enacting your thinking.	Appendix 11 Appendix 9 Appendix 12

<p style="text-align: center;">Phase 5: REWORK Phase</p>	<p>How can what has been read, heard and seen be combined and processed with what was recently learnt and known? How does this new information make a difference? What new story does it tell?</p>	<p>Combining new understanding with earlier understandings and finding ways to communicate them. Creating experimental works. Reworking older works to add in new understandings. Processing thinking.</p>	<p>REWORK is a space of higher processing. When things are being reworked the new knowledge and understandings are being joined with earlier understandings. The new ideas are being analysed, synthesised and new connections made. This means creating new artworks with these ideas embedded in them, reworking units of work or embedding new ideas part way through delivery of a unit of work to extend student and personal thinking. It includes revising and adding new sources to demonstrate and draw on new ideas, undertaking conference presentations and receiving feedback and workshopping approaches and thinking. Each of these aspects feeds into and develops ideas towards creating a more complex understanding.</p>	<p>Appendix 15</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Phase 4: ENACT Phase</p>	<p>What can others offer my thinking? Who can I share my work with? Where can I gather differing opinions? Who knows more about this than me?</p>	<p>Using the information gathered to try and identify a position</p>	<p>Try to put these ideas into some sort of order and process them. The communities involved could be teachers, professional communities and organisations, knowledgeable others, as well as ideas outside the immediate group consulted in the SHARE phase. This broadening involves enacting thinking and taking a more active approach which, can be through teaching units of work, sharing the artworks for critique or exhibition and/or communicating ideas specifically for feedback.</p> <p>From ENACT move to one of three phases -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to COMMUNITY if I have found fit with the new knowledge and have found a position for my thinking • to IDEATE if the new knowledge has created another round of thinking • to REWORK to revise and rework earlier understandings 	<p>Appendix 14 Appendix 8 Appendix 10 Appendix 17 Appendix 18 Appendix 19 Appendix 20 Appendix 21 Appendix 22</p>

Rework 6: DEVELOP Phase	How can everything be brought together?	Drawing new and old ideas together to create a togetherness of some form	<p>The DEVELOP phase is the bringing together of all the information, in my case within an exhibition space. It does not need to be brought together in a cohesive and linear manner or in a completely eclectic and/or random manner but is open to personal direction. Despite delivering ideas in differing ways, these nuances contribute to the overall telling created, considered and developed in a way the connections are enabled. The means selected to finalise the work speaks about how an artist values the audience.</p>	Appendix 16 Appendix 23
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Table 1 Social Issues Process

3.4 The Methodology: Social Issues Process (SIP)

The Social Issues Process (SIP) (Table 1) is the methodology used throughout this research.

The linear structure is a means of making sense of what in action can be a very complex process. The SIP phases follow the process of artistic inquiry undertaken by the researcher/artist and is a process deduced from two iterations of practice inquiring into topics of social relevance (Appendices 8 & 12). SIP is a means of processing thinking, a way of resolving questions and researching issues which remain unresolved. This closer documentation reinforces the evolving, recursive and eclectic nature of artistic practice (evident in flow charts p148 & p95), which is a vital component when contemplating an arts-centred pedagogy.

3.5 A Method of Ongoing Analysis – Critical Events

Critical events are a method used to analyse practice throughout the SIP methodology.

Critical events are learnings which occur throughout the SIP. A critical event is often not a specific incident, but a series of events culminating in a realisation that happens. As earlier stated, while the methodology has been written in a linear manner, the enacting of the iterations were recursive, eclectic and far from linear.

As part of critical event narrative analysis, critical events are identified by their impact, reflective nature, criticality and their ability to create new knowledge. Critical event narrative analysis is a deliberate approach to recording and developing practice and theory undertaken through highlighting and capturing critical events from stories of experience (Webster & Mertova 2007). These events draw strands together in a way that has academic rigour and manages the quantity of material. Webster and Mertova (2007) say that a critical event:

'... reveals a change of understanding or worldview by the storyteller (p73), ... [is] identified by the impact on the storyteller ... unplanned and unanticipated ... a communal activity, a sharing of the culture ... [has] criticality ... is identified after the event [and is] intensely personal with strong emotional involvement' (p83).

Critical events may occur at a moment in time but are often connected to events that have occurred over time, with a realisation occurring at a particular point in time. Critical events often require the construction and reconstruction of stories to fine tune the event being documented. This requires time and continued thought, a mulling over of ideas, and a way of working and viewing knowledge that is particular to a narrative form of inquiry. While critical events are self-claimed phenomena of a transformative nature, the effects are felt and remembered long past the event having finished, and with the remaining impact making them juncture points worth documenting (Webster & Mertova 2007). With time and consideration, these narratives '... recalled in the form of critical events [can become] instrumental in changing or influencing understanding.' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p71) and transforming and transcending the original position. This supports different ways of knowing (Eaves 2014) through a broad application integrating arts-based methods and encouraging experiential and pluralistic responses.

These opportunities reframe and re-evaluate, while simultaneously moving towards ongoing representation, interpretation and sense-making. Through experimentation, learning, and reflexivity, knowledge production and narrative (re)construction eventuate. This is relevant to connecting research and lived experience in a range of settings and can aid both, by capturing and communicating the diversity and complexity of human experience (Knowles & Cole 2008, p.57). It can also enhance capacities to act, by scaffolding a rich multifaceted understanding which cultivates a contextual responsiveness and promotes awareness and sensitivity to different perspectives.

The critical events which impacted this research are described as waves (Appendices 17-23). Being research using narrative and critical event methods, these are written in narrative forms and document the eclectic connections made which move the research forward. Six main junctures were met throughout this research which had a lasting impact on the researcher/artist/teacher. They are specific to the researcher and so have been placed as appendices, however, the method of ongoing analysis embedded in critical event analysis

which was used, is imperative to this methodology and way of researching. The waves embody the connectedness of information sources and demonstrate the need for a variety of experiences when undertaking the SIP in order to make connections between things.

3.6 Summarising the Research Process

This artistic practice is richer having considered issues of social relevance and varying approaches to audience engagement. The approach considered multiple points of view and provided a variety of sources to consider and compare meaning, which encouraged connections between works, and helped evolve a thinking process. This approach considered ways to engage with the community through art by presenting multiple narratives and allowing the agency of the viewer to make their own determination. This is a less common approach to engagement, which is often highlighted by very clear statement pieces such as the work by Ai WeiWei or George Gittoes which are more confronting. However, the works by Monica Canilao and Wangechi Mutu, which can be described as quieter forms are equally valid. With various ways of engaging with socially relevant issues, it is important to consider its many potential forms. Importantly, engaging with issues or social relevance requires a thoughtful and considered approach using an open and loose process to ensure that consideration can occur throughout the entire experience. This research provides a conceptual base from which further, ongoing arts practice addressing social topics can evolve and grow.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Findings

The research aimed to investigate artistic practice and its potential application as an art teaching pedagogy. The focus of this research is on investigating the creative process. This research viewed arts practice over an extended period of time and from the perspective of a practising artist. Most research is conducted by observers of artists and for the duration of a single work. This examination of practice was achieved through multiple experiential approaches and two iterations from start to exhibition over a five-year time period, contributing to a broadening understanding of arts practice.

Linear stage models have dominated the description of theories of creativity and how new ideas are generated (Sawyer 2016) to the detriment of further understanding the intricacies of artistic process. So, this research has utilized both approaches, narrative and linear stage modelling, with the understanding that both have something important to offer. Through both approaches, a comprehensive and clear understanding of the intent and process of an artist and artistic process is gained. Knowing how an artist thinks and functions when creating is an important aspect of this research. Trying to understand the way in which an artist works provides potential understanding for applications to educational settings.

4.1 Aim of the Research

This research has provided evidence of an examined artistic and teaching practice over five years. By undertaking two iterations, a process towards documenting this practice has become evident. These aspects required the working through of more than one iteration to identify a process called the Social Issues Process (SIP). Further iterations while beyond the scope of this research could yield more comprehensive understandings.

Arts research can be used to cross over into other fields and to provide perspectives, which may not have been considered due to the uniqueness of its investigative approach. This research through its ongoing analysis as critical events documents this. It also highlights the complexity of the artistic process, demonstrating that viewing artistic practice from a single approach or point of view, does not capture the richness of artistic experience.

4.2 Social Issues Process

For the purpose of developing a pedagogy, the SIP has been explained on a very basic level as a linear or stepped model in Chapter 3. This serves three purposes: to explain the process

easily; to enable a variety of issues of social relevance to be considered; and, to cater for a wide variety of educational contexts. However, the implementation of this process does not need to follow a linear progression and the digressions and recursions, backtracking and jumps that occur are part of a normal artistic process and should be encouraged and embraced. SIP is a guide to engaging students with responsibilities as global citizens through art.

4.3 Arts Practice as a Basis for Art Pedagogy

The research has at its core a focus on examining and analysing a creative arts practice for its potential application as a pedagogical approach to teaching visual art in educational settings, and to engage students with the responsibilities as global citizens. Visual art education in schools is often left to generalist teachers having completed one unit of art studies within their undergraduate initial teacher qualification. It is of little surprise that many teachers are seeking further assistance with the implementation of the Visual Arts curriculum. While there are many books written about art education, they often fall into the trap of teaching art elements and the principles of design rather than engaging with art communities, artistic thinking as well as real issues within society. At the essence of the Art Curriculum and the SIP process is this necessary engagement.

This research offers a process that could potentially be followed by art teachers to ensure social engagement occurs as part of art education. It is potentially an approach to art education which requires higher order thinking and engagement with real issues. By presenting ideas simultaneously which is a signature of this approach, students are required to engage socially and to consider the ideas and opinions of others as well as work on presenting their own. This begins to create a real dialogue and embraces the social potential of art education.

Ideally, teaching teachers at the outset to approach all areas of teaching with inquiry and social context in mind, with classrooms as spaces for experimentation and student voice embedded, would encourage an education which is proactive and socially engaged across all subject areas. Working towards a pedagogy for visual arts which engages students with their responsibilities as global citizens is a small beginning.

4.4 Future Directions

This research offers a pathway to further work in education, particularly in art education. The response from teachers for work around visual arts in schools following the second exhibition *When Will the Rain Come?* was not one which was planned for but has persisted beyond the second exhibition. Communication with teachers and requests for professional development sessions, units of work, images, step-by-step tutorials, Facebook page updates, and participation in my next exhibition etc. particularly as it relates to student work being finalised in an exhibition environment, has been ongoing. Given this response, the potential need for professional development, unit plans and artist visits in classrooms in which thoughtful student work is developed to exhibition level is clearly a potential avenue for further research.

Further research in this area, through creating and trialling units of work would clarify whether this approach to engaging with issues of social relevance in art is suited to the classroom environment. Once trialled by art specialists, it could provide further research potential through further trialling units of work in schools with non-specialist art teachers to verify the effectiveness of the process. Broadening this research to galleries and museums also has further research potential which requires additional consideration.

While it is acknowledged that viewing more than one artist's practice may have provided further insight into artistic practice more broadly, the benefit of analysing the practice of an artist who also teaches art has also been beneficial. This provided an understanding of how to engage students with socially relevant content and issues, which may not have been experienced without this component.

There is no dispute that art which deliberately engages with social issues has the potential to advance social justice causes and meet the needs of responsibilities of global citizens in the rationale for The Arts in the Australian Curriculum. Throughout this research I learnt that children as young as five were able to engage with varying viewpoints and negotiate topics of social relevance and position themselves in regard to these.

What always needs to remain in sight, is that arts practice and hence art pedagogy is a continually evolving process. It needs to be considered that this approach, while general and accommodating is only one approach amongst a variety of approaches to enacting art

education. The focus needs to remain clearly on a constantly evolving process to ensure that student voice and social engagement remain relevant and front-and-centre in the way that students engage with the world through visual art.

Appendices

The exegesis provided in the four preceding chapters summarises an overview of the project begun in 2013. Whilst there have been interruptions in the candidature, the following appendices provide some of the raw data used in establishing a model to map artistic practice and organise it in such a way that it could be used as a pedagogical model for visual arts education.

The nature of the material included in the appendices is largely raw and unfiltered, providing an understanding of the struggles, successes and critical turning points within the project. In effect this small sample of a much larger body of work, aligns with some aspects of a practice led research methodology. As mentioned in the exegesis, a significant section of this material is autobiographic taking the form of diary entry, journal work, conversations, blogs and a range of other artistic reflective exercises and reflexive practice. In presenting this material, within the context of the full exegesis, the material has been organised to align with the Social Issues Process (SIP). More detailed models of the process of SIP are included in the individual appendices.

Appendix 1: Phase 1 - Community Phase

Get to know your community. What is happening? What challenges you?

It is important to understand at this point that finding an issue of significance or social relevance can take time, and in this research, it took a lot of time. It is a process of contemplating, considering, exploring and at times discarding. The research journey clearly documents this through academic writing, experimental works, Blog and social media accounts from which a very brief summary (Table 1: Working through Community Phase thinking) has been created.

Without working through these steps, the issue of social relevance would not have been identified. Some threads are clearly evident in the final works, while others have been discarded and others still have been modified or adjusted across this phase.

Working through Community Phase thinking

Issue	Themes	Artworks	Materials	Artists & Theorists
Death	Opening the trunk Presentness	Portrait of Nan	Nan's diaries	John Coburn Kylie Farrelly Mark Hanham Del Kathryn Barton Tania Heben
	Location study Progress Dialogue	Seagull studies Periwinkle poem Seagull illustrations	Photos of places Nan visited Nan's Diaries	David H Stacey
	Toads Introduced species Fairness	Toad illustrations Painted B'grounds	Nan's diaries Lino prints of birds	
	Dialogue Toads	Toad illustrations	Children's book I wrote	
	Layers Does the dialogue continue? Discussion or dialogue? Critical events Points of view Dialogue	Illustrations about Nan's Death (Appendix 3 Figures 13-19)	Illustration – ink on paper Paint	Michel Roty R. Wilkinson 2000 Unconventional Movements in Cont. Picture Book Illustration McKay and Monteverde Damien Kamholtz
	Portraiture – is it me?	Knowledge (Appendix 3 Figure 15&16)	Illustration – ink on paper	Ben Quilty – Death row artworks

	Process	Knowledge	Collage	Butler, 2011 – writing can reveal the author
Self	What is a diary? Diary concept Multiple artworks on multiple topics – aesthetic discussion	Knowledge		Pantaleo 2010 Wofenbarger and Sipe 2007
	How do you represent a person? Silence Structuralism Moving away from being literal	Post Grad Exhibition at Lux Gallery (Appendix 3 Figures 18 & 19)	Diary pages	Hinke Schreuders
Silence	What is it to be unheard? Vocal cords Chamber of silence Does audience matter?		Stitching over works (Appendix 13)	Hinke Schreuders Su Blackwell
Narrative	Narrative art Text and image Voiced and unvoiced Materials Landscape and portrait	Large metal and crate ball sculpture (Appendix 18: Figure 88)	Nan’s diaries Red pen Old chair Photoshopping images	Su Blackwell Imants Tillers Gordon Bennett Barbara Kruger Rauschenburg Liu Bolin Driftwood techniques Jane Radstrom Raw+Material=Art Tacita Dean Hiroyuki Hamada Darren Almond Rune Guneriussen Maxine Davidowitz Alyce Bailey Larissa Ilieva
	Space and Place	Childhood Homes (Appendix 4)	Magazine images, pencil and paint on paper	
	Polyvocality postmodernism	Self portrait (Appendix 5 & 6)	Pencil and watercolour paint on paper, magazine images, discarded children’s artworks	Lisa Kokin Derek Gores

Table 1 Working through Community Phase thinking

No limitations on time or the number of directions were placed on the creative process. Instead, the creative process was embraced as an embodied process (Adams 2014) that developed of its own accord.

This approach to research is tied to the quandary of what is termed ‘research’ and ‘knowledge’ and is surrounded by a lack of precision regarding methodology, design and methods appropriate to the field (Bacon 2017). The line between practice and theory can

become blurred during an embodied research process, however these opportunities capture the nuances of practice required to draw conclusions about an artistic process.

By making use of questions and contemplations in holistic and engaged ways the combination of both theory and practice (Leavy 2014) aid movement from the known to the unknown (Cypher 2017) providing alternative perspectives or views (Leavy 2014) and adding to the richness of research overall. This is an important part of this methodology as the aim is to document authentic artistic practice, which is not always neat and linear.

Having personal preferences for visual and written narrative, both were used to document and record the artistic practice in research journals, Blog, artistic journals, on social media and through experimental works. Narrative used as a means of inquiry creates understanding, rather than having definitive outcomes as its perpetual aim. As a method it critically acknowledges the dynamic and emergent complexity of human lives which are at the centre of all narrative inquiries and is an approach which '... focuses on the description of biographical experiences as told by the person who has lived them' (Schweitzer & Knudson 2014, p. 134). It arises from a Deweyan (1938) notion that life is education. Narrative provides a means to document thinking both reflectively and reflexively, and provides opportunities to re-story thoughts, ideas and theories. It also presents opportunities to document the creative process, to look back on pathways, follow thinking undertaken and identifying critical events, referred to as waves in this research, which provide turning points in thinking. At the centre of narrative as a form of inquiry is its human-centredness, focus on worldview, and alignment with contemporary human activity and experience (Webster & Mertova 2007) all of which involve ways of viewing the world.

Appendix 2: Opening the Trunk

An Event – Opening the Trunk

March 16, 2013 – Blog entry

I entered my research with a fairly clear agenda, so was stunned to be hit with a wave of denial. My Nan had been dead for 10 years and her trunk of journals sat at the end of my bed gathering dust because in my heart she was still here. I presented the eulogy at her funeral with tears in my eyes knowing that something had changed but not a week had gone by when I hadn't thought of her or considered reaching for the phone – until now. Opening that trunk, drawing out the journals, reading them through, sharing them with my cousins, reminiscing and letting the memories flood back are things you do once you have acknowledged death – creating works is how I have now begun to deal with my grief – to continue the dialogue that was my Nan's life. I know now, that the journals are just things and that what I cherished was my relationship with her. She was open and I could talk to her about anything. I wish I had hugged her more. The loss, now I feel it, is enormous. - March, 2013

I like to create my works by hand. I believe I place something of myself in them that is not present when I work digitally - a depth I find unachievable digitally that comes somewhat easier scratching away with pencils and pens or slapping around with paintbrushes. There is less room for error working with things and more scope for the materials to have a say when interacting with the paper, which I lose digitally. Working with things in creating art seems more real to me. In this case it's therapeutic. The constancy of line in my current works allows me to relax and contemplate. I don't really think of my Nan, but I do think of the memories surrounding those times and at yet at other times I think of nothing.

December 10th, 2012 – Blog Entry

Reminiscing about Winter, 1978 - As we pull up across the road from Brougham Place Church in my Nan's toasty, blue car which smells of sunshine in the middle of winter, I'm wearing my best dress and woollen tights mum bought for my visit to the city. I push the door against the frosty winter wind. Church on Sunday at Nan's house was a given. I never missed the opportunity to listen to the stories repeated about my foray into acting at 5 months as the baby Jesus in the Old Folks Home where she worked, or for her to recount my sporting and academic successes to each of her friends. We have a bond my Nan and I. We talk about everything, argue at times and read side-by-side in the middle of the day and in the middle of the night. Before long, I am ushered into her favourite pew, where I sit awestruck by the amazing organ and beautiful stained-glass windows. Coming from the bush, we don't have anything so huge or beautiful and despite having seen it many times before, its beauty still captures me. She urges me to find my hymns in the hymn book so I'm not fumbling instead of singing and then the readings in my Bible. Church is serious business. We sit close, quiet, side-by-side fighting off the winter chill, happily enjoying each others closeness. On the drive home, the radio plays on 5AM, we slide through an orange light, you are allowed three of those a day – Nan's rule, and after some motoring through side streets slide into her drive. Someone has delivered the junk mail and she comments that the spiders will move out at the very least. We spend the rest of the day reading, and watching TV with her knitting while I collage some images I've found, turning them into story books. The winter sun pours through the window for a few hours as we sit curled up in her small unit, lounge room with the little heater working hard to keep us warm.

December, 2012 - But today, the beginning of the day is just working its way through my windows as I sit on my cold bedroom floor tiles at the foot of my bed. I brush off the lid of my Nan's trunk, the thin layer of dust forming from the roadworks outside my house, take a deep breath and gently open the lid. I have a flashing vision of cockroaches running for cover or mice being disturbed, but I'm met with stillness and the automatic recognition of the things that are my Nan's. Tears immediately come out of nowhere and flood my eyes and run down my face. I really miss her, especially today, a day when I would love to sit, have a cuppa and chat.

Reminiscing about school holidays 1978 - Nan's diaries are dragged out every time the grand-kids come over, and today is no exception. We sit together looking through the pages as she recounts what she saw and what she did. She loves Australia and loves the bush. I have a million questions, and am always looking for details, and stories about Marg, her 'bestie' who shared all of her adventures.

Reminiscing about 2002 - Almost 30 years later we stand around my Nan's bed for five days before she dies of kidney failure. She had refused treatment for the cancer which was in her body. She makes me promise to write a book. The day that she dies I am given the honour of writing her obituary by her daughters and a few days later of presenting it. I find out in the days that follow that she has left me her travel journals. It has almost been 10 years now, and the tears spring back into my eyes like it was only yesterday. I haven't opened the journals until now. I wonder if I will find in them, in her way of writing or seeing, an understanding which helps me better see her experiences and continues our dialogue.

December 2012 - I hesitate. Not sure what to do, which book to take. I spend a moment and let the memories wash over me. So many things come to mind, memories from throughout my childhood, my teens, university days and assignments, pregnancy, parenting, road trips ... through to those last days when we sat around her bed in the hospital and then returned to see her in death.

Appendix 3: Grief Series

I think grief is the price we pay for love. It is a natural consequence from forming emotional bonds to people, projects and possessions. We know that one day all that we value will someday be lost. It can overwhelm us leaving us shipwrecked. It can come in waves. It can leave us alone and lost at sea or it can place us in a new place full of treasures, new beginnings and connections.

These works were created in response to the death of my Nan at the very beginning of the research process. They were created at a time when I was finding my way in terms of researching in creative arts and at a time I did not fully understand the embodying process of researching through the visual arts. They attempt to communicate my sense of loss and attachment, along with a resistance to letting go of someone I loved dearly. The works are illustrative which is an approach to artmaking when I am thinking through an idea. These are akin to sketchbook drawings that some artists use when thinking and playing with an idea.

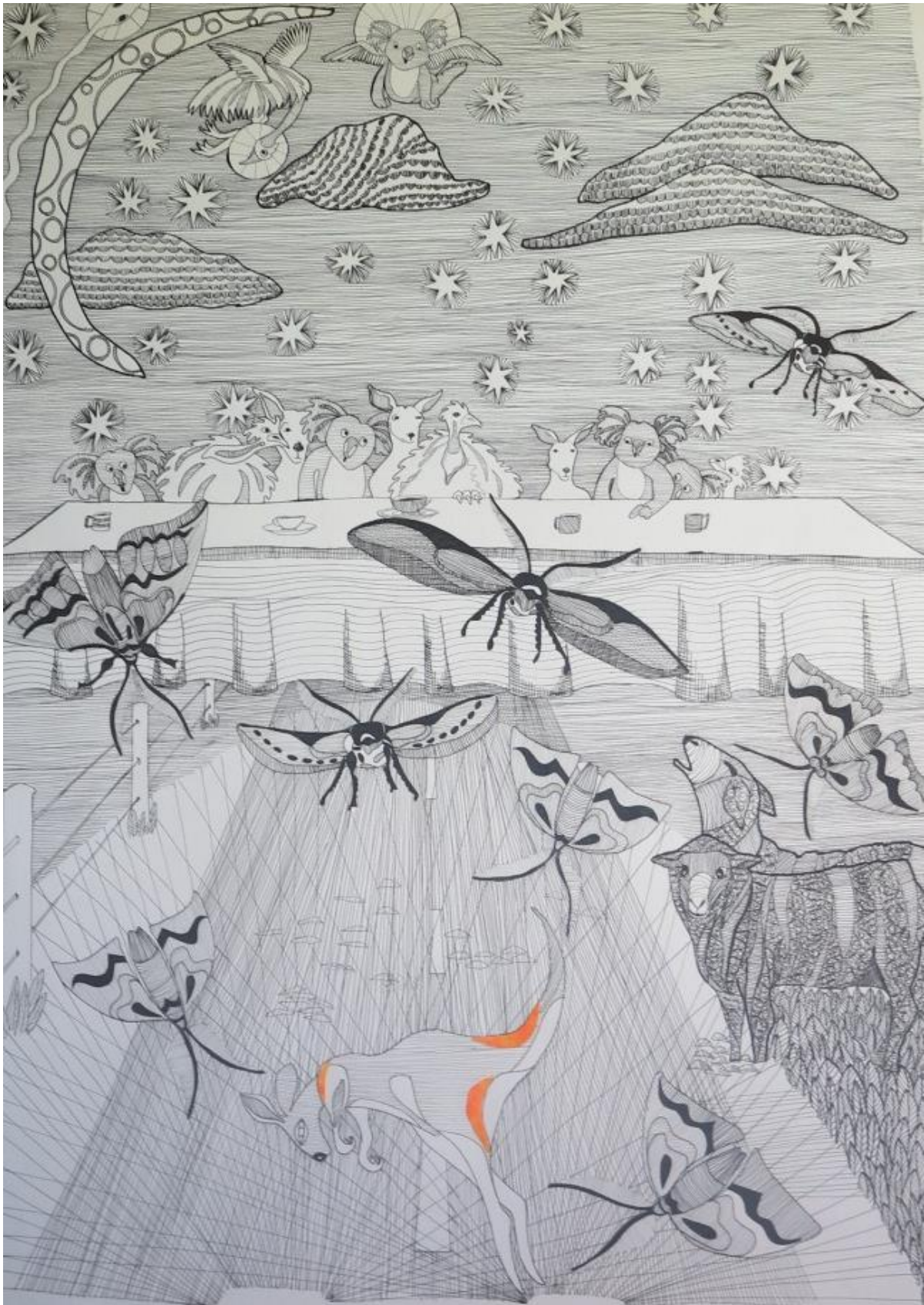


Figure 83 Karen Argus, 2013, *The Last Supper*, ink and collage on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 94 Karen Argus, 2013, *I'm not ready*, ink and collage on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 105 Karen Argus, 2013, *You're pulling my hair* ink and collage on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 116 Argus, K 2013 *Peace of Knowledge* ink and collage on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 127 Argus, K 2013 *Drowning in ...* ink and collage on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 138 Works hanging in Lux Gallery. Photo by Karen Argus 2013



Figure 149 Works hanging in Lux Gallery 2. Photo by Karen Argus, 2013

Appendix 4: Childhood Homes

What is a home really? Is it a space or a place? The terms are intrinsically different when you start to contemplate them. Is the house a place or a space in which we live? Is the land the house is on our place? – Karen Argus

These small collages played around with objects which were positioned in my childhood (blue-ringed octopi and 3 corner jacks) and photos of my childhood homes (Figure 20-26). Throughout my research I was differentiating between my home and that land on which it sits, feeling a sense of space, but not place. I was able to accommodate the home but not really accommodate the land on which it stood.



Figure 20 Argus, K 2014, Childhood Homes, mixed media collage, 29x39cm

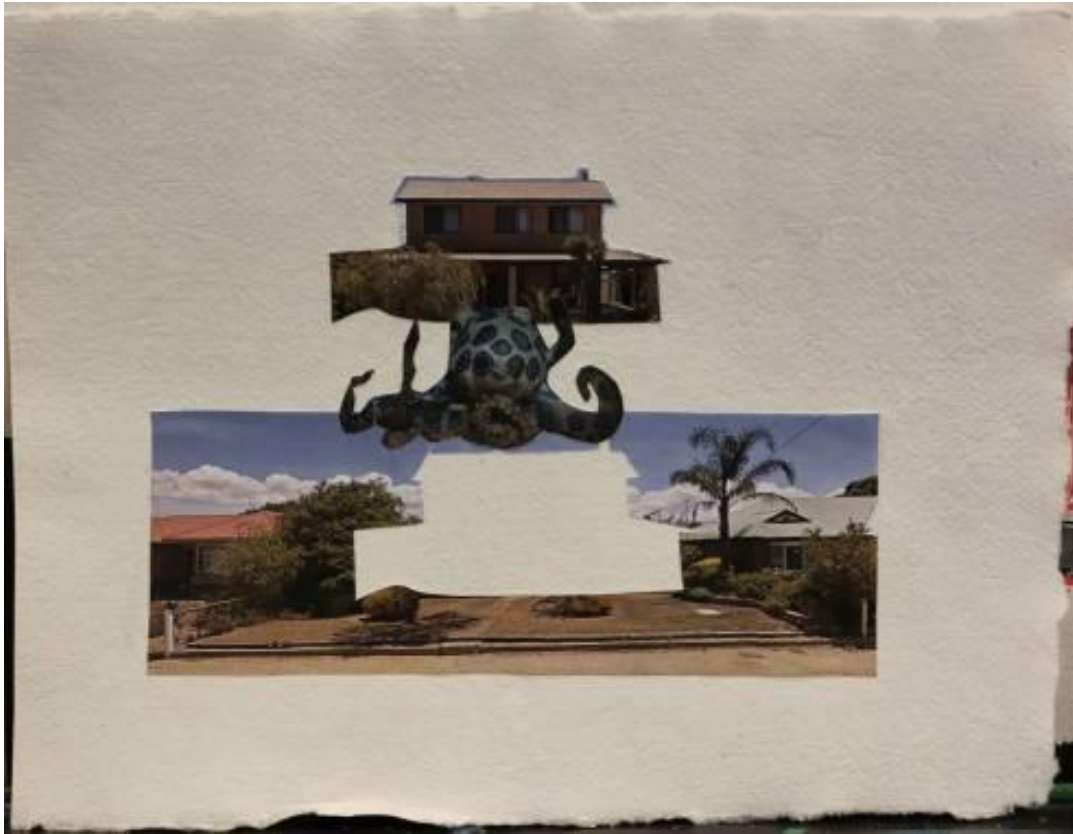


Figure 151 Argus, K 2014, Childhood Homes - Ardy 2, mixed media collage, 29x39cm



Figure 162 Argus, K 2014, Childhood Homes - The Knob 5, mixed media collage, 29x39cm



Figure 173 Argus, K 2014, *Childhood Homes - The Knob 3*, mixed media collage, 29x39cm



Figure 184 Argus, K 2014, *Childhood Homes - The Knob 4*, mixed media collage, 29x39cm

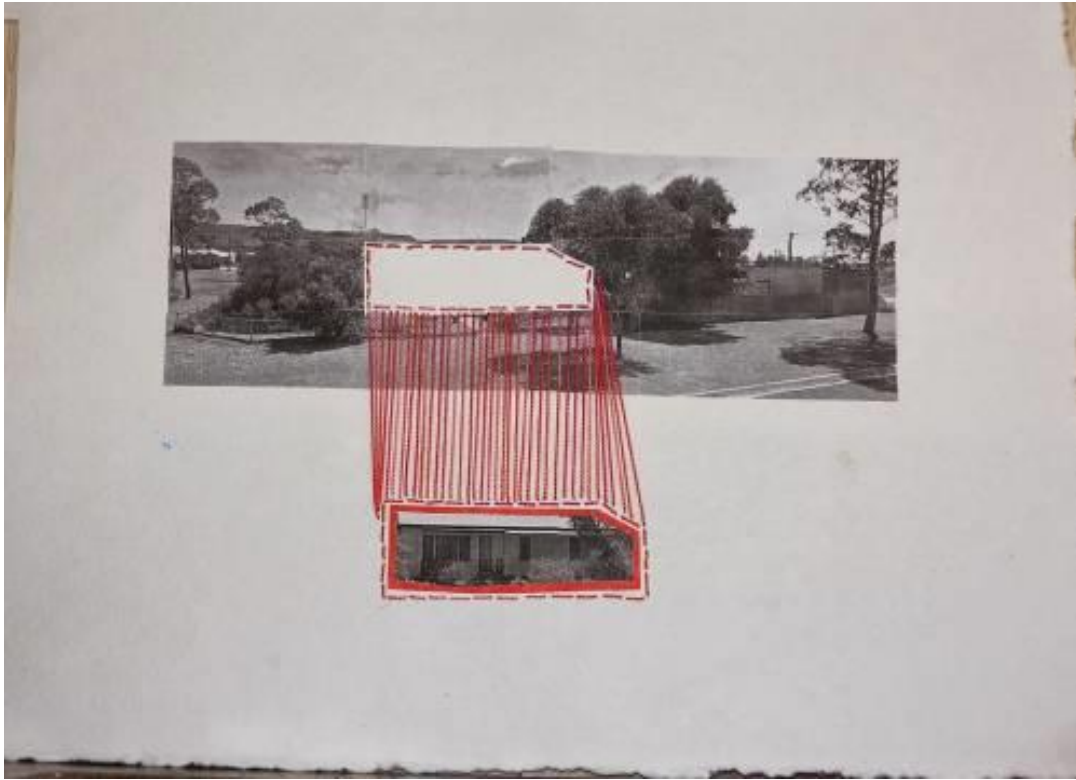


Figure 195 Argus, K 2014, *Childhood Homes - The Knob 2*, mixed media collage, 29x39cm



Figure 206 Argus, K 2014, *Childhood Homes - Ardy 1*, mixed media collage, 29x39cm

Appendix 5: Silent Series



Figure 217 Argus, K 2014, *Childhood Silence 2*, collage, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 76x57cm

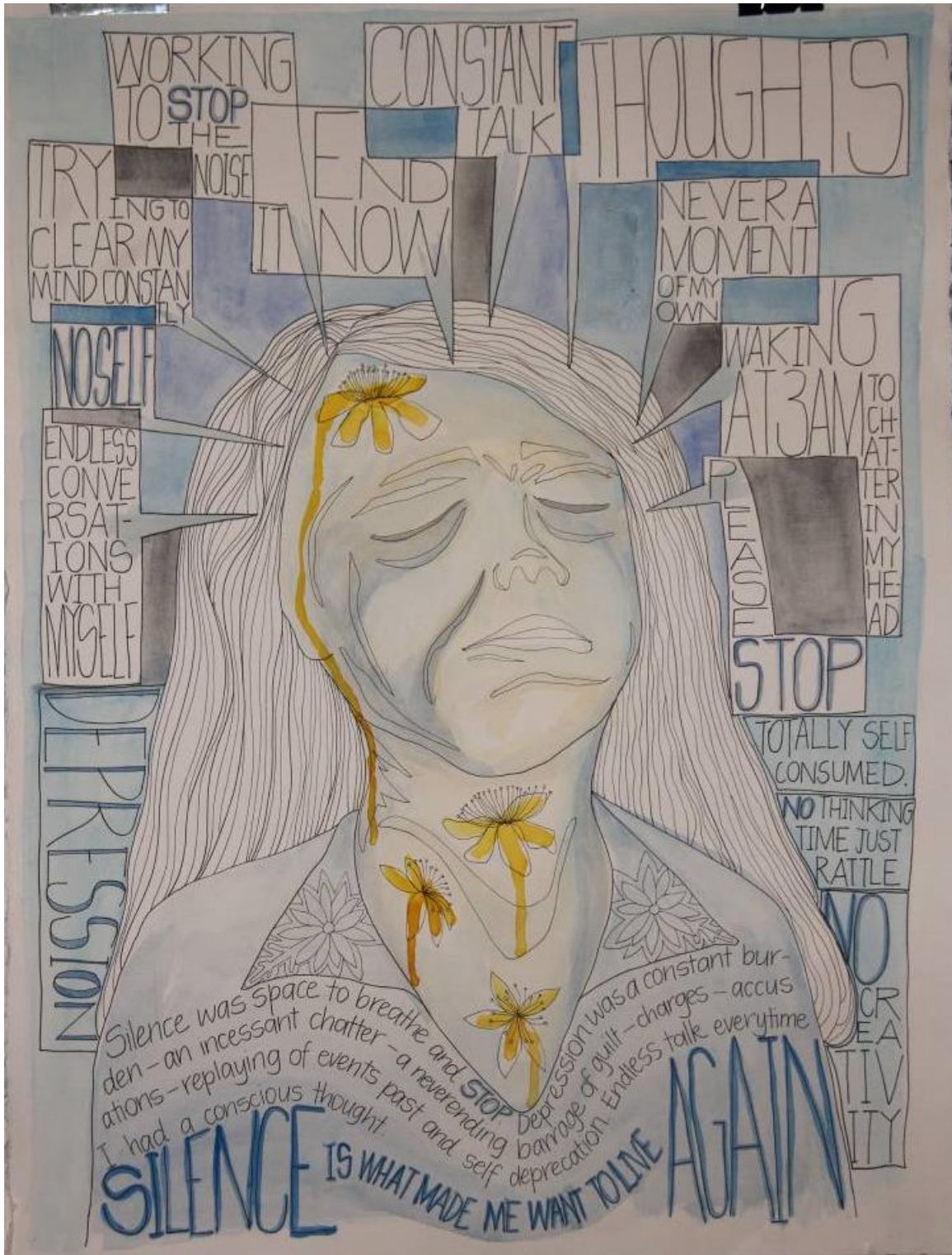


Figure 228 Argus, K 2014, *Depression*, ink, paint, coloured pencil on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 239 Argus, K 2014, *I am Surviving*, ink, paint, coloured pencil on paper, 76x57cm

Appendix 6: Polyvocality

Series 3 – 2015 – Introducing Collage

Focus: material narrative

Drivers: trying to express multiple aspects of self on a single page; who am I; what do magazines and newspapers say about who I am; attempting a second and third voice

Artwork: Artwork 1 – newspaper and magazine collage and acrylic paint on canvas, 150x200cm; Artwork 2 - collage (newspaper and magazine), ink, watercolour and coloured pencil on paper

Artist Statement:

These works were driven by trying to express a more complete sense of self. In this case, trying to add a second and possibly third aspect to that telling beyond the purely personal. I was challenged when creating works about myself on paper, as to how I could express the complexity of how I understood myself on a single page. I see myself, not a single aspect, but a member of a broader context, and felt in the *Silent Series* that I had begun to demonstrate the physical and an aspect of the personal of who I am, by adding in the introvert aspect to my personality, however, I still saw more to myself, than these few things conveyed. My approach in these two pieces, which are experimental works and not work for exhibition, are inspired by the work of Wangechi Mutu. Mutu is predominantly a collage artist and uses magazine images to create large collages. In her work, magazine images, mainly sourced from motorbike and pornography editions, are used to comment on how African people are portrayed in them. Her work is a social commentary on African people as stereotyped in a particular way, which she feels unfairly represents them as a people. Likewise, I have used history books and images from women's magazines as a way of thinking about how I am viewed according to documents society produces targeted at women my age or are written about women. The work *Road Kill* (Figure 30) began to survey women's magazines by cutting them out and creating a representation of myself through the images, which I am trained to view as representing Australian women. This is overlaid on a book of the history of Australia, written in the 70's, when I was born which also had a particular view on the contribution women made to the history and making of Australia. I created the work as road kill and the expression 'deer in the headlights' was prevalent when working through this idea. I was

challenged by what these said about who I was, should be and was expected to be. I'm not a fan of women's magazines, and don't really read them. These were sourced from an earlier generation and I suspect reflect their views of the world. They don't reflect mine. What is interesting however, is that while I don't read these magazines, people around me do, and this has an impact on who they expect my children and I to be.

The second work *Childhood Silence 2* (Figure 27) reflects on the work *Childhood Silence* (Figure 31&32). I worked to recreate an artwork using a material narrative – materials, which also tell a story. In this artwork I use children's discarded artwork to collage the background. It adds to the complexity of the telling, about what was happening around me at the time – which was a shaping of how our creativity was unleashed on the world. In this case the works that children had created freely in my classrooms and left at school, were cut up and collaged to create a background to children's art which is pieced together. Likewise, the work in its efforts to portray a sense of self, moves back to using symbols to represent where I lived, what I liked, the objects around me which recollect childhood stories. The image is drawn with Derwent coloured pencils – the same ones I was given when young – from a school photo of me when I was about eight. There are few women's magazine pictures in this work, because they weren't something I connected with easily, but discarded children's artworks say something to me about creativity and how it is nurtured or otherwise.



Figure 30 Argus, K 2014 *Road Kill*, newspaper and magazine collage and acrylic paint on canvas, 150x200cm



Figure 241 Argus, K 2014, *Childhood Silence*, collage, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 76x57cm

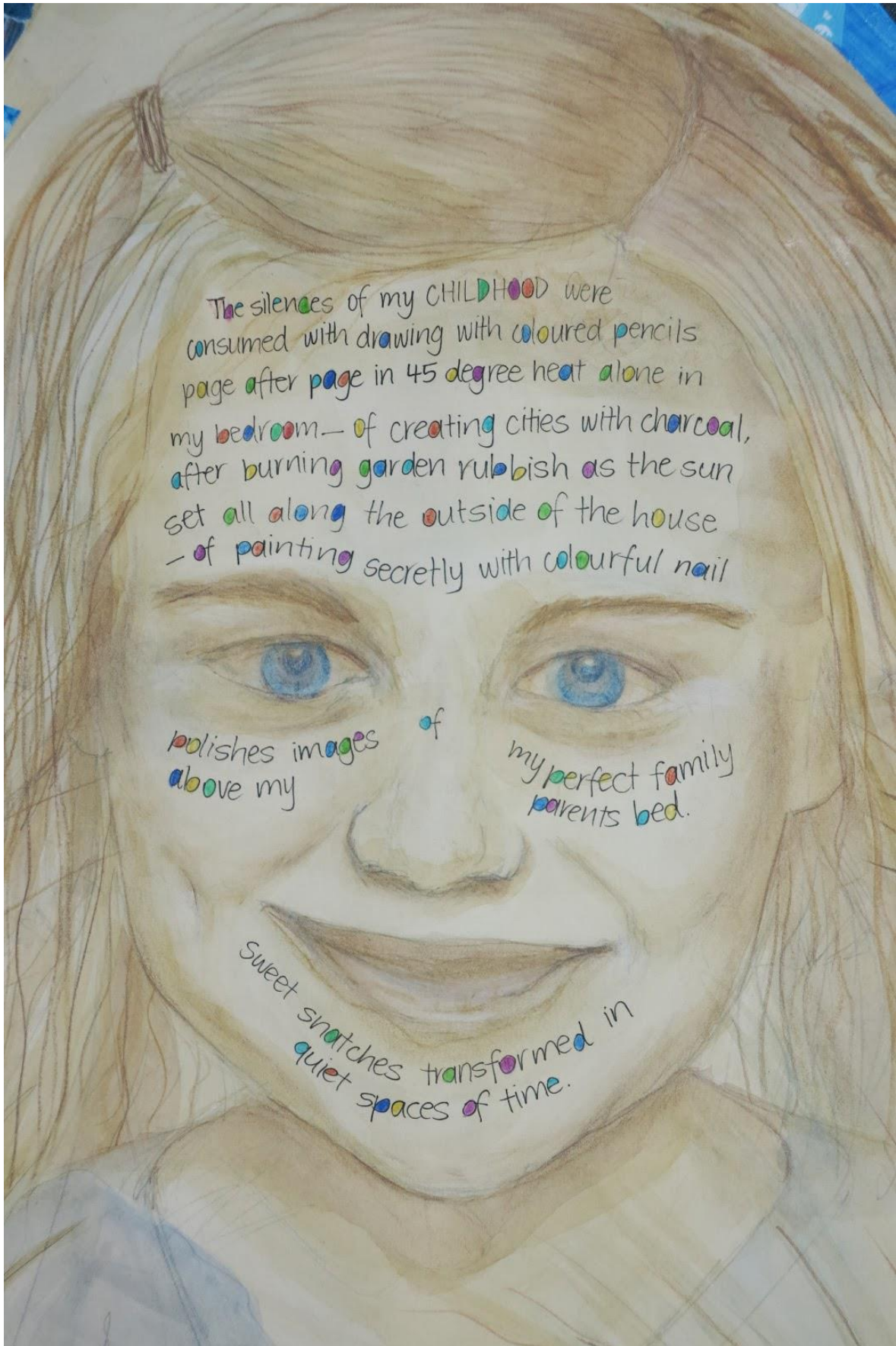


Figure 252 Argus, K 2014, close up of Childhood Silence, collage, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 76x57cm

Appendix 7: Phase 2 - Ideate Phase

What more can I find out? Can I answer this question already?

There were still two main theoretical threads at this point in the research, the concept of self and narrative and how they could be expressed. The issue of social relevance was focused on toads and the treatment of them. I had begun to consider artistic collaborations and looked at artists who had collaborated with others. I also grappled with the ethics of observing students work. I often reflected on my teaching practice and questioned whether this was used to reflectively document and chronicle an event or student. I became very clear about de-identifying any personal information, gaining parental permission and clarifying with myself the purpose of the documentation and ensuring that it aligned with my practice as a teacher and not the student in any form. That ethical line was important, so ethics approval was not sought, but focus on my process and not impact any individuals, was at the forefront of my mind.

Issue	Themes	Artworks	Materials	Artists & Theorists
Visual narrative	Creativity locked out Silence	Children in jars with warning labels on them Silent Series (Appendix 5)	Glass jars Collage Warning labels Coloured pencil Ink Paint	Barbara Kruger Barbara Dover
	Toads Multiple voices Collaboration Collaborative works Installation works	When will the Rain Come? (Appendix 8)	Collage Paint on canvas Newspaper font Magazine images Discarded artworks	Linele Stepto Amy Casey Amanda Shelsher Iman Issa – Freize Magazine Margaret Olley Margaret Preston Pascale Marthine Tayou Beth Galstone Gerda Steiner and Jorg Lenzlinger Linde Ivimey Troy Emery Patty Grazini Wangechi Mutu Basquiat

Table 3 Working through Ideate Phase thinking

Using the book I wrote for a Preparatory to Year 4 Class I was teaching, titled 'When Will the Rain Come?' (Table 4) I began to work on some large canvases exploring picture book

narrative written in multiple voices and expressed using multiple materials and forms with the intention of being placed in an exhibition space. I read a lot about other artists (Table 3) some drawing toads, working on collaborations, using colours as a source of reference, attempting a combination of text and image and attempting multiple aspects of thinking in a single image. This broadened my thinking around what could be presented in an exhibition and what could be presented in a single image. This line of thinking began to bring together the issue of social relevance, being toads, and the self and narrative themes.

Voice 1 (oppressor) Newspaper fonts	Voice 2 (oppressed) Scratched in wet paint
It's a long dark hole at school under the tree.	We sit. Watching and wondering, 'When will the rain come?'
I can see inside. I block out the sun with my hands.	Warm, sticky air pushed in around us. Each body still. I snuggle up to my mum. Sharp poke. I don't move.
When I look inside I can see them ... hundreds and thousands of eyes staring back at me.	Silence. Crowded together. No movement. No sound. I close my eyes and dream.
I always think they're going to jump on my face, but they don't. They just sit there waiting for the rain to come.	I dream of a beautiful day. It quickly becomes a nightmare and I try to think again of beautiful rainy days.
We play around them while they wait.	My eyes are closed, but I can feel it. Thump! Thump! Thump! Vibrations all around us. I shiver with fear.
When the rain comes we run inside, but through the window I can see them hopping out.	Finally, the rain is coming. Drips begin to fall. Around me bodies slowly begin to move. Waking out of slumber.
First one-by-one. Then there is a sea of them.	No-one can resist the pull of the rain. Time to play. One-by-one we climb out. Soon the joy of freedom is everywhere.
Toads.	Beautiful toads of all shapes and sizes.
Toads are jumping, playing, racing out into the raindrops. Dripping, splashing.	Toads are jumping, playing, racing. Out into the raindrops. Dripping, splashing.
Bell rings. It's our turn to play in the puddles.	Thumping returns. Big feet stomping. Crashing. Squashing. Destroying the beautiful puddles and rain.
The gardener comes. Big boots on. Raincoat covers him – drips go down his socks.	Racing to hide amongst the plants. Heading for the hole. 'Where is mum?' 'What do I do?'
Chasing all the toads. He puts them in his plastic bags. Fills them up. We help him so we can play in the rain.	Sitting at the edge of the hole I turn to look back and see ... bodies hanging by the foot.
He walks with the bags back to his house.	I'm pulled into the hole.
Inside the freezer the toad bags go ... and they slowly fall asleep.	I sit inside shivering. Thinking about what I saw.
The rain has stopped and the bell rings. Back outside we go to play in the sunshine.	We sit closely, numb and still. Wondering about those who are no longer here. My mum is gone.
I look down the long dark hole. Guess what? More eyes. Waiting for the rain to come.	The sun is blocked out and warm, sticky air is pushed in around us. Everyone is still. I sit and cry.

Table 4 Original text of 'When will the Rain Come?' written by Karen Argus

At this point, the intent was to find closure for the issue being considered, by broadening thinking around it and to then moving back to the community phase to begin again. However,

a point of closure was not achieved. Therefore, further consideration of the subject from alternative points of view and from sources not previously considered were required. At this point, competing strands were also evident - the contemplation of self, and how to express an authentic view of self, remained part of the work, as did the question of narrative and how it should be represented to convey its complexity.

The Silent Series

The *Silent Series* (Appendix 5) were part of the experimental thinking at this time. These



Figure 33 Argus, K 2016 *The Long Dark Hole*, triptych, canvas 1 of 3, newspaper, children discarded artwork, acrylic paint, womens' magazines on canvas 1.8mx1.25m

works demonstrated a grappling with elements in an effort to portray an authentic self, using text and image (Appendix 5: Figures 27-29). The social issue of the introduction of, and killing of toads, remained front and centre too. How multiple voices were to be portrayed was equally challenging. To satisfy the 'self' component the writing from the artwork, *Childhood Silence 2* (Figure 27), was transposed onto a canvas and painted black, on a black background (Figure 33 & 34). This provided it with a presence, but a very quiet one which required a study of the work, for it to actually

be seen. Eyes were cut from discarded womens' magazines and glued over discarded children's artworks and then rearranged and reorganized (Figure 34). The canvas began to

represent a complex self that was seamless, non-unified, conflicted, contradictory, ambiguous, multi-voiced and introverted. It focused on the importance of a complex, silent



Figure 264 Argus, K 2016 *The Long Dark Hole* triptych canvas 2 of 3, newspaper, children discarded artwork, acrylic paint, womens' magazines on canvas 1.8mx1.25m

self in a noise infested world and a society, which forced its values onto one. These works were experimental at this stage.

Art is an embodied process, so there was also a lot of questioning around what discarded pictures meant - not needed, not required or unwanted. Did they represent symbols of society also discarded and no longer needed – torn away for instance? Materials tell narratives of their own and contribute to, a complex narrative telling. Art research has become '... a field of possibilities, of exchange and comparative analysis in which different modes of perception and thinking are integrated.' (Rutten 2016, p. 297). This opening up beyond a set of formal criteria, deemed 'real research' allows the opportunity for a more interesting discussion around what should be considered research (Hawkins & Wilson 2017). It also ensures that the unique and individual views of creative arts researchers are acknowledged.

Example: The Long Dark Hole Triptych

I began a triptych for the book I wrote in 2010, 'When will the Rain Come?' at this point just a black shape on a red background, which is how it stayed for quite some time as I thought through how I wanted to create it. 'It's a long dark hole' is a triptych (Figure 34) of a large black hole and forms artworks for pages 1, 2 and 3 of the picture book 'When Will the Rain

Come?'. The three panels begin the story – they set the scene – a complexity of means, which explore the concept of self and on another level, challenge our societal values around the introduction of toads to Far North Queensland. This triptych designed on a number of levels, was considered - as I created it over a couple of years. At this point however, I largely worked on the painted elements and the text forms. Some aspects are symbolic, some written, metaphorical, personal, and some thoughts from childhood. All are based in the demands of research. There is no single way to explain my understanding of this beginning other than to tell you what happened or did not happen.

Using Exhibition Conventions

I began these canvases early in my research. I had the idea to create a picture book as an exhibition, so that the social norms of exhibition viewing and associated with art, were applied to the viewing of the book. I felt that picture book viewing overemphasized the use of text and often skipped over the rich picture form. Some research I had undertaken in my MEd (literacy) confirmed this for Year 1 students, who when presented with a picture book that they could not understand after the picture walk (a reading of the book looking at pictures only) left students prompting the teacher to tell them what the words said, rather than problem-solving the pictures themselves. While, when presented with multiple artworks, students moved into higher order thinking, to problem solve and create multiple stories of how the images might be connected. What became interesting to me was that I noticed that when the format of the viewing was altered, in this case from book form to exhibition form, inadvertently it also changed the way I made decisions about what I was creating. There was a greater emphasis on the detail and how something might be read. There was more focus on the process of producing work to ensure that it was high quality not simply basic and to the point. Placing work in a gallery space took quite a lot of my thinking time away from the story and onto exhibition standards and requirements. As I worked across the three canvases, I noticed a change in thinking from working specifically on this part of the story to consideration of the whole, at times too.

The Use of Font

I revisited the book and began to remove words that were not required or had little value and replaced them with images and design aspects to tell the story. I spent time discussing this with friends and colleagues. I also spent a lot of time contemplating which font to use,

because I thought it communicated something more than simply words (Figure 35) and in the exhibition it was deliberately placed high, so the viewer needed to look up to read it. It was placed in a position of power, but through cutting it and varying the font, a questionable position of power – a constructed but broken sense of power. The original line read ‘There was a long dark hole at school under the tree’, which ended up as ‘It’s a long dark hole’ in large chopped newspaper font (Figure 36) across the top of the first canvas.

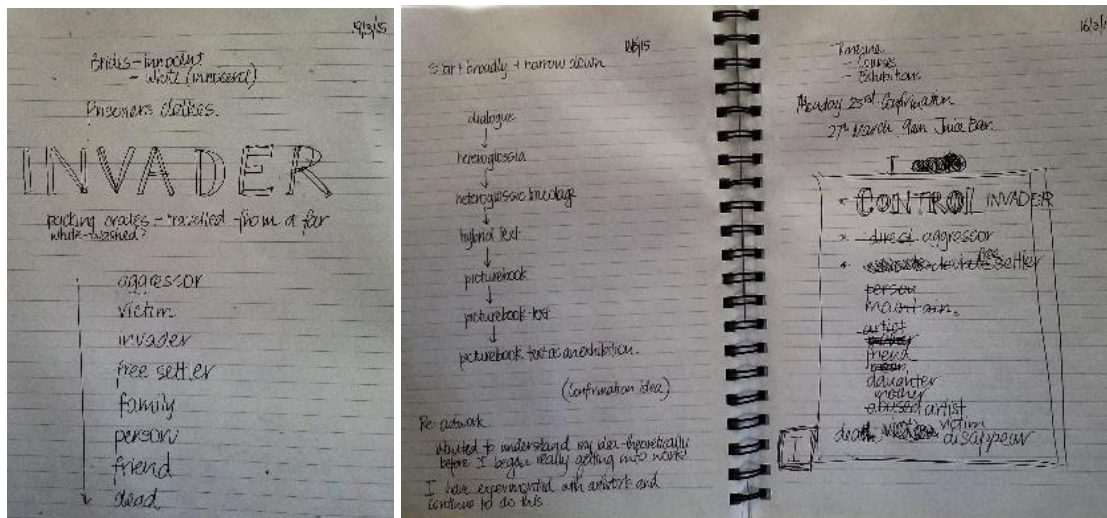


Figure 275 Argus, K 2015 Research Journal entries exploring an idea around the hierarchy of text forms March

The canvases have two voices written on them, one of the children (Figure 36) and the other of the toad (Figure 37). Both of these multi-voiced aspects, in some way, represent me also – a movement between my roles as a woman, mother, teacher and artist as a constantly moving state of flux from powerful to powerless.



Figure 286 Argus, K 2015 Close ups of chopped newspaper font from the Long dark hole triptych

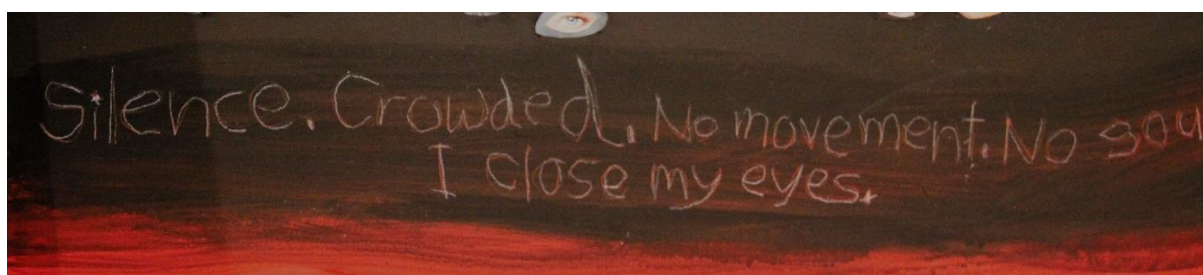


Figure 297 Argus, K 2015 Close ups of scratched fonts from the Long dark hole triptych

Additionally, they present a narrative - a means to draw the audience, to provide something they can read to further their understanding. If the time is taken they may also learn something about me, but of toads if they do not.

Understandings of Self

These works create understandings of self, not seamless or unified understandings, but aspects of self, composed of a myriad of experiences and drawn together here as one voice. As a self, my view of myself is conflicted, and at times contradictory – in these works I am both submissive and domineering – there are multiple aspects to who I am. The concept of self was becoming less important in the work at this stage. I had begun to think more about what a narrative is and how it can be constructed.

Way of Working

I became aware that not everything needed to be planned and followed through. That if something were to drop away, that this would be its natural course, no different to aspects of self which fade away. So, during this time, my arts practice was continually emerging.

Exploring Colour and Meaning

I see red as a female colour – the colour of blood, female blood – a life source and a sign of the potential for life to continue (Figure 38). Red is the colour used to draw-in luck and fortune. Red is bright and happy, but also cheap, as in the red-light district and advertising for cheap products in grocery stores. Red is used to express love, but also anger and hate – red is complex and ambiguous.

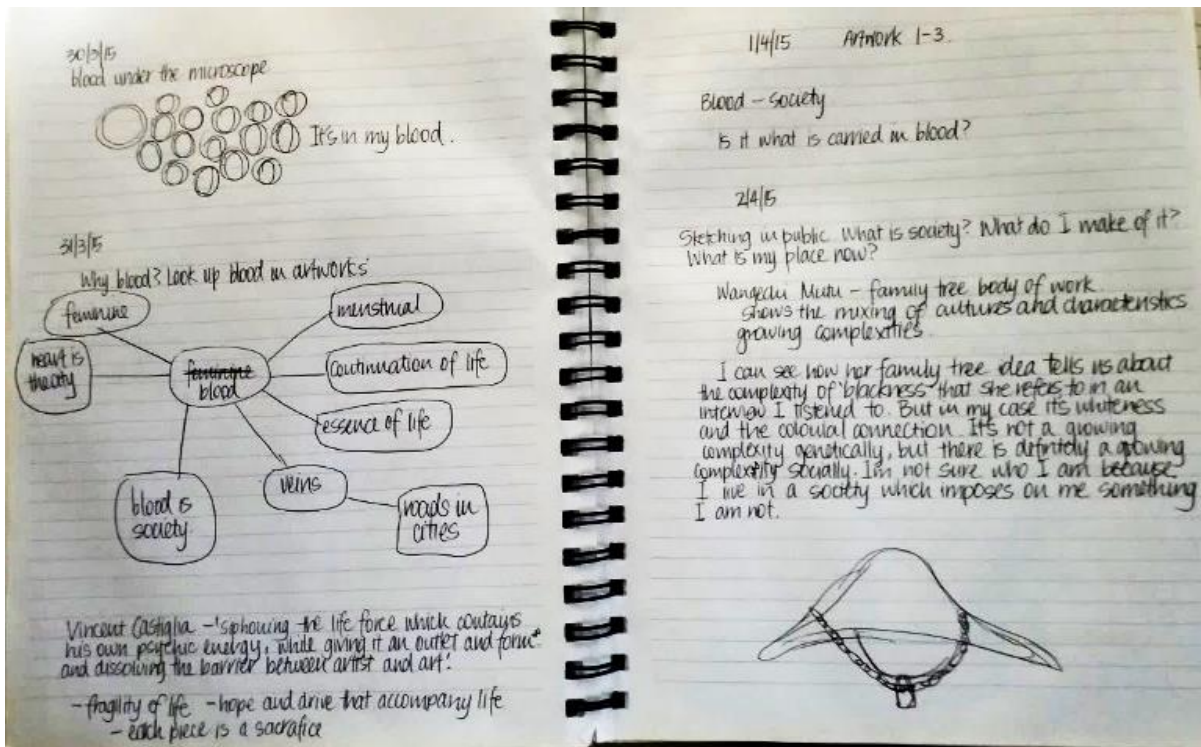


Figure 308 Argus, K 2015 Research Journal entry Looking at the concept of blood, April

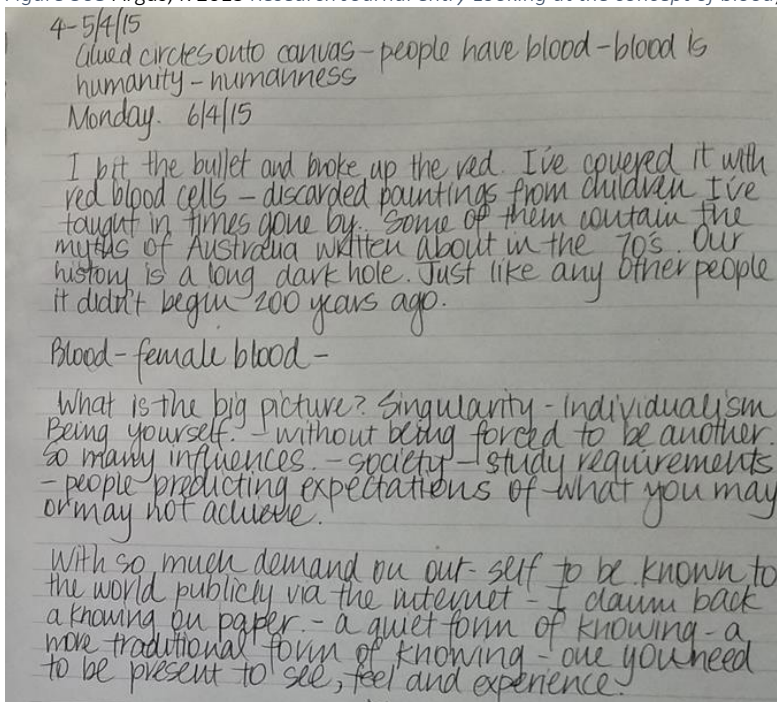


Figure 319 Argus, K 2015 Research Journal entry Writing about the artistic process and connecting it with thinking and application, April

Complexity of materials used

Using discarded children's artworks (Figure 39) wasn't a colour choice for me, but a statement about being human. It also questioned the way in which we cut and direct the artwork of young children into cookie cutter forms. It's the beginning of the socialization

process, it's where we begin to learn how to fit into societal norms and values in the primary art classroom.

These artworks were collected from my classrooms over time and made into a paper bank - boxes of painted colour. The paper was collected after returning the work to students who had purged their ideas at the easel but then discarded the outcome. They were cut into doughnut shapes like those of blood cells under the microscope to break up the uniform, red background which communicated constancy, uniformity and homogeneity – everything that I was fighting against (Figure 40). They add individuality with no two the same. They add complexity and interest.



Figure 40 Argus, K 2015, Close up of use of discarded children's artworks cut into circles

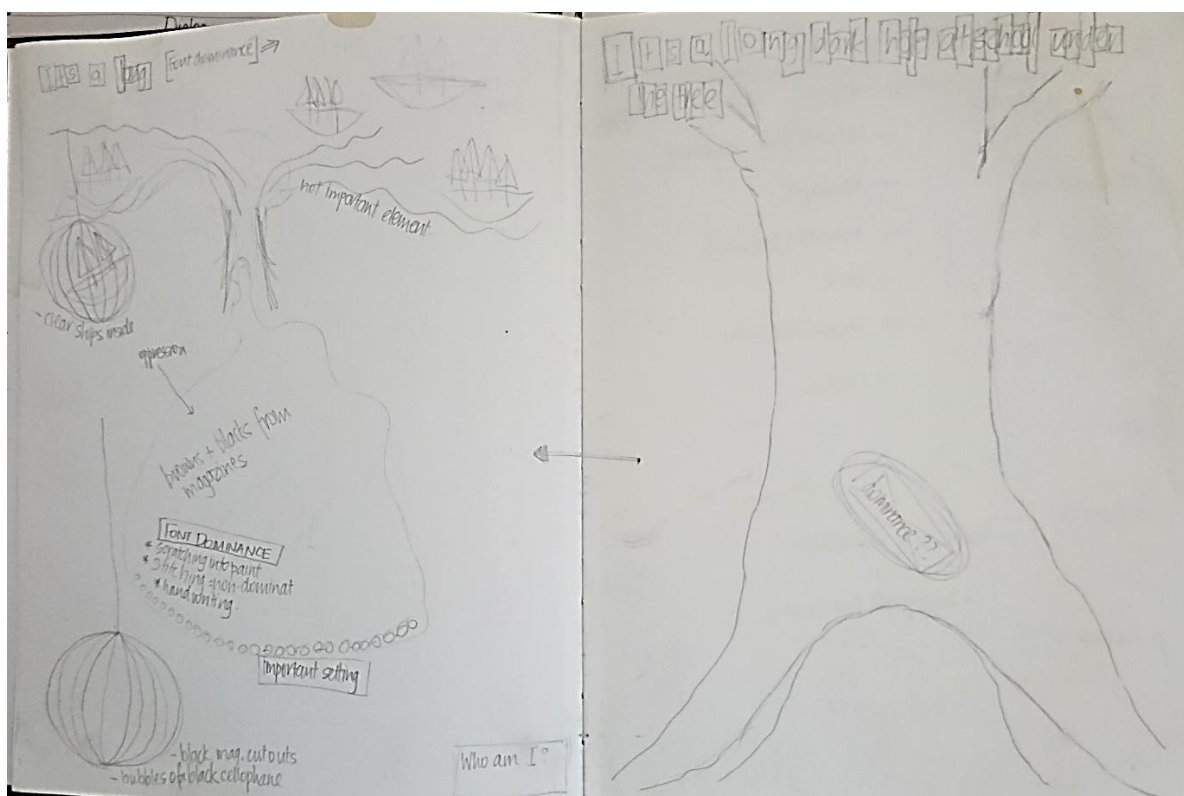


Figure 41 K 2014 Artist Journal entry initially the hole was actually placed under a tree, until when cutting back the words the tree wasn't deemed a vital aspect of the text

The size and shape of the hole across the three canvases evolved. The development over time evident in the artist journal (Figure 41). These works were followed by another triptych following the same process (Appendix 10: Figures 64-66). A series of cloud pictures were also

created but never used, instead changing them out for a larger sculptural piece, which was more effective (Figure 67), along with four portraits of toads (Figure 68-71).

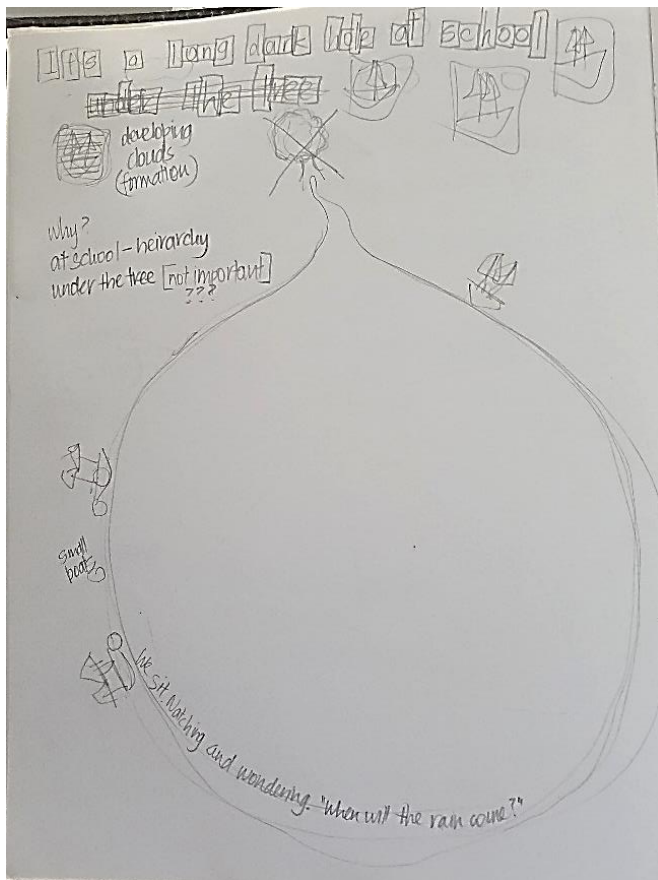


Figure 322 Argus, K 2014 Artist Journal entry This image shows the tree being cut out and emphasis provided to the hole. This was an approach which went through to the final work

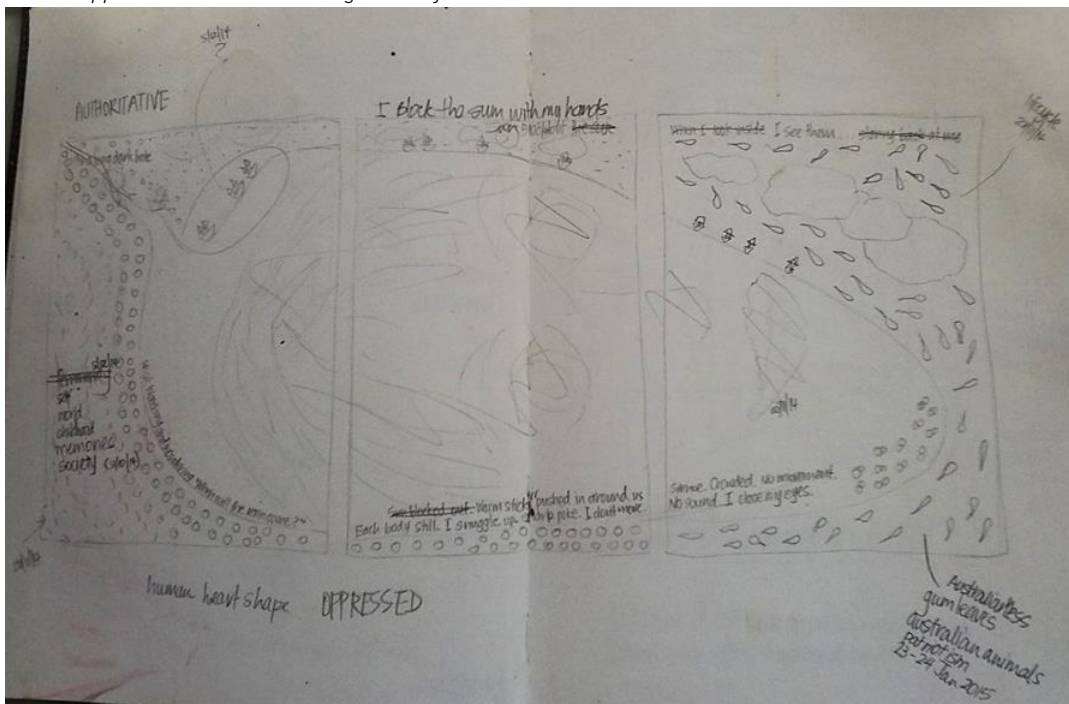


Figure 333 Argus, K 2015 Artist Journal entry This shows the hole taking on the shape of a heart which was the final shape in the artwork. There were still lots of changes around the outside with the more patriotic and colonial aspects discarded

Appendix 8: Iteration 2: When Will the Rain Come?

Exhibition Concept

'When Will the Rain Come?', showed from early November to December and presented



numerous text types on toads, but additionally focused on the broader value of compassion in society, as well as carrying an underlying theme on the role society plays in creativity.

'When Will the Rain Come?' is based on a narrative written for students in a rural and remote school in Far North Queensland in 2013. I wrote the story as a response to them watching the toads when it rained, pour out of a hole, which was under a tree outside our classroom. They would ask if they could go get them. This along with some other events made me think about the toad issue and our thoughts as a society surrounding this introduced species. In Far North Queensland people have strong opinions about toads, but my ideas were simple, they were however, conflicting. The issues which did not find fit were: firstly, the contradictory values of telling children to aggressively kill something compared with the 'play nice' and 'play gently' value usually heard; secondly extinguishing the life of a living thing; and, thirdly the

Figure 344 Tanks Art Centre 2017 *When Will the Rain Come?* Invitation

reported damage they are doing to the environment. This exhibition explores my approach to finding some 'truth' to this issue. It was held in the Main Gallery at The Tanks in Cairns from November to December, 2017.

As an educator, there is a particular slant, to the way you view the world. You view it with the means to educate another. In my case, I break the world down into teachable pieces and contemplate how to deliver those pieces in a way that optimises learning. This particular sway or bent is difficult to leave behind. As educators, audience is always at the forefront of our thinking. For me, my history is not just in education, I am still a classroom teacher. I teach both art and writing and it is difficult to separate the two when I move from being a teacher of these things, to when I become the artist and writer, that are also, me. As

Britzman (2006) states, 'We are all affected by the worlds we try to affect; our sense of identity may telegraph the human condition' (pxi). Teaching for me is a lifestyle, not an occupation. It is a primary part of what makes me, me. 'When Will the Rain Come?' is an exhibition focused on two main things – expressing who I am, and the ways I am impacted and impacting society. Drawing heavily on the transmodern (Luyckx 1999) idea of self, the work acknowledges the past and present while contemplating a future. This work moves beyond the body as self, and being impacted by society, towards a self in which there is a to-ing and fro-ing of ideas between society and itself. It considers the self, finding a pathway of truth owned and directed by oneself but influenced both by history and society.

The exhibition is a story that actually happened in a Far North Queensland school when the students went out to play and it rained, but beyond this simple viewing, the work addresses a complex understanding of self, including themes of introversion, invasion, compassion, belonging, family history, depression and childhood. These understandings, as aspects of self are embedded within the use of picture book text, exhibition, collage and sculpture. This work moves one back to stillness and contemplation, to a point of listening and understanding.

The works in the exhibition explore understandings of self beyond the body, seen through threads, which move from canvas to canvas. These understandings are written, visual, compositional and material threads.

Created for a gallery setting

The narrative, 'When will the rain come?' is written in picture book style and created for a gallery setting. The gallery role allows a broader space within which the narrative is able to develop and be read and encourages the viewer to come to the work with a mindset which encourages close looking and a focus on the visual elements. Likewise, the creator also brings to the narrative setting the mindset of creating art, rather than only that of a storyteller through words. The narrative is not intended to be a book placed on walls, but a narrative space, where the viewer is encouraged to contemplate the story. The viewer, once in the story, accesses the layers to consider the thoughts, ideas and views being presented by the creator, but impacted and read through their own experience. The exhibition narrative is acknowledged as being a physical object within the gallery space, but simultaneously is part of a much larger narrative, being explored and sought by the creator/researcher. The aim of

this research is to consider this aspect of my journey towards understanding self. This aspect of the journey is documented in a multitude of ways - research journals, blog, artist journals, Facebook pages, meeting minutes, academic writing, experimental artworks and exhibition.

Understanding my context

Throughout the development of the narrative, an awareness of the community and environment in which I live is evident and acknowledged as being both a physical space as well as an intellectual one. These spaces for the purpose of this research are considered as: the personal (self as artist), practical (theory of art practice/ how artists work), social (theory behind art), creative (theory of creativity and what art making is), educational (theory of text/ theory of art) and, sharing (theory of exhibition narrative) spaces. The interaction with these spaces is reiterative, constantly changing and often beyond clear definition.

The idea that began this line of thinking was the way toads are treated. I was stuck on the idea that parents openly encouraged their children to kill them in quite aggressive and violent ways. I wondered about this as a confused value. On one hand 'Play gently Johnny. Don't be too rough' and on the other 'Kill the bloody thing!'.

In the instance of my first exhibition, my class at school used to look into a hole under a tree outside our classroom. They loved it when it rained as the toads would pour out of the hole and they would chase them.

My second experience came when I was at a BBQ at a friend's house. I was surrounded by great people, great conversation and people just enjoying an evening together. The parents were watching their kids play on the grass and sharing a wine or two, reminding the kids to play fairly and not be too rough. When, out of the blue, the host went to the shed and brought back some golf clubs. The kids ran out into the yard and began hitting the two toads that were there. The previously concerned parents, telling their kids not to play too rough were suddenly cheering loudly at them killing toads in a pretty aggressive manner. It really tainted the evening for me, and I left pretty soon afterwards. Toad killing has become a part of the North Queensland psyche, I think. It is not seen as an aggressive act because the justification of the killing is environmental protection and sustainability.

Challenged by community thinking

While the initial drive was the student behaviour, I really tried hard to find fit with what is a community value. Far North Queenslanders hate toads. So, my sources were skewed at this point to all the scientific writing about toads and the environment. I was trying to convince myself that it was okay to kill them. My compassion for them as living things, continually outweighed any, and all scientific writing that I had found on the topic. I became aware of toads during this and struggled with the change in parental values when it came to this animal. I began seeing it as an introduced species, which had been put here, with no choice and felt some sympathy for its plight. I continued to look at maps of its progress across Australia. I read about the destruction to the environment and the amount of insect life it ate. I read newspaper articles about them from when they arrived. I tried to find space for it, so that I too could want to destroy it, but it just was not there for me. While I do not love them, I do not hate them enough to kill them either.

Writing a book

With the intent to share my thinking, I wrote a picture book for my class. I wrote a story about their actions. I wanted the students to question their behaviour. On reading the book, they saw their behaviour, but were not moved by it at all. In fact, it continued further stories of how they had killed the toads and excitement and the means of doing it. This story did not leave my thinking. I felt there was some incongruence between parents asking their children to 'play gently' in one situation, and to 'kill the bloody things' in another.

A second voice

So, I wrote a second voice into the story, the voice of a young toad. It was added during a writing subject in a Masters' program at the University of Wollongong and received great support. I shared it with some early years teachers who were astounded that I could make them feel for toads. I also shared it with family and friends. For all intents and purposes, at this point it was a postmodern picture book. The second voice added another perspective and a lot more depth to the story. The student reaction to the story this time around, was profound. They said they had never thought of it that way and they then began to write stories with alternate voices of their own. They said all the right things about alternative solutions to aggressively killing them. But, while the behaviour was acknowledged, the next time it rained, the actions were the same. I was disheartened.

Continuing to examine the context

I looked thorough the images of toads in Google search to work out how they were portrayed visually. I looked at how toads were portrayed sculpturally across the world. On reading the newspaper articles again, I looked at the changing language used when talking about toads – from the lead up to their introduction and onto their demise. I worked on drawing toads and painting them. I focused on portraying them in a more positive light. I examined photos of them exploring the patterning and looking past the poisonous glands.

Presenting at Tropics of the Imagination Conference

My first move into finding a broader audience was a presentation at Tropics of the Imagination. This was my first attempt at using the theory behind transmodern/beyond-postmodern thinking. While early in this research the theory behind the thinking was helping me to find a space for the multitude of opinions I was encountering. I also gave me ideas about exhibition space and content.

APT8 at GoMA

I met with my visual art mentor early in 2016 when APT8 was at the GoMA. After talking about my research and where it was heading, we wandered through. This was not my first walk through, but it was the first time with someone who had a genuine interest in art. We talked about the works we saw, and this was the first time I tried out my narrative lens when discussing work. I became really interested in an art space by 3 artists, Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Hesam Rahmanian which I felt best represented a beyond-postmodern narrative.

A unit of work on complex texts

I developed a unit of work after this exhibition around complex texts. Complex texts at this point, were my way of introducing students to the idea that we can express ourselves in more than one way. It worked simultaneously with me also beginning to develop work using different narrative forms.

While theoretically my understanding of beyond-postmodern narrative was moving forward, my arts practice and understanding was lagging behind. I attended a five-day workshop with David Fairbairn [Appendix 9], which provided the necessary drive to move my thinking

forward. In terms of creative practice, my work had remained in a gathering stage until this workshop. This is where a linear model is not effective in telling the story comprehensively. However, not long after the workshop, my practice moved forward quite substantially.

Presenting at the ALEA Conference in Adelaide

In July, 2016 I decided to present my narrative concept to a group of literacy teachers and experts at the ALEA Conference in Adelaide. Teachers of English stick predominantly with a genre approach to narrative for ease of marking I believe, and so it was interesting to begin with modern narrative which can be explained this way, but to then walk them through how narrative has changed over time and to apply this to a classroom context. The ALEA presentation was reworked into an article to share this content to a broader audience.

Bullying unit of work

From February to July 2017, with this still in my mind I wrote a unit of work based around bullying. The unit of work tied in with a program that was being run across Queensland called 'Say No to Bullying!' I ran the unit from Year 1 through to Year 6 in visual art classes. The students worked through developing a mixed media artwork around the theme of bullying.

Adjusting as we worked

The bullying unit of work was adjusted as we moved through it. The final assessment saw students create a work of their own, in response to the question 'Do we bully toads, or do toads bully the environment?' There was a lot of discussion around the term 'bullying' as well as arguments for and against toads, with some students not able to take a firm position one way or another.

Gallery Manager

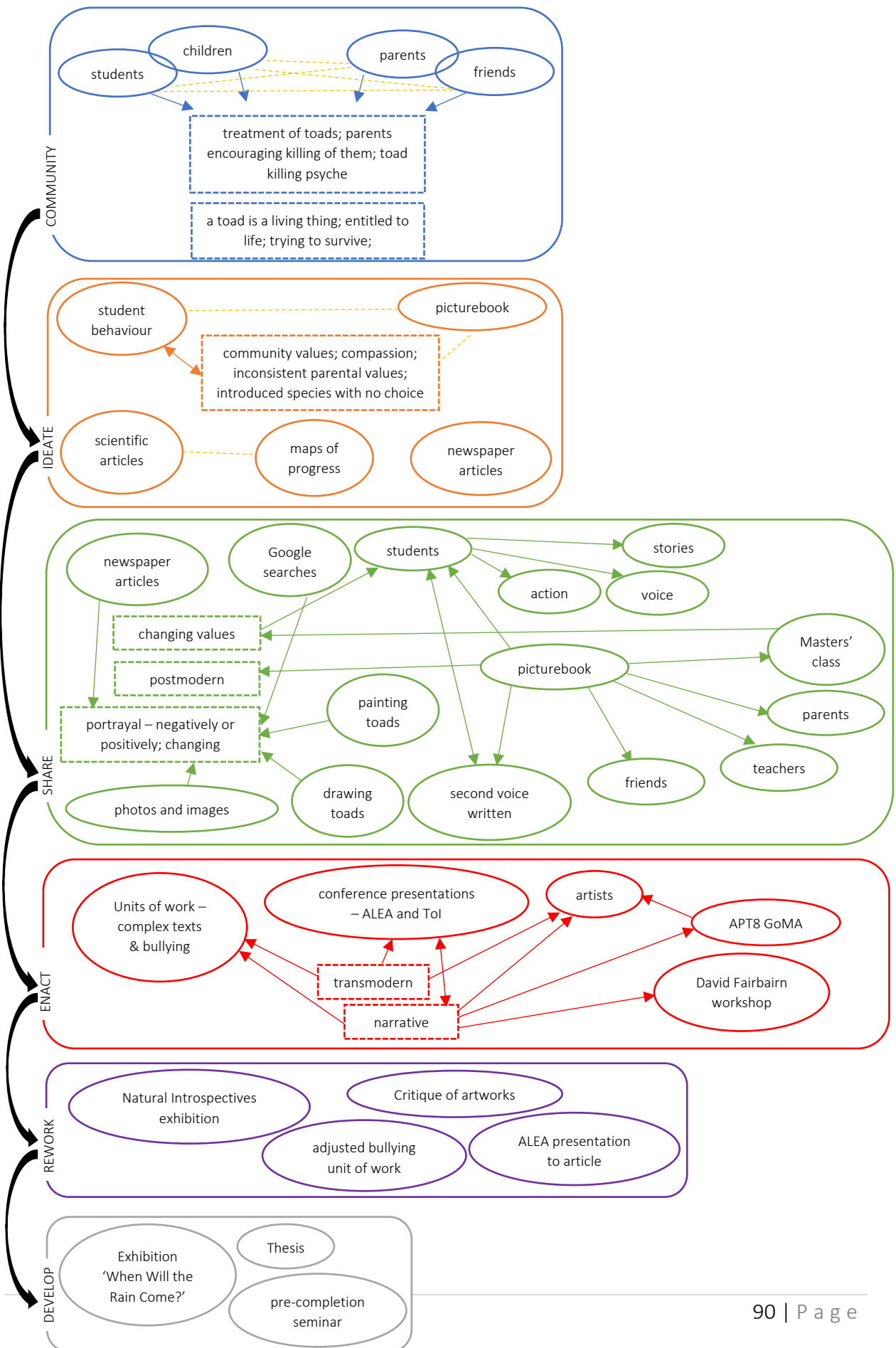
This saw me in the role of artist/curator for an exhibition around '*Natural Introspectives*' and to develop a unit of work to complement this. This exhibition has been a great opportunity to sit with a group of very talented artists and to bring together a lot of individual interpretations of ways of seeing the environment we live in.

The unit of work that was created to go with this exhibition extended to include an exhibition visit and opportunities to work with artists through workshops and/or school visits.

Critique of earlier works

Some works which I had begun to develop in the earlier stage were critiqued at this point – demonstrating once again that the linear process is an ideal and not always effective in practice. The critique had me go back to rework some of the artworks which were deemed ‘unresolved’ and difficult to understand.

Tracking Phases - Iteration 2



Appendix 9: David Fairbairn Workshop

While the work I did with David Fairbairn moved my practice forward and re-grounded me in drawing, the other side to what I learnt from him was what practice-led research looked like in the arts. I did not know what it was called then and I probably was not really aware of what it was, but there was a lightning moment following 5 days with this artist and teacher which altered my perception of drawing and art research. David took us through a series of studies on the same subject (Argus 2016b, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016f), but by looking at it in different ways and through using a variety of methods and materials. He referred throughout to contemporary and historical artists and encouraged us to consider their lines of thinking and decision making in their practices. We discussed influences and researched other artists which may have influenced us. Throughout each of these studies we focused on a different aspect for instance, shade, shape, line etcetera and used different materials. This was all considered research, ways of getting to know the subject - as different materials work in different ways and can create different effects and responses. At the end of each session we then critiqued and discussed each other's work. This too was part of the research process.

Day 1

Through no fault of his, I must confess that it was no walk in the park working with David Fairbairn. In fact, for me the first 2 days were incredibly stressful as we worked through visual art methodologies - line and charcoal, contrast with charcoal, ink, and collage and life drawing. Sadly, I missed the plot on these activities mainly working on trying to get the form of our life model right - so could definitely do with a second 5 day workshop to be honest. I think a second round would help me to actually complete the activities he set up, in a way in which I actually try to achieve the goals he establishes. These went over my head completely! David introduces the workshop as dealing with the language of drawing. Having completed 5 days, I now understand something of what he is saying. He points out from the outset that realism is not his goal and that we are here to think ... and over the next 5 days believe me, there is quite a lot of thinking to be done! He teaches at the National Art School but mainly I think, he lives for drawing and his skill as a teacher is such that he finds his way through your skin and into your brain.

David sees drawing as an evolving process of research and methodology. He moves the class away from completing illustrations or facsimiles to translations. He refers to artists throughout his conversations - one-to-one and to the class as a whole - demonstrating a grasp on the people in his field with ease but also acknowledging their importance to your practice and his own.

Throughout the 5 days he refers continuously to the distinction between rendering and copying. With rendering where his value is placed - reconceptualising the form.

He warned us there would be criticism both individually and as a group, and that this would help us grow and improve. :) As uncomfortable as it made me feel, he was right I learnt a

tonne.



Figure 355 **David Fairbairn Workshop – Critique Time** Photo by Karen Argus 2016

Critique Time

He referred a lot to working on the inside, rather than from an outline of the figure. The challenge when drawing is to move around the picture plane - inhabit the different spaces and to realise that each space affects how the line is read.



Figure 366 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - Workshop activities, charcoal, chalk pastel and conte on paper

This one really didn't work for me - early piece, trying to develop abstraction (edginess rather than organic line). While not such a great example of abstraction the background work is far more authentic. There were some good things happening here. Focus on where the figure meets the environment.



Figure 377 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - Workshop activities 2 charcoal on paper

Charcoal ground that we created and worked from.

I played with the conte on this one. Not so easy to see from the size of this image. Enjoyed just following the light. Still working from an outline, once the conte started to do its work, I'd wished the charcoal line wasn't there. Focus on where the figure meets the environment and stylising shadow.



Figure 388 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - Workshop activities 4 charcoal on paper

Improvement in the use of materials at this point. Still a lot of black line work which I'd like to move away from, but much happier with this exploration. Used the charcoal base in these to fully form the feet and create the shadow. Just pushed it around and erased back the light. I'm actually really happy with the shape of this piece and the front foot and shadow.

Change from working, from perspective, to working in planes. Resolved works (completed) are not the goal, but to experiment is - engage with the moment. No need to work to a resolved work. Will move to resolution by the end of the week, when we will do longer drawings and climb in and solve the mess. It's probably a 1980's mindset where art is about problem solving. This is embedded in a strong foundation of art history.

Comments throughout to everyone:

- Continuous line creates a more organic line.

- Make it more constructed - geometric
- look - process - put on the page. The brain is vital - move away from creating 1 million of the same thing
- Work on angularity. Move away from reality.
- Pay attention to where the figure meets the outside space - figure coming from the architecture

This is a conceptual approach. A living figure should express life. We place a figure in an environment to connect them with what is around them. Consider what makes this work your own. Stretch yourself. Keep looking.

Artists to follow up:

Paula Rego, Mike Parr, Auerbach

When working identify the difference between organic and edginess to achieve different looks and approaches.

LOCATION + SCALE = SPACE

*** COMPOSITION ***

Paper is not your defined space. Extend by adding beyond. Move outside the known. Celebrate the extension and diversity of materials and ideas.

Keep changing the question. Sadly, my questions were non-existent. In fact I spent the entire time grappling with materials and figures and missed all of this until returning home. I can't believe I learnt so much and began thinking so differently, despite not grasping at all what he had been talking about all of Day 1.

Drawing is as much about the inside space as it is about the line.

Colourist - tonalist - what is the difference?? Tonal = interest in gradations.

Consider:

Primary - straight from the tube.

Secondary - 1 colour mixed in with

Tertiary - 1 colour mixed with secondary

Be aware of how much mixing. Dynamics - fluidity in drawings.

If we accept that the ladder is static - the model is not. Temporal is moving and changing. Examine both static and temporal elements.

Day 2

We began the day with David reminding us that there is no one way and that you need to find your way. Each way of looking is the process.

Move from the idea of lines creating a plane. Consider. If you choose to see everything you are not being selective. Not being selective is not visually intelligent. Use the lines you draw to find the form.

The first layer is the scaffold.

TONE/MASS - when moving from one point to another.

Tone is constructed - become more representational. Lots of gradation. Formalise how you see shadow. Given a shape rather than just shadow.

Auerbach - painter/drawer - dynamic energy

George Gittoes - war zone - film maker - front line

Other like-minded Artists

Euan MacLeod

Wendy Sharpe

Edward Hopper

Wik Amor

Nicholas Harding

Either narrow focus or broadened

8-10 minute poses.

Discussed tomorrow - collage - paint up gradations.

Change of dynamic - major drawing

- 2 drawings simultaneously
- Revisit poses over the last few days
- photograph if you want to revisit
- resolve aspects of space if not your pose

Major drawing may be more pictorial or iconic. David will come around one-to-one to discuss. Dry mixed media collage. Work around what has been learnt. Embrace what you've learnt and go with it - take it somewhere. Try avoiding illustration. Visceral response. Energy and motion of pigments hit you. Feel and see what is in front of you. Illustration falls away. Understand the material. Experience it.

Day 3

Drawing is a reconstruction of reality. Artists are affected by history and this history feeds into their work. When diffused it becomes illustration.

Hopper - 50 years ahead of Euan MacLeod - shadow in their work shows drama and form.

Each mark is purposeful

Work on rhythm and dynamic.

Reduction of shapes.

Spend time looking at how something is built.

Collage

Once a piece is put down. Slippage changes things. Continual layers. Picture planes that move toward the viewer. A piece = mass. A tear = line. Lines can be cut or soft - there are subtle differences. Principle - to realise the increase in challenge. How to reconcile line with mass.



Figure 399 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - Workshop activities 5 collage and charcoal on paper

Giacometti - stays in a linear thinking. Tone is created from rubbing out. Rubbing out and rebuilding become part of the process. Deliberate use of line and tone.

Continuum from line at one end to tone at the other. Giacometti sits closer to the line end as does David. Suerat closer to the tone end. The principles are the same. Splash around and relationships will be created.

Underlying structure - principle - consistency of thinking.

Reality - John Davies - is how you work your way around the form. No lines required. All look at the figure in own way.

Use devices and principles to work towards your major work. The model is a resource. Take a photo of the pose you are looking for. Can approach it by creating an iconic image or a pictorial one.

ICONIC - 1 figure with frame - head or figure is central.

PICTORIAL - use of the background

Day 4

With the discussion yesterday on reality I began my day reading the article 'Postmodernist Creative Thinking Utopiawise' by Athes (2013). It was a great read heading into my major project and while I didn't have a planned work in mind, I did want to further experiment with overlapping sequences to tell some form of narrative - which is my particular bent - methodology - way of working. I had no idea what the narrative would be so it was, I guess, going to be a generative narrative - I wasn't sure if there was such a thing, but on Googling it, apparently there is. I also wanted to play with Kathe Kollwitz's economy of line but abundance of expression and begin considering the work of Paula Rego and her ballet dancers.



Figure 50 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - Workshop activities 6 ink on paper

This is my Day 1 example (Figure 50) using ink.

Your way of working is your methodology. You may need to work on more than one piece at a time. Let it sit and sweat. Go back to it later.

I played with charcoal lines. They were beautiful to draw on the quality paper and I moved my hand back into an awkward position to make them move more naturally - perhaps organically - less precisely.



Figure 51 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - developing my final work charcoal on paper

The work started moving from top to bottom. Like someone jumping from a cliff which was certainly how I felt about the creation of a major piece.



Figure 402 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - developing my final work 2 charcoal on paper



Figure 413 Argus, K 2016, David Fairbairn workshop - developing my final work charcoal and coloured pencil on paper

In my critique today David mentioned mature and accomplished lines. Yay!! :)

Day 5

Today is about finishing off and working with David to get the work to the highest/most resolved position possible. I found his critique with the group really helpful.



Figure 424 Workshop Space photo by Karen Argus, 2016



Figure 435 *Finished Works* Photo by Karen Argus, 2016



Figure 446 Finished Works 2 Photo by Karen Argus, 2016



Figure 457 David Fairbairn providing feedback, photo by Karen Argus, 2016



Figure 468 David Fairbairn providing feedback 2, photo by Karen Argus, 2016

- editing ends is a possibility (cut things off or block them out if you need to) edges can help to stabilise figures.

- breathing space - position breathing - open spaces
- abstraction - pictorial energy
- some slippages that let air into the drawing
- good sense of line and line making
- complexity of figures in and around
- tonal shifts and relationships
- readable space - easy to read - has breathability - calmer, tranquil, still
- use of ink is prevalent - which provides more weight to the work
- use of paper for space
- Ground white into the work to create a lighter background
- Use history and dialogue to talk about connections

Day 5: Final Critique

This was the final critique on my work following 3 days of working through research approaches with loads of feedback and critique and then 1.5 days of solid artmaking - drawing. I need to say that David held my hand through this process and I would not have achieved this degree of success and experimentation without this guiding hand. While I found the instruction and activities very challenging, I was able to apply the essence of what he was teaching, in principle - due to his ability to create an environment of visual intelligence and thinking.

Critique on my work:

- use of material is sophisticated.
- variation from white to coloured pencil - has density
- own images have evolved
- celebrates the charcoal
- take hold of this intensity and put it into an image
- very successful set of drawings
- discussed the honesty that the model is entitled to - the forms do not really look like her. Did you need a model to accomplish this drawing?
- now take this intensity into an authentic image



Figure 479 Karen Argus 2016 *The Rite of Spring* charcoal, chalk pastel coloured pencil on paper 57x226cm

Summary of the Five Days Working with David Fairbairn

This is a research process that David Fairbairn uses himself. He explores his subjects using materials often in combination with each other, “His mixed media drawings involve working with gouache, ink, charcoal, pastel and acrylic on paper. ... he often includes old printing proofs in the creation of new work.”(Wadwell 2017, pp. 132 & 135). When we were working he often encouraged us to leave behind what we could consider errors, to David they were a record of the artists process. David also works this way, leaving behind some of his preliminary drawings. As he says, “...every major mixed media drawing “is preceded by a number of simple charcoal drawings. Every etching relies on a drawing that is inverted by the end of the process.”(Wadwell 2017, p. 135).

The critique provided on my work (Argus 2016f) over the five days, was on the whole good. What stayed with me and what changed my perception was the question David Fairbairn asked me – did you need a model to make this work? I felt that I did, but I did not know why. After some time, consideration and soul searching I was able to verbalise, that, yes, I did. My image showed her story of being with us for five days. It was a few days after this workshop that I realized that my way of presenting work was narratively (Argus 2016a). In my work, I tell stories. As I learn through the process of creating and researching, I become more aware of directions and features stories can take through the decision-making and researching of combinations of image, word, material, and exhibition space (Argus 2016g).

An Open Letter to David Fairbairn

Cairns, Queensland

Tuesday, September 13, 2016

9:47am

Dear David,

In beginning this open letter, I recall so quickly an intense 5-day workshop I did with you. While I spent most of it struggling to understand what you were trying to teach and the rest crying at home behind closed doors due to the frustration of not being able to accomplish the tasks, I did learn that my practice is my methodology, and that I have a lot more to experience in life, art and drawing. This was certainly no reflection on your teaching, but rather a student out of their depth and new to a field. Admittedly, this frustration came on the back, of the death of a young boy I coached, and was followed a week later by a conference presentation, the death of a close friend, and seeing Robert Hannaford's exhibition at the Gallery of SA. Emotionally I was a mess, but somehow through all of that I began to piece together what it was you were trying to get me to do.

While my initial drawings tried to capture reality, as all students lacking thought and imagination do, and had me caught up in erasing what I saw as errors, by the end I'd learnt to incorporate these as evidence of my process, and to feel the line.

I didn't care that it made no sense to anyone else but me, I relished in the satisfaction of making it. I felt it. I made marks with pencils that could not be made with charcoal and those with charcoal that could not be made with conte. I expressed the story in my head through the medium.

The story is interesting. I did not choose to paint a reality, but an idea - a developing story. An idea developed through the direction of the medium as well as the artists I'd researched and the space that was available. When you spoke about your thinking, your exploration of figures and referred to your early drawings as your research on a subject, I understood that, but I also relished the rush of input, at that last moment. The aspects which develop to finish the piece, which move beyond the final approach being selected from research. Encouraging, rather than a selected methodology, an ongoing approach to the research process – the creation of a narrative which is never finished – a point in time. We differ in working, with

your way being more systematic as you aim to capture the person presented to you, while I aim to capture the story they told or shared around me.

I remember being stung by your criticism multiple times that week, but the barb that stuck was the very last, when you asked if I needed a model to accomplish my drawing. In my drawing I tried to represent the model as I saw her, at lunch and dancing amongst our easels, carefree and bubbly. The darkness for me was symbolic of us keeping her still, wanting her to stagnate so that we could capture her likeness, when in all truth she was so full of life.

I remember doing a teaching placement, my final one, which determined whether I became a teacher or not, and I was at loggerheads with my Supervising Teacher. He taught very systematically by grading, and I was constantly justifying my teaching approach to him. It was the placement at which I learnt the most about myself as a teacher. Your workshop was the same for me. Although I didn't have the words or knowledge to express my position, with that final criticism, you sent me on the path to find out why.

Thanks to you challenging me, I believe I now do.

My practice is narrative that engages.

With immense thanks and gratitude.

Karen

Appendix 10: When Will the Rain Come?

The Tanks Artist Statement for 'When Will the Rain Come?'

This exhibition has been created in a picture book style and asks us to question our thoughts and ideas about toads. The story was developed while teaching a P-4 class in a rural community and portrays an interaction some students had had with some toads which were in 'a long dark hole under the tree'. An additional voice of a young toad is provided to create another perspective. Interspersed amongst the story are reconstructed newspaper articles, sculptures and toad movement maps which provide a historical context for our thinking as a society. The development of this exhibition came through research studies at JCU and teaching visual art units of work with Years 1 to 6 students in Far North schools around bullying. The student work forms part of our societal positioning on what we think.



Figure 60 Argus, K 2016 *The Long Dark Hole* triptych canvas 1 of 3, newspaper, children discarded artwork, acrylic paint, womens' magazines on canvas 1.8mx1.25m

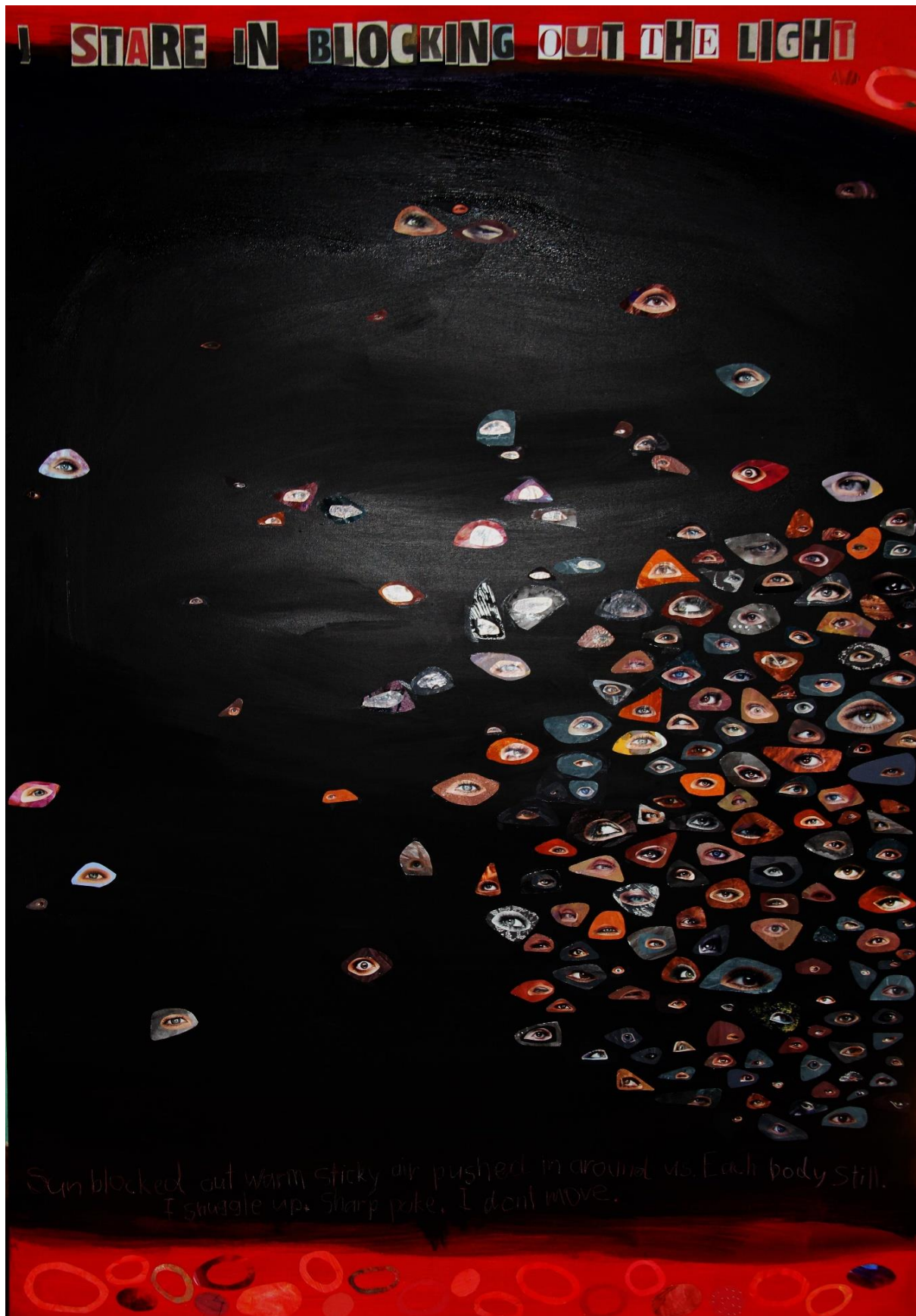


Figure 61 Argus, K 2016 *The Long Dark Hole* triptych canvas 2 of 3, newspaper, children discarded artwork, acrylic paint, womens' magazines on canvas 1.8mx1.25m

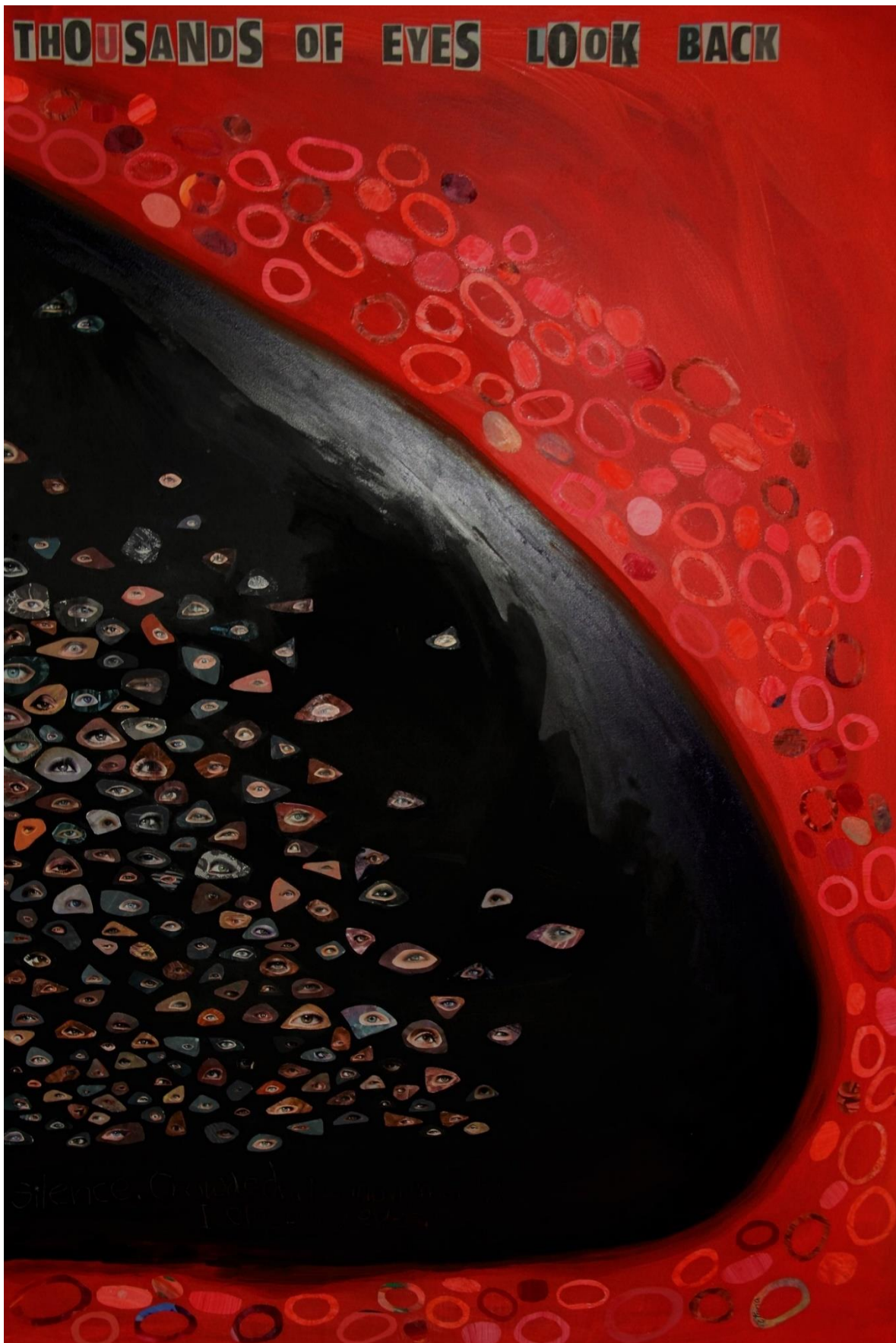


Figure 482 Argus, K 2016 The Long Dark Hole triptych canvas 3 of 3, newspaper, children discarded artwork, acrylic paint, womens' magazines on canvas 1.8mx1.25m



Figure 493 Argus, K 2016 The Rain is Coming triptych panel 1, children discarded artwork and acrylic paint, on canvas 1.8mx60cm



Figure 504 Argus, K 2016 *The Rain is Coming* Triptych Panel 2, children discarded artwork and acrylic paint, on canvas 1.8mx60cm



Figure 515 Argus, K 2016 *The Rain is Coming* Triptych Panel 3, children discarded artwork and acrylic paint, on canvas 1.8mx60cm



Figure 526 Argus, K 2016 Plastic Cloud sculpture gabian basket, plastic bags, rope, children's discarded artwork, women's magazines, and newspaper



Figure 537 Argus, K 2015 Mama newspaper, children's discarded artwork, acrylic, and alfoil on canvas, 90x90cm



Figure 548 Argus, K 2015 *Papa* newspaper, children's discarded artwork, acrylic, and alfoil on canvas, 90x90cm

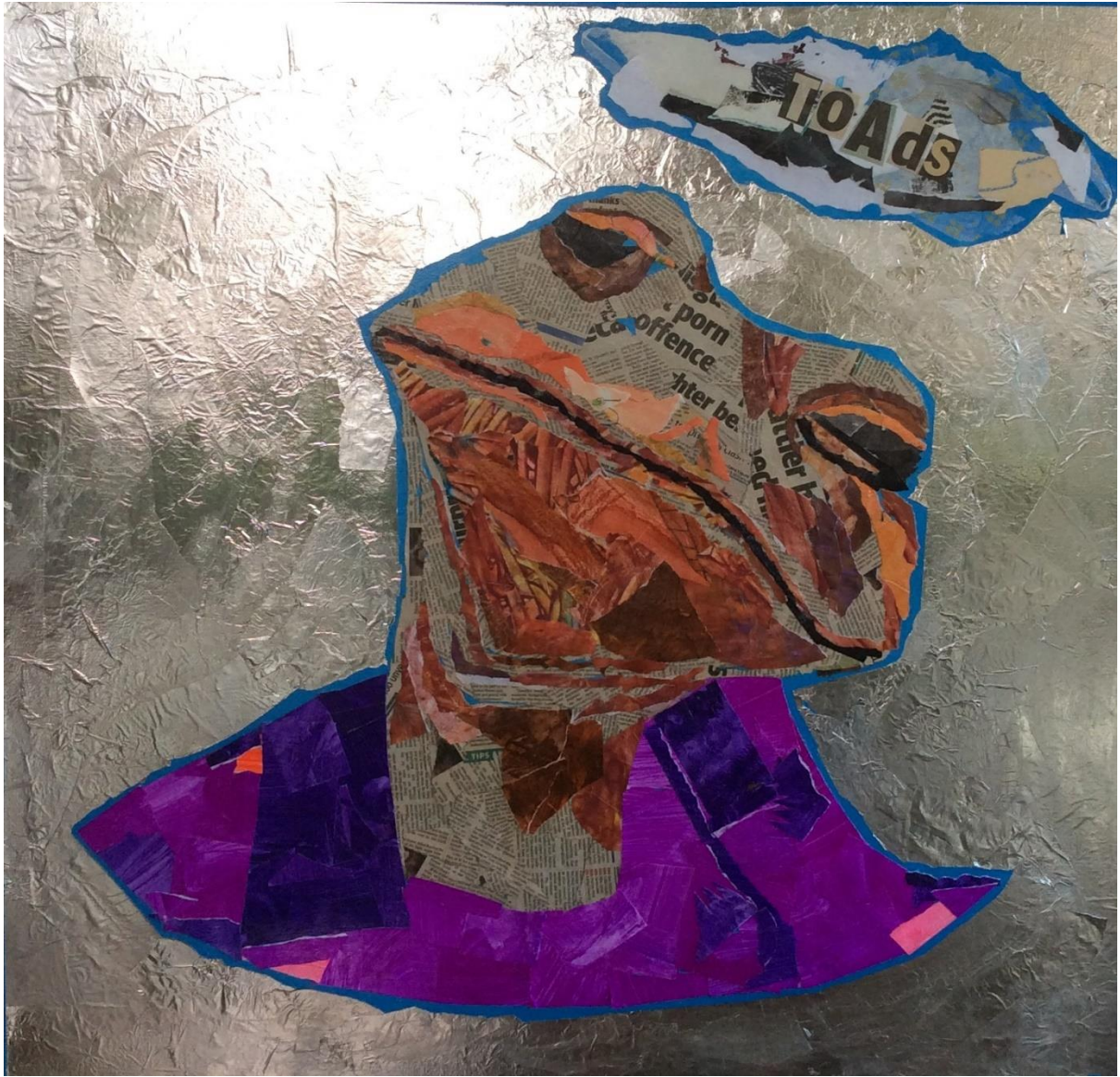


Figure 559 Argus, K 2015 *Sister* newspaper, children's discarded artwork, acrylic, and alfoil on canvas, 90x90cm

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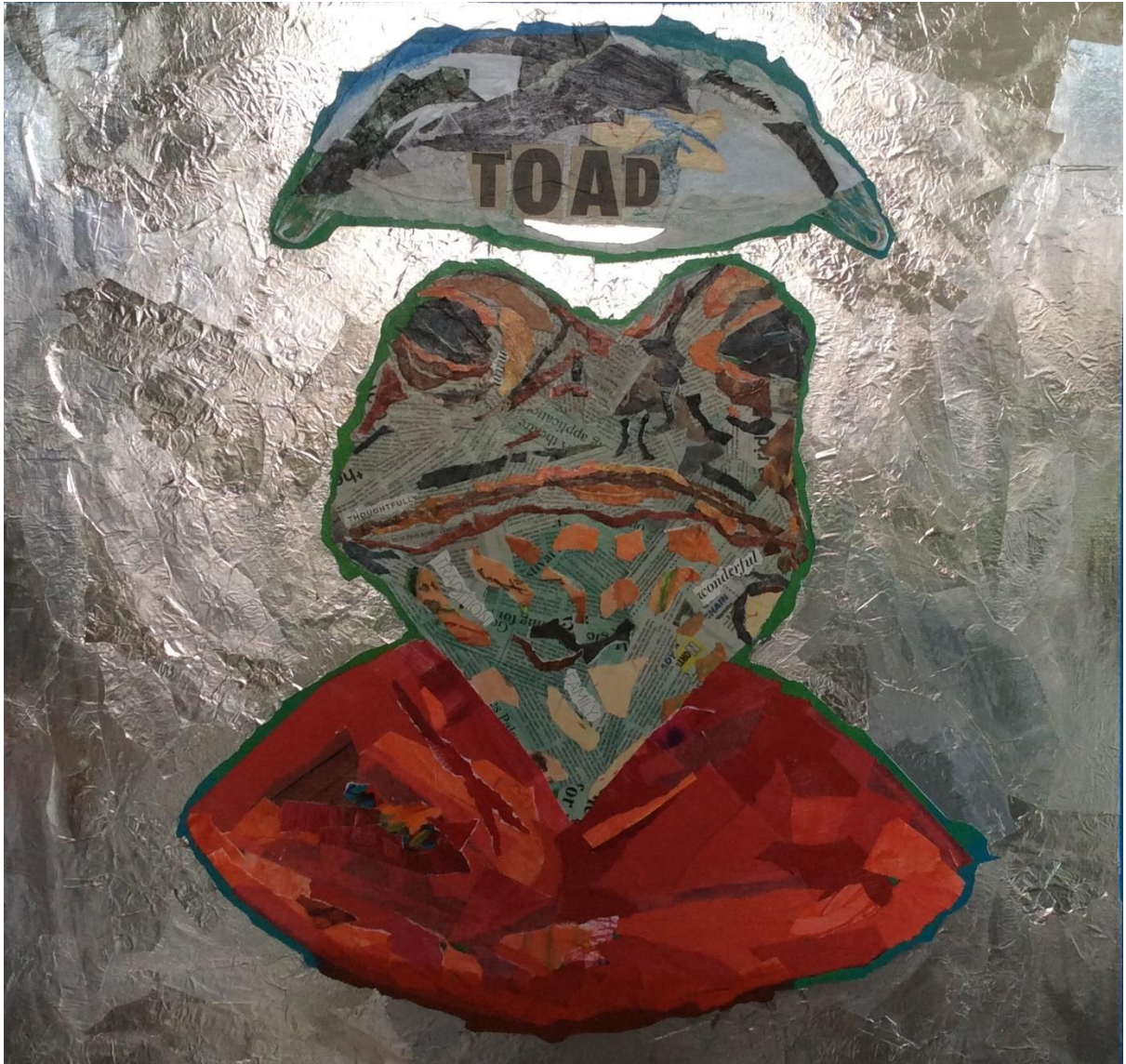


Figure 70 Argus, K 2015 *Brother* newspaper, children's discarded artwork, acrylic, and alfoil on canvas, 90x90cm



Figure 71 Argus, K 2016, *Relaxing at Home - 1935*, ink, children's discarded artwork and newspaper font on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 562 Argus, K 2016, *Released into the Unfamiliar and Unknown*, ink, children's discarded artwork and newspaper font on paper, 76x57cm

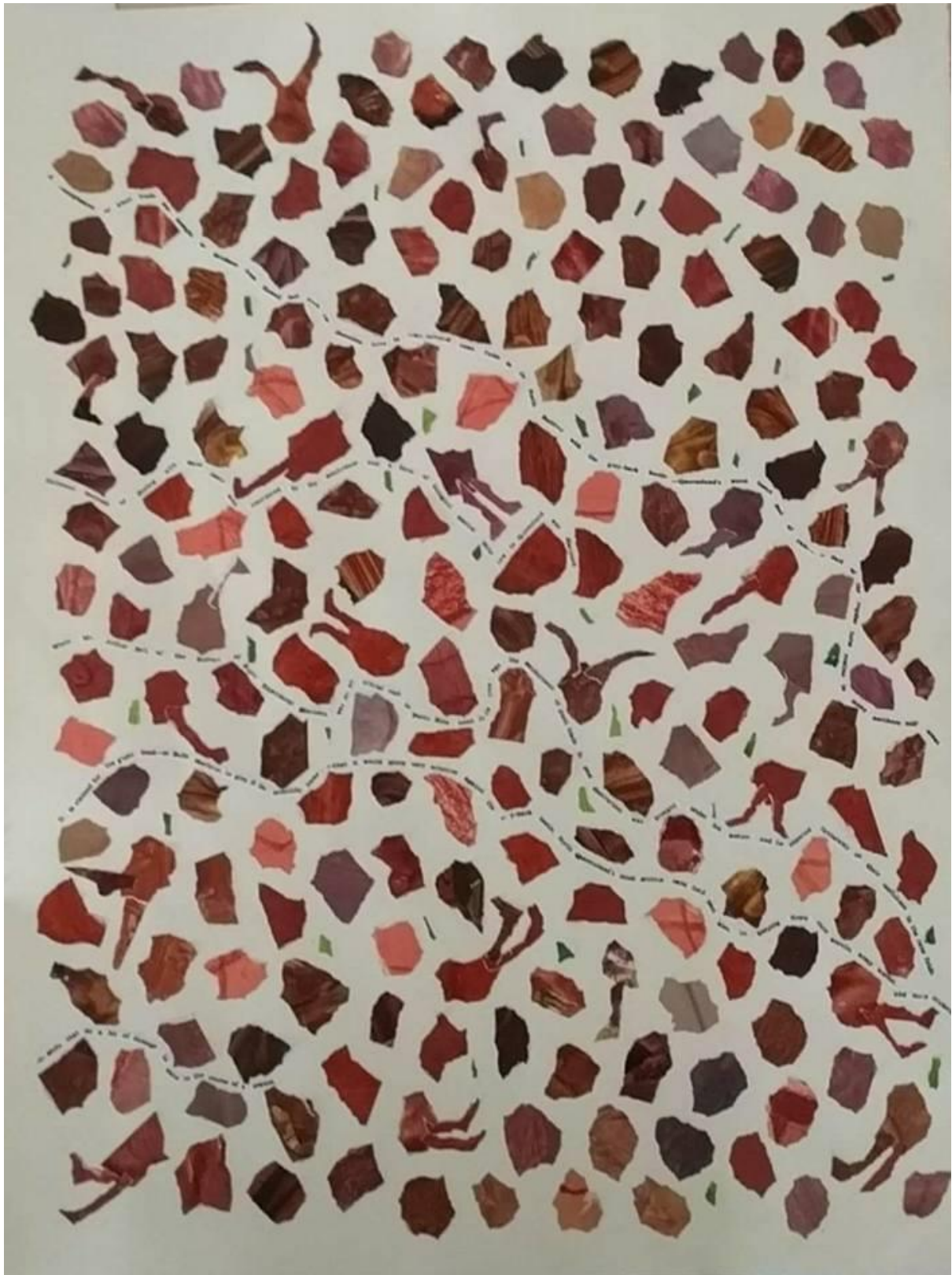


Figure 573 Argus, K 2017, *Taken from Home and Transported* – 1939, ink, children's discarded artwork and newspaper font on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 584 Argus, K 2017 *The Rite of an Introduced Species* installation. cardboard boxes, newspaper, children's discarded artwork, wooden blocks, metal rod and metal plate 2.5mx2mx1.5m



Figure 595 Argus, K 2017 *Dumpsite: What is the Human Impact?* acrylic, charcoal and chinagraph pencil on canvas 125x95cm



Figure 606 Argus, K 2016 *Liberation* 1.8x1m acrylic paint, chalk pastel and charcoal on canvas



Figure 617 Argus, K 2017 *Toad Distribution in Australia 1985-2015* acrylic, children's discarded artworks and charcoal on canvas 4x40x40cm



Figure 628 Argus, K 2016 *Let the Killing Begin* 1.8x1m acrylic paint, chalk pastel and charcoal on canvas



Figure 639 Argus, K 2016 *Blood Bath* 1.8x1m acrylic paint, chalk pastel and charcoal on canvas



Figure 80 Various contributors, 2017, *Public Wall: This is What We Think About Toads* Photo by Karen Argus

Appendix 11: Phase 3 - Share Phase

What am I thinking? What would they say or add if I shared it? Have I found fit in my thinking? Do I have a position?

While narratives offer a powerful means for accessing the personal stories we tell about ourselves, our place and our personal history (Dillon 2011, p. 213), there is a need to move towards questioning and analysing concepts and statements, and working more reflexively. The Share Phase encourages movement beyond one's own thinking to sharing thinking with others through points of view in small group exhibitions, critiques of work, attending workshops, meetings, and exhibitions to extend thinking. These opportunities create moments which extend experiences into becoming phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Murphy 2009, p. 598) and lead to a positioning where inquiring narratively is not simply about writing and reflecting on the day or experience, but includes recovering and reconstructing meaning, as well as reading at the edges (Clandinin, Connelly & Chan 2002). Generating approaches beyond those with which the researcher is familiar, and moving them beyond what is stable and known as frames of reference, and the differences amongst these can alter what is seen and how it is interpreted (Clandinin, Connelly & Chan 2002). Therefore, the more perspectives a researcher employs, the greater the potential dimension or depth in the text and understanding (Kincheloe 2001). This recovering and reconstructing meaning through the generation of approaches plays a considered role in this research approach particularly when developing critical events, which are turning points.

Smaller exhibitions were held, workshops attended, conference presentations given and art units taught, all which contributed to discussions and thinking considered in the Share and then Enact Phases. The importance of separating the Share and Enact phases is to ensure consideration of the work by a broader audience. It would be simple to restrict the work to a conversation with one other, and think that this constituted sharing. The conversation with a known and trusted colleague or friend while very important, would not aid in broadening perspectives sufficiently to move the thinking and work forward. Some examples of the experiences in this research can be seen in Table 5. The sharing in these examples are broad means of sharing, and include sharing the way of working with materials as an artist, ways of

thinking about art as a gallery manager, consideration of ideas as an academic at a conference, ways of working as a teacher, and the challenging of my research as a student.

Sharing Experience	Extension & Impact from Sharing
Post-graduate Exhibition at the Lux Gallery	Placed work in a public space (Appendix 3: Figure 13-19) Hung work with other post-graduate students Discussed work and research and our thinking behind what we are doing
David Fairbairn Workshop (Appendix 22)	Visual arts research process extended Material narrative contemplated Narrative as a means of expression established
Gallery Manager & Conversations with artists	Art and its value What the community values with regard to art Led to consideration of what I value in art and the exhibition concept for <i>Natural Introspectives</i> (Appendix 12)
Presentation at ALEA Conference, Adelaide – Complex Texts	Reaffirmed thinking that narrative has many forms Discussion regarding narrative forms and how they can be created in classroom settings.
Classroom units of work – Lamentation (Appendix 5)	Stitched work following exhibition <i>Lamentation</i> had little foundation as a material narrative. (Appendix 13) Re-evaluated material narrative and the purposeful use of materials to provide meaning not aesthetics. Value in materials as a way of assisting artists to think more deeply about something.
Classroom units of work – Toads	Bullying unit of work led to expressing more than one line of thinking in a single image. The knowledge that age is irrelevant to communicating ideas and thinking. Community voice is ageless.
Visual art mentor & University Advisors - Meeting notes & Academic writing	Discussing arts practice and direction Discussing thesis direction and thinking Redirection and changes in writing

Table 5: The impact of sharing experiences on developing practice and thinking

Appendix 12: Iteration 1 documented: Natural Introspectives



Figure 64 Argus, K 2017 *Natural Introspectives* exhibition invitation Old Post Office Gallery

Exhibition Concept

Natural Introspectives, OPO Gallery, Atherton. Exhibition Dates: 20 September to 6 November 2017

This exhibition is a collection of works representing a variety of artists' introspections on natural phenomena. Drawing on both the natural world and our thoughts and ideas within these, diverse artists used various media to move this exhibition away from realism and direct representation to consider alternate views, ideas and perspectives on nature. Whether it be dislocating plants from their environment (Ian Wallace, Lorraine Lamothe), considering the idea of a safe space (Rob Mian), subverting nature imagery (Lorraine Lamothe, Sharon Robinson), using colours expressing an emotional connection (Graeme Draper), editioning the natural world (Kim Bagot) or questioning the place of introduced species (Karen Argus) each of these, emerging through to established artists, engage with the environment and question or present opinions at varying levels. It is evident, that different artists have different ways of seeing the world and this exhibition works to demonstrate these other visual realms, ways of seeing, or ways of re-presenting alternative views of nature. This curated exhibition was designed to consider whether an exhibition of varied artists could create an exhibition of art which socially engaged as audience. In terms of narrative arts practice, this exhibition functions in conjunction with a unit of work for primary school classes, workshops for the community and is part of an iteration of artistic practice.

The first exhibition and first iteration of practice ended in '*Natural Introspectives*', shown at the Old Post Office Gallery in Atherton from September to December, and included seven

artists who contributed their ideas through artworks on botanicals and the surrounding environment as a broader theme. The artists were given complete freedom as to how they wanted to approach the idea and so techniques and approaches were varied and included literal and conceptual interpretations using watercolour and ink, printing, paint, sculpture, collage, textiles and reconstructed book form.

Personal Intent

From my position as one of the participating artists in what was an artist collective exhibition, *Natural Introspectives* the exhibition, was not limited to the Opening Night and this is where my process as a researcher and artist become strongly evident. The exhibition from my perspective, included: discussions held prior with the artists about the work; the meetings we sat at individually and collectively; the group emails and individual ones; the talks with the artist opening the exhibition; with the Gallery Manager; with my Visual Art mentor; my advisor; with artist peers outside those in this exhibition; the viewing of other exhibitions and reading about them if not seen in person; the creation of my own artworks; the hanging and rehanging of the exhibition, the discussions held on opening night that I heard, as well as those I was involved in. But also include the later discussions with artists, mentors and advisors about the success and other aspects of the event; the personal reflections, recalculations, misgivings, regrets which have occurred since; the changes being made as I think towards the next exhibition and the one after that in a continually altering practice towards creating a new form of text.

Social Context

This exhibition was established to engage with a social idea - to challenge what 'good' art is and the nature of art in our community. Simultaneously, it questioned our thoughts on the environment, which was also loosely the theme in the William Cooper Retrospective being held in the other gallery simultaneously. Being the first attempt at social engagement or contemplating responsibilities as global citizens through art, this exhibition was considered retrospectively. 'Natural Introspectives' aimed to find the values associated with botanicals and the environment, while also attempting to address the broader idea of what makes 'good' art within the community. This iteration investigated the process underlying artistic practice which involved some form of social responsibility. It focused particularly on a long-term study over multiple artworks ending in exhibition around a social issue. This iteration

documents the research undertaken to gain new understanding, by: investigating artistic practice through multiple experiential approaches; employing and improvising on art approaches around social issues; and exhibiting works throughout. The research used a practice-led approach.

When considering this exhibition it would be easy to fall into the trap of beginning to explain the work descriptively, but nothing is gained from that and there is really no place for that in my research. But exploring it in terms of my research practice, research process or research design falls in line with the new knowledge gained, knowledge helped to create and that I hope to continue creating with the broader world in which we live.

Engaging with a community idea

This planning began about 18 months earlier than it went to exhibition. An artist got in touch with me about having an exhibition about plants. I was managing the gallery at the time and a second artist had also been sent to me about having an exhibition but felt he did not have enough work for a solo exhibition, so I suggested they join together. Both artists look at botanicals, with one creating watercolour work which was more precise and realistic and the other creating printed works, monochromatic and detailed, but less accurate in their replication of the species. Between the two of them, there still was not enough work to fill a gallery space and I had asked around for other artists who work in botanicals. The work that was coming in did not quite fit together, so the project was put on hold for a while. It was when the idea of the William Cooper Retrospective came up and people began saying that we were now having a 'real exhibition', that we all began to question the idea of what is considered a 'real' exhibition.

Attempting to understand

I began by asking at a hanging team meet one month, 'Why do you think that William Cooper's work is more 'real' than other work which is put up in the gallery?' To them it was obvious – people pay more for his work, he is internationally recognised, there are books and DVD's about him and he worked at it full-time and was rewarded well for it. The absolute determiner which they all wholeheartedly agreed upon however, was how realistic his work was, how lifelike – true to life. I asked, as I always do, then why not just take a photo and they said that it would be impossible to get a photo this good. I was challenged by this, as my way of thinking was more in line with the work talking to you, saying something, conveying an

artist's opinion – and perhaps Bill Cooper's work was doing that – perhaps he was showing the beauty of the world – but largely I found William Cooper's work, representational, and in my mind, it was lacking something which was beyond that of the definitely accomplished brushwork and beauty.

The beginning of a deeper discussion

Not everyone in the hanging team paints realistically, and it was at this point that I began discussing things with other team members. One team member was also uncomfortable with the hype around the William Cooper exhibition and the community placing it on a pedestal. He is a conceptual artist. We talked endlessly about the meaning of art and what makes something art. He comes from a modernist positioning, of all things coming from feelings and not requiring any further information to be understood. I, on the other hand, having seen his work, love the ideas behind it, which others do not get to understand, not having benefit from the conversations that I have. We decided to include his modernist works in the exhibition on botanicals, and to fine tune the exhibition into a commentary which voiced the alternative which was not shown in the William Cooper exhibition. To complement this voice and to be able to tie the two together, and already having two botanical artists lined up, we made the theme broadly about botanicals and/or the environment. With further discussion, another artist also came on board. She is predominantly a textile artist as well as working creating mini sculptures and book art which question and challenge life, usually around issues to do with women. Both are good friends of mine who I often have philosophical discussions with. Sometime later we also drew in a popular local painter and a book artist and had a meeting to discuss the exhibition concept and blurb. This was an interesting time as we could really tease out what each of us was thinking about what the exhibition was and where it was heading.

Time poor – there is no time for that in art

I still felt the idea was not settled and the conversations about the excellence of William Cooper abounded. However, due to the upcoming exhibition, moving to a new house and getting a new job, where I would normally work through these things, they were left largely neglected. I did buy the book 'Ways of Seeing' and I did intend to write an essay to go with this exhibition, but sadly due to work commitments, completing artworks, working on my thesis amongst other things, it just did not happen. I can confidently say that I moved from

considering a concept, back to processing my ideas by working through them artistically. This is fine as a process but having rich conversations is really important to my practice too.

Getting it on the page

In this space I created four collages. They were stories about the introduction of toads into Australia. They were pretty collages using newspaper articles (Figure 83). The collage materials, beyond the newspaper articles, made no sense to me. I was not sure beyond the colours I provided, why I was using children's discarded artworks in this context. The works were part of a larger exhibition, in which these materials worked, but in this context, they were not going to make any sense. The collages aimed to provide a space for discussing the introduction of toads into the Australian environment.



Figure 652 Argus, K 2017 'Natural Introspectives' hanging at the Old Post Office Gallery, Atherton, Photo by Karen Argus

Limited opportunities to share thinking

Living remotely presents its challenges when sharing ideas. Trying to put ideas into order with a non-existent physical network around you, means relying on a virtual network which I have found to be somewhat more challenging. While I see myself as more at home when alone, I have relied heavily on a few people when sounding out ideas in the past, and this period was very challenging without them. While only a phone call away, it was not the same as having coffee or hanging work and discussing issues. So, I relied at this point on what was available to me, which was a non-art teacher who saw art aesthetically, my visual art mentor, and an ongoing art friend. The teacher and I largely talked aesthetics. With my mentor we predominantly talked about the upcoming exhibition and how to bring it all together. I could have had deeper conversation with both, but I was not quite sure what the conversation was that I needed to have. With my friend we had robust conversations about material use,

aesthetics, what I was trying to convey, and exhibition ideas. She moved away about six years ago and I visit her each year. So, we have become familiar with discussing things over the phone. Clearly this phase was not as robust as it needed to be for a myriad of reasons, and I think this is reflected in the work, but that is a difficulty of living remotely I have since learned and is one I will need to come to terms with through developing stronger virtual networks.

The need for a broader audience

In some ways I felt like I had done a loop when I ended up needing a broader conversation. This time round, it was a combination of thinking ideas out alone as well as discussing them with students that I taught. It really required a broader audience, conversation and view, but this is what I had available to me. While I attempted to move beyond the passive approach to understanding which is largely within my own space, to involving thinking and taking a more active approach through teaching the units of work, sharing the artworks for critique or exhibition, and communicating ideas specifically for feedback there was not space or opportunity for this to occur. While I had moved outside the immediate group consulted earlier, I had not moved beyond what I had already known or into a higher level of thinking. I had not found fit with the new knowledge and had not found a position for my thinking. My long time friend and I discussed things a few more times, as did my mentor and I, but the space I needed to more fully engage with, was not available to me. I found no time to rework my thinking which I sorely missed which meant the thinking had remained the same. I found myself in an endless struggle at this point and was relying too heavily on social media platforms for feedback, while trying to seek something more out. These were not rich sources and were simply responses to the aesthetic which had me endlessly looping back to the rethinking the initial idea. Being on a timeline it was necessary to complete the works and finalise them. For this reason, the works came together with the work from other artists at the hanging stage. I felt they were weak conceptually.

Creating a conversation

About a week prior to the exhibition the artists met with a contemporary artist who was opening the exhibition. Each artist tried to explain their ideas behind their work and their opinions about botanicals and the environment. She was sent artist briefs written by each of the artists and these were also put together in a booklet form and handed out to the audience. The exhibition space was the Old Post Office Gallery and was a suitable venue.

On the hang day, the work by one of the initial artists had not arrived and the hanging team insisted on a museum hang/traditional hang with each artist's work hung together in groups. This was not an effective hang for an exhibition which was attempting to create a



Figure 663 Wallace, I & Bagot, K 2017 *Work by Ian Wallace and Kim Bagot rehung to create a conversation between them*. Photo by Karen Argus

conversation between different works and so when the work arrived later an artist and I rehung the work, mixing up the artworks to provide conversations between the styles and thoughts in the hope that the ideas behind the collective texts would provide the opportunity to create ideas, thoughts and opinions (Figure 84). Ideally these opinions are then expressed to create a collective ending to, or opinion about the interconnectivity of ideas. In a perfect world, this would then create a transformational or

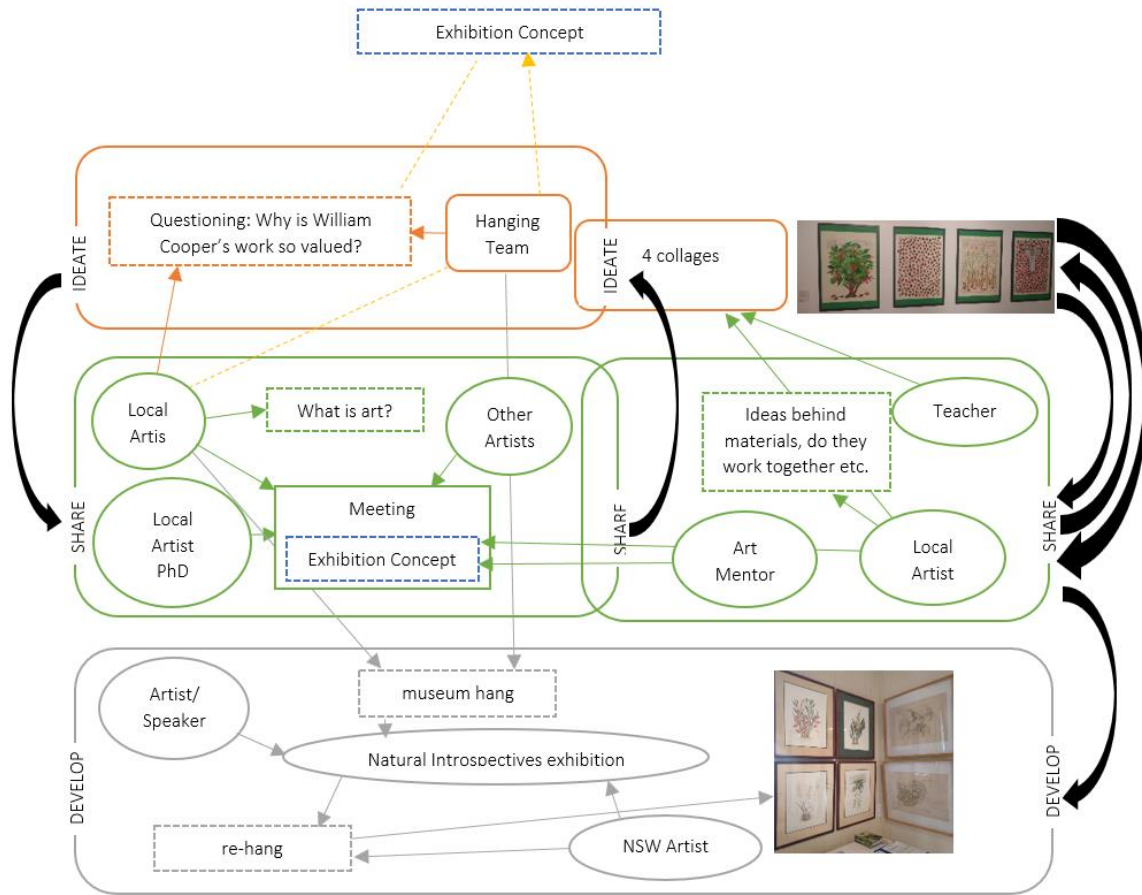
transcendental opportunity for those observing and/or participating in the exhibition. I think we can safely say, it did not. The audience commented on the aesthetics of the works, on their lack of understanding of some and on their complete misunderstanding of others. Whether it was the audience or the way the exhibition was put together, is open to further consideration.

Social engagement

As Natural Introspectives was a direct commentary by a group of artists questioning 'What is 'good' art?' and was set up to deliberately coincide and challenge the Tableland Regional Gallery exhibition, *William Cooper: A Retrospective*, the attendance at the opening was far higher than is usual for an exhibition at the Old Post Office Gallery in Atherton. The work focused on the environment and the group of 8 artists, local and interstate, challenged viewing by positioning works in an eclectic manner so that they managed to converse with each other. At the opening, the speech challenged the audience to consider what the artists were trying to say and to view art as not just a direct representation of something, but as a way of communicating and starting a conversation. The exhibition comments written by visitors supported the idea that the exhibition was thought provoking although not always clearly understood. Conversations with the other artists following the exhibition, focused on

ways in which to engage what was termed a 'resistant' audience with conceptual art, and resulted in solutions including didactics, artist talks and other approaches, which will be tried at subsequent exhibitions.

Tracking phases - Iteration 1 Diagram



Appendix 13: Stitched Locations



Figure 674 Argus, K 2015 *Millaa Millaa Falls*, ink, watercolour and thread on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 685 Argus, K 2015 *The Crater*, ink, watercolour and thread on paper, 76x57cm



Figure 696 Argus, K 2015 *Lake Eacham*, ink, watercolour and thread on paper, 76x57cm

Appendix 14: Phase 4 - Enact Phase

What can others offer my thinking? Who can I share my work with? Where can I gather differing opinions? Who knows more about this than me?

Where the Share Phase involves putting work and ideas out into a space for further discussion, the Enact Phase is focused on discussing and responding to this. This is evident in the second column (Table 5). These opportunities where narratives are constructed and reconstructed to blend and highlight issues of complexity and human centeredness provide time to document the 'real author' position through individually written and spoken narratives. This is vitally important in this research and towards moving narratives from 'confessional writing'; to those with a position of narrative authority with an increased degree of intellectual rigour. These more complex narratives move the research from being completely self-focused and simply described, to providing valid authority (McMahon & DinanThompson 2011). Using hindsight, past experiences and critical events or incidents (Pinner 2018; Webster & Mertova 2007b), aspects of the research experience are selectively and retroactively written about (McMahon & DinanThompson 2011). Particularly relevant, are critical events which significantly impact the trajectory of the research.

Engaging with a variety of ideas and thinking are vital at this stage and this research made use of smaller exhibitions, meetings with advisors, art workshops, discussions with artists, and exhibition openings to develop this work and extend knowledge.

These incidents create moments of change and when re-storied demonstrate new learning, leading to alternate pathways of experience and each of the experiences through this sharing phase contribute in a deep way to the direction of the research. The impact sharing has had on thinking and the extension of ideas are summarized in Table 4. The workshop with David Fairbairn (Appendix 9) taught me about how to use embodied visual arts research. When beginning, I didn't even know such a thing existed. This approach to researching over five days also taught me about material use and how the materials that one uses can contribute to the research and story being told. My arts practice has become an important part of my research and something I would not have understood in as much depth as I do had I not shared my way of working artistically, with others. The Fairbairn workshop helped me to understand through working amongst others, and having my work critiqued, that my method

is not painting, drawing or collaging - but is narrative. Narrative is my technique. It was only through Fairbairn questioning my work, 'Did you really need a model for that?' that I reflected on why the experience of having a model had been so important to me, and it was only through this questioning that I realised I was telling a story of her.

Each of these experiences were equally profound in their contribution to this research, but would not have had this effect had some form of sharing not been undertaken. It was through sharing that conclusions were drawn and concepts were developed. It is a vital component of an arts practice when considering issues of social relevance as it assists in positioning and extending thinking.

Critically reflecting on conversations

The research pursues, simultaneously, arts practice and research outcomes, through being responsive to changes by critically reflecting on conversations and critiquing them. They are considered from backward and forward positioning, in critical event narratives, which are later, when fully considered, documented as waves (Appendices 17-23). The example of the creation of The Long Dark Hole Triptych is a strong example of how practice moves around varying ideas before settling.

Appendix 15: Phase 5 - Rework Phase

How can what has been read, heard and seen, be combined and processed with what was recently learnt and known? How does this new information make a difference? What new story does it tell? How can I document it?

At this point the waves are used to document the Rework Phase, but they more adequately document both the Rework and Develop Phases. There is a cross over between the two in this case. While this brings rise to the need for two separate stages, in the classroom when teaching, the need for both was very evident. While as someone who has practiced art and has an awareness of thinking about how I conceptualise concepts, students and people generally, need more exposure to this aspect as two separate steps.

Appendix 16: Phase 6 - Develop Phase

How can everything be brought together?

It is a misunderstanding to think that this stage is only about exhibiting. It does not need to be this way, and it is misguided to think that this is the only way to undertake the Develop Phase. A great example of this is the bringing together of all the concepts, thinking and ideas that happened in the conversations and meetings prior to the exhibition, *Natural Introspectives* (Appendix 12). This exhibition was about understanding and valuing art in all of its forms and was about understanding how the community understood, thought about and discussed art. The exhibition was about sharing that thinking with an audience of mostly non-artists, but for me the develop phase happened in the conversations surrounding the artwork too.

Appendix 17: Knowing the context

A consideration of childhood – Karen Argus

We moved one day after 12 years, the first twelve years of life, from the only tiny, fabricated house verandah view I'd ever known – one of red dirt and blue skies that went on forever, a flicker of trees and a misery of endlessly crying crows. It was my backdrop, my familiar, my comfort, my known. This often 40 plus degrees in summer, dry (I saw my first rain when I was four), waterless landscape, is me.

The new large, long, smooth, brick-house, wrapping verandah view we moved to, couldn't have been more different.

I'd grown up sharing my bathwater (cleanest first through to the last member of the family), covering my mouth with the tap when taking a break from playing outside (much to the dismay of many spiders who were violently spat out), and wearing clothes two, three or maybe four times if it could be stretched, before they were washed. Water was precious and every drop was paid for, piped from somewhere through a large cement snake that made its way along the landscape from as far away as I can remember staying awake in the car.

From this, to a daily view of an endless ocean of equally endless colours and textures - from constancy to a seascape of inconsistencies. It was moody and temperamental. I found my regular early morning routine of looking out, interrupted, disconcerting and hugely uncomfortable.

I was never happier, than when we left to live in the mountains of New Guinea. To leave it all behind, and to not have to look at it any more.

Unbeknownst to me, water and I were not yet finished.

A consideration of childhood may seem unimportant or out of context here. But as it is with narrative, knowing the teller and the place a person comes from when entering the narrative is important. Had you not understood what water meant to me, these waves would make less sense. I have a love-hate relationship with water, I think. It challenges me – from drownings, floods, being washed out by waves, and dragged along the bottom of rivers – I

fear it. But, the lack of it frightens me too. It drives me to consider my options on how I use it and approach it, on where I choose to live. I find myself contemplating, reflecting and thinking whenever I am near it. So, to discuss my research in terms of waves, at junctures or as critical events - speaks of an embeddedness, a change from within, not simply a fleeting change in approach, but a deep sense of shift. They are points of discomfort. They are disconcerting and interrupt the quotidian flow of things.

The Waves

The critical events in this research are referred to as waves. The waves identify significant changes in research direction and thinking. The research has not been linear or predetermined, but a process which has altered understanding through the directions taken. The directions explored have come in waves, some far bigger and larger impacting than others, but all with their own type of importance. The waves have been considered in hindsight, after the event – sometimes long after the event. But, each wave notes significant impact on the research direction, process, practice or thinking. They are written in narrative to maintain their richness, verisimilitude and authenticity.

Appendix 18: The First Wave: Ways of Viewing

If bonding is central to human experience (Scannell and Gifford, 2014), then I am bonded to stories. I have been as far back as I can remember. I may not have remembered a face as a child, but I would always remember the story of the person. So, when my Nan died and left me her trunk full of journals, I couldn't think of a more perfect gift, or a higher honour than to be trusted with someone's stories.

This was the first wave – understanding my connection to narrative.

My Nan loved the beach and died of cancer, the two are completely unrelated, but describe her well. We knew Nan was going to die. There were no surprises, she was refusing treatment – not wanting to be a burden on anyone - we stood around her hospital bed – all of her children and grandchildren – on and off, for 5 days.

She knew she was going to die. She took time before she told us and went into hospital to work through her possessions and label them – putting the name of each person who had requested the item, on it. Some items she had chosen to give to particular people, and so these were also named. I can only imagine putting your life to rights in such a way. Having lived alone for three years now, I have a newly found respect for her. She did it for most of her life. I'm sure the tears came often during this process because connections were important to her, and this was her saying goodbye. When my Nan died, my name had been left on a trunk. Inside, she had placed her diaries.

Memories of my Nan – Karen Argus

As we pull up across the road from Brougham Place Church in my Nan's toasty, blue Datsun which smells of sunshine in the middle of winter, I'm wearing my best dress and woollen tights mum bought for my visit to the city. I push the door against the frosty winter wind. Church on Sunday at Nan's house was a given. I never missed the opportunity to listen to the stories repeated about my foray into acting at 5 months as the baby Jesus in the old folks home she managed, or for her to recount my sporting and academic successes to each of her friends. We have a bond, my Nan and I. We talk about everything, argue at times and read side-by-side in the middle of the day and in the middle of the night.

Before long, I am ushered into her favourite pew, where I sit awestruck once again, by the amazing organ and beautiful stained glass windows. Coming from the bush, we don't have anything so huge or beautiful. She urges me to find my hymns in the hymn book so I'm not fumbling instead of singing and then the readings in my Bible. Church is serious business. We sit close, quiet, side-by-side fighting off the winter chill, happily enjoying each other's company.

On the drive home, the radio plays on 5AM, we slide through an orange light, you are allowed three of those a day, and eventually into her drive. Someone has delivered the junk mail and she comment that the spiders will move out at the very least.

We stood around my Nan's bed for about five days before she died of kidney failure. She had refused treatment for the cancer which was in her body. The day that she died I was given the honour of writing her obituary and a few days later of presenting it. I found out in the days that followed that she had left me her travel journals. It has almost been 10 years now, and the tears spring back into my eyes like it was only yesterday. I haven't opened the trunk until today.

We'd always written them, books and diaries, throughout our lives, my Nan and I – mine in varying forms – hers diligently in scrapbooks documenting her daily life and travels - mine far more eclectic and substantially less organised, created often by sitting on her lounge room floor cutting, collaging, writing and illustrating as she read, wrote or watched television.

Reflecting on my upbringing – Karen Argus

My Nan raised me emotionally. My mum wasn't ready to do that for her own reasons. She loved me, they both did, they just had different ways of showing it. For my mum it was through providing for me in practical ways. For my Nan it was through talking, spending time and listening. Both were equally important.

It is important to understand these relationships as they influence my practice and explain why my work began by being so inward facing. After Nan's death our bond wasn't severed. In its place was the challenge to maintain a continuing and growing connection I had with her. This continuing on recognises that death ended her life, but not us. So, rather than saying goodbye to her or trying to find closure, my Nan remains both present and absent in my life. I'm still highly influenced by the contribution she made living – her love of nature is instilled in me, the value of family and family connections, and an expression of life beyond that which we live. It is these things that ground what I now attempt to bring together and express through living my life. As I express what I know about her, and about my creative process, a recycling of knowledge given, and knowledge gifted, comes about.

A point of view

Intending to use my Nan's diaries as the basis for my thesis, I was completely thrown when on opening her trunk I was faced with not having acknowledged her death. My first works (Appendix 3) explored my thoughts, ideas and feelings about this. My illustrative and

symbolic response came as a surprise to me, but it began a thinking process about my point of view.

The first illustration

The first illustration, of my entire research process, *The Last Supper* (Figure 13) demonstrates this early viewpoint. The work was begun as a response to Nan's diary reference to the Hay Plains which she had travelled through on a bus during the day. My view, however, was a recollection of road kill and travelling through at night. Combining this with the death of my Nan was not a deliberate choice, but one which developed as part of my artistic process. I had a story to tell.

Processing thinking

I became frustrated a short while after opening the trunk my Nan left me, finding the diaries dull to read as an adult. I suspect, the loss of my Nan, and particularly the loss of the emotion or feeling that I had previously attached to my moments with them contributed to this. For a short time, I came to believe that what was important was the emotion I attached to the experiences and artefacts she had left behind. However, the other element I had not fully considered was that each time I opened them I had learnt something new, went somewhere else or experienced something never experienced before. It was the knowledge and experiences, which provided me with interest and the desire to look through them over and over again.

Considering form

So now into adulthood, I have travelled to most of the places my Nan did, so that newness, that exploring of the unknown is no longer at the forefront. But perhaps diary keeping for my Nan was a way of remaining present. Paperno (2004) says, 'the modern diary ... stems from the fear of watching life grow shorter with each passing day ... turn (ing) life into text, the diary represents a lasting trace of one's being—an effective defence against annihilation.' (p563). If this was the reason for my Nan using her diaries as a tool to be remembered, then she at least has achieved this aim. She has presented us with a view of herself over 20-30 years. But I am not so sure she was this self centred.

What is narrative?

The way my Nan told her stories, were not always the way in which I recalled them, and it was this experience which helped me make my first cognitive leap about narrative. Firstly, I

came to understand what narrative can be, and secondly, what a narrative can do. It was from this experience that I realised that narratives represent who we are, and how we wish to be seen and that this may differ from how others view us.

Nan's diaries were narratives of sorts too. They were written as a record of her experiences. I sometimes wonder why she wrote them. I remember after returning from a trip she would sit us down and take us through her journey. But I wonder if there wasn't something more. After reading Paperno's (2004) work I began to look at my Nan's diaries from a slightly different perspective. I'm not sure it is one she intended but it is one I found interesting. It became an examination of who she was and chose to be, by what she saw and wrote about. Paperno (2004) suggests, that,

'... not to read them as such would be to deny people their capacity for speech. ... The diary is best read not as a book with a beginning and end, but as a process. We should ask not what can be learned from the text of the diary, but what can be learned from the individual diarist's work of recounting his/her life, in private, on a continuous basis within a calendar grid' (p573).

It is not so different for artists. Their works become their narratives or stories. Well that is the case for me.

What makes an artwork communicate?

The early works created in the Grief Series (Appendix 3) were exhibited in a higher degree research group exhibition at the Lux Gallery. People commented on the technique and the line work, the cuteness of the images and the detail. But none really understood my intent. While this acknowledgement of the physical attributes appealed to my more introvert aspects of self, it also made me begin to consider how a work is created that conveys a thought or opinion.

This began a process of personal reflection. Firstly, what does my artwork say about me? And secondly, what do I want it to say? I began to question from this point, how I would represent myself and what that representation would say about me. It brought with it an awareness that moved me beyond representation in a passive form, to the realisation that one could become what they wanted to be, a far more pro-active approach to developing work.

Multiple Viewpoints

Through a combination of experiences, the next phase occurred. This phase brought together thoughts from a few different sources: an exhibition at the Cairns Regional Gallery called 'Birds of a Feather', an article by McKay and Monteverde (2000) called 'Dialogic Looking: beyond the mediated experience', my experience of the death of my Nan; and, my research to date.

Thinking through the 'Birds of a Feather' installation

'Birds of a Feather' in 2011 changed art gallery viewing for me. It was from this exhibition that I began to expect something of art, a challenge, something more to think about. I was fortunate, having been to 'Bird Street' in Hong Kong, the street the exhibition was based around. I had already formed ideas about what that place was and what it meant. So, viewing the many different interpretations and ideas and the various ways of expressing them created the effect of a conversation for me. My context was very different to many of the ideas expressed in the exhibition, but perhaps so was my experience. I had stayed with a family in public housing for three months in Hong Kong, when I went there, and was taken there by the father of the family. He showed such a sweet temperament towards the birds and their owners, which I had never really seen in him before. I noticed that lots of the artists' issues were about space and confinement, and yet what I saw was beauty, individuality, peace and personality. This contributed yet another voice to the conversation but could have easily happened without it.

Academic article: dialogic looking

Later in 2011, I read the article 'Dialogic Looking: beyond the mediated experience'. This article stayed with me because it addressed what I had noticed in the exhibition I had attended – the collection of ideas creating something bigger than the whole. McKay & Monteverde (2003) state, '... the rich relationships between subjects and objects ... active subjects and diverse voices [create] dialogue' (p45).

Teaching research on the impact of visual images on conversation

In 2011 I undertook an action research project in literacy as part of my MEd (literacy). The research, grown from viewing the *Birds of a Feather* exhibition and reading Dialogic Looking looked at the impact that varying visual images (a picture book, an artwork and then multiple related artworks) have on conversations amongst young children. The research found that

multiple images created conversations which engaged higher order thinking. These finding remained in my thinking and formed the basis for much of the initial stages of this research.

Images as part of the conversation

I began my interpretation of my Nan’s diaries. Experiencing her death 10 years after the event was shocking but began me thinking about my point of view and how it differed from my mother’s and probably my cousins’. With this in mind, I began to explore the ways the diaries could be used, and it was at this point that I understood that they performed the role of one of the speakers in a conversation. Ideally this conversation then contributes to an aesthetic dialogue, like the ‘Birds of a Feather’ conversation, where one visual speaks to another.

I began to contemplate whether this could be achieved within a single work by using multiple approaches. I worked on a drawing and experimented with sculpture too at this time.

Sculpturally, I created a large ball (Figure 87) made from a metal frame but covered with timber from left over shipping pallets. The idea that these had come from so many places and ended up here was part of the narrative that these materials added.



Figure 87 Argus, K 2013-2014 Multiple stories steel rod and screws and recycled pallets Photos by Zachary McAulay. Used with permission.

Additionally, I worked on some paper-based thoughts. The Silent series (Appendix 5), Childhood Homes (Appendix 4) and Stitched Locations (Appendix 13) were also developed throughout this time. These questioned the complexities of narrative and my concept of self. The works about self also developed over time (Appendix 6). Beginning as pencil drawings, then adding watercolour elements, then collage elements. This led to the beginning of my thinking about discarded children's artworks and the purpose of materials in telling a narrative.

This work led to me moving back to earlier works and adding collage elements to them too.

I also wrote a children's picture book at this point titled, 'My Grandma Wants to Die'. Writing is another means I use of processing my thinking.

First Wave summary

This wave and critical event shows a lot of movement over time. This movement was necessary to establish a direction which is personally and socially relevant. Contemplating ideas takes time. While waves can cross SIP phases, this one is situated predominantly in the Community Phase of the Social Issues Process.

This wave was not overwhelming, the emotions around opening the trunk and reliving her life, of realizing that although we spent so much time together that in some ways I really did not know her, that through her diaries she was giving me the opportunity to know how she wanted to be remembered and seen were highly personal. But this wave for me, was around the idea of finding a way to express myself, of considering how I wanted to be seen, and of questioning who I am. This was my first wave and moved me away from a predetermined series of works, towards a reflexive thinking and way of working which was research based.

Appendix 19: The Second Wave: An Approach

The second wave was small, the kind that just reaches past your toes, but is enough to make your feet sink into the sand. In many ways, it was not unlike the first and followed it. They are both intricately connected. The second wave came in the way I worked and my thoughts surrounding this. My feet stayed in the sand for some time, as this wave made its impact known. This wave brought home the concept of narrative, multiple views within an artwork and the struggle with creating a point of view and making an artwork speak. It began a reflective and more active approach to my arts practice and started me thinking that art was not about defining things, but inquiring into them.

Text form

It began by swirling around my boys when they came home from school with a persuasive essay to write. They were consumed with persuasive devices and how these could be used most effectively. I asked them how they would like to do it, and the responses revolved around the use of media, rather than the written word. I could tell by the conversation that they understood the assignment and the devices but were frustrated at being restricted to a written text form. There was a disconnect between the text form required, their understanding and the assessment task. The wave continued its swirling effect as it led me to further contemplate my Nan's journals and her way of documenting herself, which I had considered following. I thought by following her journals and creating a journal of my own I would create a dialogue with her. I realised, that this was not my text form, just like an essay was not the one for my boys. I could see that their knowledge was lost in the translation from one text to another and questioned whether that would also be the case for me using a journal form. In my heart I knew it would be, having found my Blog such an effort to maintain.

So, the second wave made me confront the form I would use: intellectually, artistically and personally - to find the form which was me. At this point I was playing around with a variety of different forms: sculpture, drawing, painting and collaging.

Childhood Homes or 'Places and Spaces' collages

The experimental works which were developed worked at identifying the difference between space and place and helped me to process how I considered myself in regard to my place and my space (Appendix 4). I tried working out what my position was and how I fit within it and

expressed it in an artwork? These small collages played around with objects, which were positioned in my childhood (blue ringed octopi and 3 corner jacks) along with photos of my childhood homes. Throughout, I was cognitively differentiating between my home and that land on which it sits, feeling a sense of space, but not place, while trying to visually show that separation. I was able to accommodate the home but not really accommodate the land on which it stood, so cut things to show the separation. This approach to collage Mutu discusses when separating things or joining things that do not normally fit together. I also experimented with wood and sticks creating constructed homes, something like a bowerbird nest.

Continuing to 'read' others work

I had begun to examine a lot of Mutu, Sherman, Nolan and Tillers work at this point and had started also to look at communist propaganda posters for their use of symbolism. I'd also been to an exhibition in Melbourne of Klimt's work which used a lot of colour, pattern, size and symbolism.

Questioning of Self

I had begun thinking about a dialogue or conversation with and about, oneself by exploring various text forms. Julie Mader-Meersman (Figure 88) works with the physicality of materials and patterns in society when creating her artworks/texts. She refers to life being made up of many different places and this contributing to the communal sense of self. Within her work she includes maps and collected materials which are sewn together and create dialogue and conversation when placed in close proximity. Her work also challenges the traditional concept of a text by including book formats within an artwork frame, which is then hung as a visual art piece. I was quite influenced by her approach to using multiple materials and began a deep examination of who I saw myself to be theoretically in my writing. The challenge for me was around the changes

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Figure 88 Mader-Meersman, J 2007, Less.on mixed media collage on schoolroom map, 48"x60"

that were occurring. Many artists examine the self and I followed a lot of these artists while I grappled with defining myself.

Inconclusive works

I didn't exhibit the 'Childhood Homes' work despite there being opportunity as I felt the work didn't come together with a strong voice. If it wasn't working for me, then it really wasn't going to work for others. I had made the connection though, that another level of thinking was required, or a stronger voice or an issue that is more community focused or socially relevant. I'd also established that my 'self' wasn't constant or singular so trying to create works which demonstrated this, became a big part of my thinking. I had also picked up again on the use of materials used by Mader-Meersman.

The silent series

The Silent Series (Appendix 5) were my first works that really began to touch on a more confronting, personal and vocal portrayal of myself, that were apart from my Nan. They were a response to her diary writing but a means to finding a way to express my own sense of self. The works included a written narrative and attempted to connect with each other around the broader picture of introversion in society.

Introversion

I had read the book Quiet by Susan Cain and she was discussing the way that introverts find themselves in the world. This series of artworks became an expression of my thinking around reading her book and the connection this had to who I saw myself as being. The works aim to consider times I experienced or considered, and my response to these. They attempt to explain the role that silence plays in life – its recollecting and regenerating power and its opportunity for growth. Each work considers a time when I was told by others to act in a way that was contrary to my natural instinct. Each work is me explaining the benefit of silence to myself. These works consider my means of dealing with a noisy, full on and continuous world in which I just like to stop and contemplate, alone. These vital moments came at times I walked along a precipice, sometimes lasting a moment, sometimes years. In some way, they form a visual journal while simultaneously being experimental works. Works used to process thinking. While planned to be exhibited, I found them too loud to be put in a brightly lit exhibition space when dealing with the concept of 'silence', so have never hung them. This series begins to move across time and to attempt to tell a narrative across a lifetime. While

not effective or easy to read, the works could be read in isolation, so lack the connectedness with each other that I was aiming for.

Propaganda posters as a source of artistic influence

Whether it is because I was in school during the US and USSR nuclear war threats - in high school and university when the Chinese presence towards the Hong Kong government began rising around the lease end in 1997 - or a fascination with the way in which art can turn the thoughts and ideas of millions of people – this series was influenced by communist propaganda posters. The correlation, applied to a group of silent individuals, is not by accident. Their appeal lies in their complex symbolism, their absolute focus on their cause, and the codes to which they are subjected, for instance, a central figure illuminated by light; triangular composition; image and text used together, and, the hybrid of ‘fact’ that is portrayed. My works mimic many of these attributes including being poster sized. These works have strong graphic arts elements of image, text and style, however with no functional or utilitarian purpose, therefore do not fit entirely within what is already an ambiguous and eclectic category (Costache, 2012). The addition of visual, conceptual and emotional content, categorises these works as a hybrid form. By exploring these possibilities, through creating a hybrid text of my own, a pedagogical space is created, which broadens my own practice.

Use of colour and materials

The frustrating thing at this point was the use of colour and materials. I found some which look aesthetically pleasing, too busy for the topic. They were visually loud while attempting to portray something which is quiet. I moved back to pen and ink and watercolours. The medium worked well, being so water based and inclined to drip, demonstrating the emotion of the content, but this time I found the colour too loud. It was screaming something which was quiet. However, the symbolic was beginning to exhaust me (Figure 89). I found it restricting and I had fallen back into my go-to artistic practice, illustration, a space I use when my brain is contemplating things.

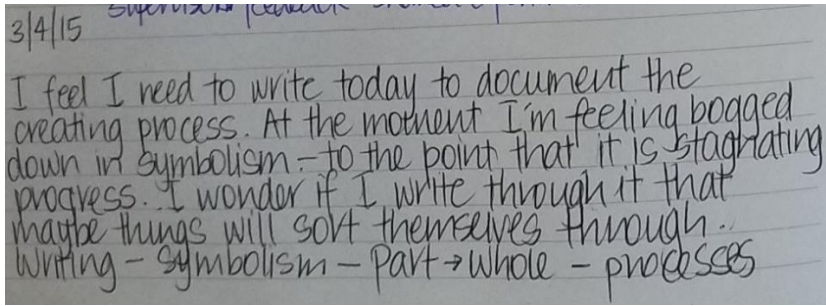


Figure 89 Argus, K 2015 *Research Journal entry thinking through the research process and its benefits*, April

Story approaches multiplied

I tried multiple ways of telling my story as my understanding of myself grew. The more deeply I considered the materials I was using, the more they began to take on a role of telling yet another story too. I began by drawing eyes while thinking about how I see myself, but connected eyes with being all seeing, remembering that there are different ways to see (Figure 90).

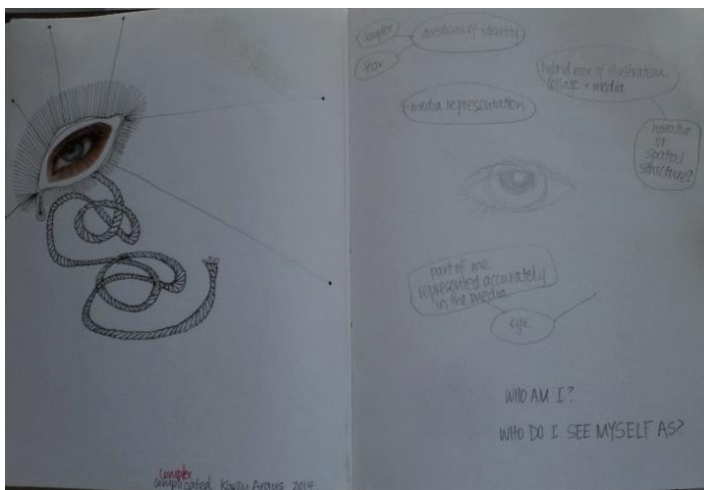


Figure 90 Argus, K 2014 *Artist Journal entry: Thinking through the use of eyes and how I view myself, their connection to women's magazines and the concept of media representation and how this is connected to me*

The eyes also in time became symbolic of being seen through the eyes of women's magazines as this is where they were cut from. This is a notion I find very challenging and I fought the symbolism for a while. I still had in my mind the idea of road kill, and from my childhood, a shooting that had happened in our small town and the police markings on the road that I passed as I walked to and from school. This thinking was embedded in some experimental works and focused on developing artworks with voice (Appendix 6). The materials used were old history books that did not acknowledge the role of women along with the use of women's magazine images. How many ways can I see the world and how

many ways can I be seen? Am I made up of this history or does it just consider whom I am allowed to be?

There are aspects in the work which I am more 'invested' in, which are planned to make a point, yet there are others which I believe say far more about who I really am, yet do not read obviously to anyone except me. The considerations are based around a myriad of thoughts which involve – colour, emotion, font, image, writing, words, symbolism, space, materials and location – a collection of the everyday, taken for granted things, which surround me.

Lamentation

As part of who I am, I am an art teacher. I cannot divorce this role from my practice as it contributes a lot to how I approach it. Much of my thinking is done in classrooms with my students as we work side-by-side. So, taking my class to an exhibition called *Lamentation* by artist Karike Ashworth contributed to my ongoing practice and their experience too. Karike's work was intensely personal and about the death of her mother from cancer. Not unlike the ongoing conversation I wanted with my Nan, Karike explored different ways of expressing and working through bereavement, while celebrating the possibility of a new caring relationship with the deceased. She used a lot of sewing in her work, so in response to this, I devised a unit of work for my students where they created an artwork about a place that they have a caring relationship with and included a sewed aspect.

Sharing with other creators

Working with students, provides me with opportunities to experience the rawness of creativity as well as helps me to open up and free up my own practice through focusing on, and teaching others. I'm not so inhibited showing my work to my students and discussing it, and in fact, find the feedback they provide helpful in developing my practice. Conversations about art and ideas can be had with anyone, and in an art classroom, students are just as focused on creating as I am.

Art teaching

This unit influenced my theoretical directions when reading and writing. The unit focused on the creation and development of telling stories in more than one way. After attending *Lamentation*, students painted a place of significance, add stitching to it and wrote about the

place they had visited. The writing contained more detail than writing they had done previously. This indicated that the visual aspect possibly aids consideration of factors not given as much thought otherwise. In *Moonlit Night* (Figure 91), the thread showed how the light sparkled on the grass, while in *Holidays* (Figure 92) it showed the rough terrain of the surrounding hills. Both would not have been evident without the stitched element. My concern with adding the stitched element in these works with Year 4 students (9-10-year olds), was that the thread itself didn't carry meaning. Another material could have been used to show the same thing. For the students, the thread did provide a physicality and particularly for student A which enabled a shining effect the paint did not and for Student B a texture which was discussed in the writing done later which was not evident with the use of paint alone.

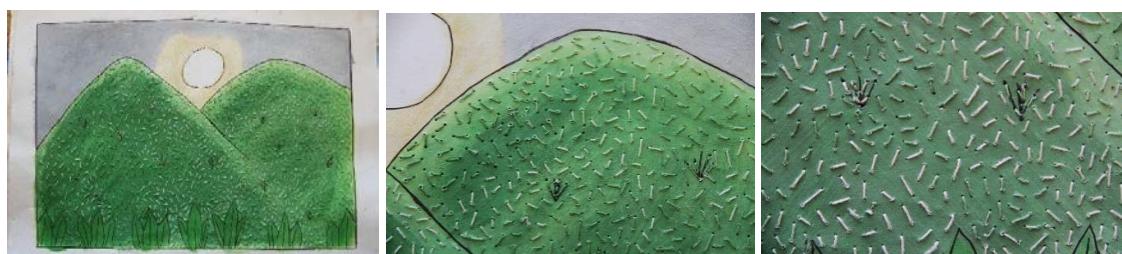


Figure 91 Student A 2015, *Moonlit Night*, acrylic and thread on paper, 40x30cm, photo by Karen Argus with parent permission



Figure 92 Student B 2015, *Holidays*, acrylic and thread on paper, 40x30cm, photo by Karen Argus with parent permission

For this unit, I created prior a series of stitched images about local places that I enjoyed or cared for (Appendix 13), as I have a belief that I should attempt any tasks that I plan to set for my students. It was while adding the stitched element that I began to consider how the stitching in this case was not being authentic to the work created. In fact, not having a story, I found the work was not doing anything, and I was not doing anything with the stitching that I couldn't do with paint or pencil. I learnt from creating five stitched images that material narratives make stories more complex, but that you need to be true to the voice of the material.

Contemplating Artists and their Connection to Materials

In a similar manner, and yet quite different, Monica Canilao's work repurposes, collects and reuses materials, specifically with their story in mind. Wangechi Mutu also makes deliberate choices when using materials for the conventions and signs they add to the work and I looked and read a lot about their work at this time. It also made me reflect on the materials I had been using and I re-questioned their use and contribution.

Appendix 20: The Third Wave: Deliberate Process and Practice

The third wave hit me hard. It was one where I became aware of what arts research looked like, felt like and could teach me. Finding a way to research within the creative arts forced me to think, make conscious decisions, and question some long held beliefs I had as a researcher. My ideas about research and how it should be conducted were challenged and those beliefs found the need to grow, diversify and find 'fit' in the field of visual art. While one example was expanded in the Enact Phase earlier, this occurred multiple times throughout the research making this wave slow and tedious. It was the experience of developing a practice over quite an extensive amount of time. The changes came slowly but with depth, accompanying reading, life experiences as well as time spent experimenting with varying materials, approaches and practices. Without this time, processing of thinking and exploration of concepts practically and cognitively, the work would not have developed to the degree that it did.

The research Process in Visual Arts

It was through this processing that my understanding of the research process and specifically what it is and does eventuated. While I saw it as an approach to researching, I never really understood it to be a 'way' of researching. To me, it was a system handed down that had a specific structure to be followed. So, when I was introduced to an artistic research approach by David Fairbairn, during a 5- day workshop, I was left perplexed and then challenged (Appendix 9).

While the work I did with David Fairbairn moved my practice forward and re-grounded me in drawing, the other side to what I learnt from this workshop was what practice-led research looks like in art. I did not know what it was called then, and I was not aware of what it was, but there was a lightning moment following five days with this artist and teacher, which altered my perception of drawing and art research.

I began to appreciate the things I could learn through the physical process of making that I would not learn through theory or in any way, other than making. His way of introducing artists and sharing their various ways of working and then setting us to tasks not to recreate what they had done, but to find our own way through them – to identify our own way of doing them meant thinking and considering your practice while working. I had begun this

process in a far more muddled and eclectic way a couple of years prior, but these sessions with David were streamlined, clear and deliberate.

Research as Practice

My work over these five days brought an understanding to research through practice. My final work was a product of this research process. While I had been experimenting with materials, the way in which David worked was to focus on one thing and to express it in many ways. During these workshops we focused on the life model but constructed renditions of her using a multitude of materials. Each one expressing the drawing of her in a different way. These were approaches to getting to know the subject. This is a common approach many artists use and is referenced by Whitford (1995) when discussing the work of Klimt, McEwen (2008) on the artwork of Paula Rego, is evident in the book *Robert Hannaford* (Art Gallery of South Australia, 2016), and *Wangechi Mutu: A Fantastic Journey* (Schoemaker, 2013), which are only some of many.

Research as Praxis

Throughout the five days I worked with David, there were five nights when I researched other artists' techniques and drawing approaches and practiced drawing life figures to achieve the same depth and interest of line. I began to recognise that each material created a voice of its own and had its own way of conversing. David prompted us to consider 'Why try to create a charcoal line that looks like a pencil line, when it has its own voice to use - its own strengths and story to tell?' The workshop reconnected me with drawing as a practice and taught me how to research using drawing materials. Looking closely at, and discussing the work of David Fairbairn, Paula Rego and Kathe Kollwitz, my technique improved. However, it was concluding that each material tells its own story, which came through use, activities and by drawing the same thing using multiple materials that helped make this connection.

Examining Material Understanding

The focus on using materials authentically, creating lines specific to the materials, brought rise to different drawing materials telling different narratives – rather than considering drawing, regardless of material, as a single narrative, which had been my view prior to this workshop. I began a series of drawings for 'When will the Rain Come?' following this which went along the second wall.

This wave made me reflect over what I had done throughout the first two years of my research and to really consider what I had learnt. My process and practice became more focused and streamlined after this and my use of materials more deliberate and considered.

Second Wave summary

In the second wave the development of material as telling its own narrative was pushed to the forefront along with the creation of multiple experimental works which questioned ways that ideas could be portrayed. This portrayal worked through each medium telling a nuance of its own. This wave saw a cross over from the Community Phase to the Ideate Phase and into the Share Phase with regards to the SIP. While much of this wave involved personal thinking and the consideration of issues, it also involved a deeper exploration into ideas and the discussion and sharing of components of them.

Appendix 21: The Fourth Wave: Understanding and Explaining Artistic Practice

I began a position at this point with Tablelands Regional Council as a Gallery Manager and joined the hanging team, a team of people who install exhibitions at three galleries in Atherton. This put me in touch with a lot of artists of varying practices and threw me into a world of discussing art, its value, and made me consider more broadly what the community valued. I continued to teach art from Foundation (the full-time year prior to Year 1) to Year 6, attended and presented at the ALEA (Australian Literacy Educators Association) Conference in Adelaide a presentation on complex texts based on both my teaching and arts practice. I also undertook a couple of online courses, *Art Criticism and Writing*, and *Research Methods for Curators and Artists* trying to broaden the knowledge learnt during the Fairbairn workshop and to fill some gaps in how to discuss the works of other artists. Finally, I engaged a visual art mentor from Contemporary Art Awards, Dr Julie Rees, to supplement my university advisors neither of whom were visual artists, to critique and provide feedback on my artwork for the exhibition *When Will the Rain Come?* which I booked at The Tanks, Cairns. The fourth wave began suddenly but took time to work through. It was a wave that swamped me and carried me out to sea for a while. It wasn't a flashing moment or a hard hit, but more a process of slowly tumbling before finally waking up dumped on a beach. It was an exhausting process.

Critique and consideration

Drawing a narrative

I had drawn a story of her days with us, and who I saw her to be. She moved amongst us looking at our work, spreading compliments, bringing smiles to artists' faces before crashing as a model with a painting group next door. My expression was not simple, as my approach was not one of drawing or painting, and that is what we were being taught. I was using those things and learning from each of them, but for me the focus was on telling the story of who I saw her to be. All the materials sat within a narrative. My purpose for creating the artwork was to tell a story. The way that I used the materials and techniques were to add to the story – to add an extra dimension or nuance. I had told a visual narrative of her. I have wondered since, if a closer rendition to her physical appearance would have made a difference. I don't think it would have. Her story with me, would have been the same.

Contemporary Narrative

I began reading quite a bit on narrative artists, particularly *New Narratives: contemporary art from India* (Seid 2007), *The Storytellers: Narratives in international contemporary art* (ed Wendt 2012) and also *Experimental Fiction* (Armstrong 2014). Each of these books broadened my thinking around what contemporary narrative looks like and it was clearly an evolving and emerging variety of forms. This narrative idea was established when reading about children's literature where beyond-postmodern approaches were being discussed and developed (Allan 2012; Coats 2014). Unlike the form I used in my childhood which had a beginning, a middle and an end, the beyond-postmodern versions used a less structured and consistent approach. They did not necessarily have an ending, but rather showed a variety of positions held by stakeholders, to which one then accepts and considers, as well as expresses thoughts of their own. This began to have an impact on the exhibition I was planning for The Tanks. Armstrong's (2014) work particularly Section Four regarding texts, where she discussed how certainties have changed and texts have moved into a myriad of forms and content, reaffirmed what I had been thinking. The collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of works was also interesting having read Luyckx's (1999) work on transmodernism where consideration was given to moving beyond one or more dominant opinions to many views in the room. That work saw a need for all points of view being equally valid and acknowledged despite numbers of supporters or validity. This was something I began to factor in when I was considering different ways and approaches to exhibiting. In combination with this, I also gave thought to exhibition space as another narrative form. This fit with Armstrong's (2014b) thinking about changing forms and content and picks up on the research by Kossman (2012) in *Narrative Spaces* who discusses the ways that exhibition space can be used to create narratives. When all this is considered, I had definitely reached a point of praxis, where developing and creating had become a research process (Armstrong, 2014). In my case this research involved reading academically, practising using a variety of materials, experimenting and conversing through units of work and discussing with interested others.

My Practice as Complex Text

This wave transformed the way I created my work, the way I viewed others' work and the way I talked about my work. It made me realise that my approach was a contemporary text form which was not limited by structure and could be as simple or complex as I chose it to be.

My move into complex texts came after the Fairbairn workshop and is evident in the second unit of work that I taught which experimented with developing complex texts with students as a text form and research approach. The unit focused on the material element and took a student as researcher approach. This was a new approach for me when teaching primary school art. These experiences moved my art and teaching practices into a contemporary narrative and complex text arena, and through this I began exploring the role that materials play.

Students Connecting with the Broader Community

As part of the unit of work around creating complex texts, the students interviewed and observed people to obtain information and ideas and then worked from this information to create works. This was the first time I had encouraged primary students to consider the views of others and we all found it really empowering. Particularly around something like Mother's Day, where a lot of assumed knowledge is usually the basis for the work, this gave students the drive to have a discussion with their mothers about what they were interested in, what they liked and what their favourite animals and colours were. The works designed for Mothers' Day used materials which they noticed their mothers accessed and made use of, for instance perfume bottles, deodorant tins or washing up liquid bottles. This gave the materials a purpose and basis for what they were creating. The students drew columns of images (Figure 92), words, materials and concepts about the person in their books and each of these layers was used to say something different about them. As can be seen in the table (Figure 92), students considered a combination of elements all drawn from their homework discussions, to create a layered approach which add depth to what could have been a very superficial artwork (Figure 91).



Figure 93 Student C 2013, *Mum*, acrylic paint, papier mache, women's magazines, plastic bottle and ink. Photo by Karen Argus with parent permission.

Materials	Words	Visuals
Perfume lipstick earrings nits make up 	makeover to ether P.Nick Kiss and hog writes let's to me Pointing to ether happy 	Red Tiger 

Figure 94 Student table identifying the materials mum uses, words that describe her and visuals that represent her. Photo by Karen Argus with permission from the parent.

The feedback from mothers regarding these works was positive. The students were very proud of their works and explained the elements in depth to their family members. It was good to work through the layers of communication with the students and it made me think more about my own work and the layers I was working with and how I could approach this more authentically. I particularly went back and re-worked some of my collages to reconsider the use of some elements following this unit. The use of alfoil came about from its multiple attributes as a kitchen tool, but also its property of reflecting something imperfectly. In this case, my personal portraits of being a toad were imperfect reflections of how women can be portrayed (Figure 95). Working through these units of work and watching other people question and grapple with the same questions around the use of materials, really assisted with my developing my personal arts practice too.



Figure 95 Argus, K 2016-2017 Toad collage showing the change in background after reflecting on the use of materials. Photos by Karen Argus

Presenting to a broader audience

I elected to present at the ALEA (Australian Literacy Educators Association) Conference in Adelaide in 2016 because I wanted to put complex text ideas out to a broader audience. There were about 50 people who attended my workshop and the response was interested and positive. The participants commented on how they now understood the historical change in narratives and could relate this to how their teaching needed to be updated to reflect contemporary narrative when teaching. As a presenter and a teacher, this was a definite confidence builder for me. Beyond the workshop, the conference surrounded me with discussions about narrative, text, teaching and visual literacy, which kept me thinking through the ideas I'd presented and where they were situated within, and amongst these aspects.

A point of view

Not having a visual arts background, but a teaching background I had viewed artworks up to this point based on principles of design and the elements of art. While visiting APT8 (Asia Pacific Triennial 8) while considering these aspects, I also began to look at the artwork through a narrative lens and a view to what they were communicating. I visited this exhibition three times for almost an entire day each time. On the day I went with Dr Rees I discussed the works we looked at with this narrative perspective. I could conceptualise various narrative types and forms in each artwork. It was interesting to see which narrative forms were being used as not all were sequential. Some were viewed from multiple views, or in the collective work by Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian from the view of all three artists, their collective view, the views of the people they worked with and the society they work within.

Narrative forms and theory

I began thinking about what views in society could be incorporated and presented to provide viewers with a point of view they could consider. I was attempting to incorporate multiple views, factual information and personal responses regardless of whether they conflicted. As in the *Birds of a Feather* exhibition, the theory behind Dialogic Looking (McKay & Monteverde 2003) and the work "*All The Rivers Run Into The Sea. Over.*" / "*Copy. Yet, The Sea Is Not Full. Over.*" Multiple opportunities were provided for the works to bounce off one another.

This wave was hard hitting in the beginning but once the concept of narrative as practice had fallen into place things came together from this point. Contemporary narrative and complex texts were terms which became grounding despite their complexity and lack of specificity. I had research I could use to explain my approach and a large degree of freedom around the execution of it. Everywhere I went, I began applying this theory and it made viewing and creating work purposeful and interesting.

Appendix 22: The Fifth Wave: Rhetorically Infra-reflexive

I am not sure if rhetoric came in a wave, but if it did, it was small initially. I remember realising while attempting to compile a section of theory that either my practice was based around values, or I valued the opinion of others. This felt like a natural progression from examining narratives and is a nuance on this, which is why I think it was not hard hitting. My practice has definitely become about valuing people's thoughts with a need for them to show their thinking in order to make the work more comprehensive. So, what initially seemed to be a small wave became one with the potential to create something that has long-lasting impact and is potentially tsunami-like in the longer term. This wave began, as I conceptualised an exhibition at The Old Post Office Gallery in Atherton called *Natural Introspectives*.

Discussions with Artists

From my position as one of the participating artists of what was an artist collective exhibition, *Natural Introspectives* the exhibition, was not limited to the opening night, and this is where my process as a researcher and artist became strongly evident. The exhibition from my perspective, included: discussions held prior with the artists about the work and the meetings we sat at individually and collectively. It included the group emails and individual ones; the talks with the artist opening the exhibition; with the Gallery Manager and with my Visual Art mentor and advisor. Beyond this, it also included conversations with artist peers outside those in this exhibition; the viewing of other exhibitions and reading about them if not seeing them in person. The creation of my own artworks, the hanging and rehanging of the exhibition and the discussions held on opening night that I heard, as well as those I was involved in, were also vital components. But also vital were the later discussions with artists, mentors and advisors about the success and other aspects of the event; the personal reflections, recalculations, misgivings, regrets which have occurred since; the changes being made as I think towards the next exhibition and the one after that in a continually altering practice towards creating a new form of text. This is the Develop Phase for me. Again Rework and Develop Phases can overlap, and they certainly do in this case. But, when working with others the need to separate the two was important.

The Impact of Narrative Understandings in a Developing Arts Practice

I found approaching texts infra-reflexively (beyond looking back on itself) and somewhat rhetorically (used for persuasive effect) with the aim of engaging an audience and myself

with a subject in a thoughtful way, was becoming an integral part of my practice. I was doing this by delivering a variety of narratives in one place. Some were contradictory some were varying versions of the same event – but all were contributing a view in some way – and provided a space for contemplation. The best example of this were the exhibitions *When will the Rain Come?* and *Natural Introspectives*. As narrative forms both were contemporary and complex. Unlike the narrative form I used in my childhood, which had a beginning, a middle and an end, contemporary narrative uses a variety of inputs to find ways of processing the thinking surrounding an idea. It does not necessarily have an ending, but rather shows a variety of positions held by stakeholders, in which one then accepts and considers as well as expresses thoughts of their own. I began to try including this social voice in artworks I considered.

Presenting Thinking and Audience Agency

I am aware as an artist that my teaching background is an integral part of my practice. My thinking is geared towards facilitating learning or perhaps more accurately - thinking. So, when I design artworks I aim to include entries into thinking, by creating environments which exposure the viewer to multiple ideas on the same topic. I attempt to direct the audience to consider multiple points of view. The work by Luyckx (1999) on transmodernism still feature here. On viewing, the work people then position themselves, their thinking, experiences and exposure to the issues being presented. They are not kept at a distance as viewers, but are invited into the work, to contribute. The audience utilise the space to create a positioning. Without this positioning, the text would be left open and less complete, or less comprehensive than if an opinion or thought were added.

Need for Community Involvement

A meeting with my advisor about including these views in my exhibition became a point of discussion requiring justification of the public contributions. While in some ways it complicated my research, working through the community positioning and community involvement is a vital aspect of my practice. When we got to the point of including it within the thesis, I was frustrated at requiring a chapter on what to me was just part of the narrative.

The Role of Others in my Arts Practice

On a jog a couple of days later, I realised that the issues I was deliberating and putting into my story, were not things I could answer alone which is why I needed input from others. The community aspect to my text was imperative and was not simply an ending, as I had been treating it. The issues were embedded in communities, and therefore needed the community to respond to them. This does not mean the community all became a united whole, rather it allowed for individuals to position themselves in such a way that they acknowledge the opinions of others while simultaneously demonstrating their own thinking. While individuals work towards finding their 'truth' and the community or society (depending on the issue) likewise comes to the realisation of their collective 'truth' or varying 'truths', the dawning that both are valuable and vital to the individual and to society becomes evident.

Using Employment Opportunities to Expand Arts Practice

The next 12 months were focused around reading theory, finishing off artworks, running another visual art unit of work and considering exhibition work. During this time, my role changed within one of my schools and I became a Primary Art Specialist. For some this would just be a change in occupation, but for me it provided an opportunity to try the creation of complex texts, texts with more than one way of being read, out on a broader audience of creatives. I devised a unit of work that tapped into the 'Say No to Bullying!' campaign run across all Queensland state schools.

A Broader Social Issue and Creating an Artwork to Communicate Thinking Around This

The bullying unit had students create two major works. The first led students through painting, collaging, drawing/writing, size, shape, colour and basic composition, and was more teacher-led. The second allowed freedom of choice around the previously learnt elements and mediums. This second strand was focused on toads and whether they are bullies, being bullied and questioning the use of the word 'bully'. Both artworks required the students to present an opinion on a topic and to show this through the work they created. To do this they were shown the impact toads were having on the animals and insect populations. The maps of them progressing across Australia. The footage of them arriving and being released. The reasoning behind them coming. The changes in newspaper reporting and language over time and shared experiences of home. We also considered living things and their right to life and 'killing'. About 120 students undertook this unit of work in varying forms based on year

level and the opinions varied from strongly opposed to strongly in favour with some students remaining undecided on the issue (Appendix 10: Figure 81). What this work across year levels demonstrated was that people from 4-5 years of age through to 11 years of age can show opinions on subjects when presented with a variety of sources and that these thoughts and ideas can be shared through creating texts of their own.

The Impact of Hearing Multiple Voices and Opinions

When the unit began, the overwhelming response was to kill them. At the end, this wasn't quite so easy for the students to answer. The hate talk had died down substantially. What I learned about my practice through this was that when presenting material, that the multiple narrative approach is important and able to engage very young audiences in thinking about very 'big' and worldly ideas that they are able to engage with. They are also able to respond with considered thoughts on an idea and present it through an artwork. This was the first time I can say that I had touched on the responsibilities as global citizens aspect of the Australian Curriculum in visual art.

Connecting New Ideas with Research Approach

I had come to realise following the ALEA conference, that the changes in narrative also meant for me changes in my understanding of inquiring using narrative. I realised that the narrative approach I had been using was being represented as a single story and not reflected in the details of the narrative inquiries (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Estrella & Forinash 2007) that I was reading about, but did suit the often cited '... ambiguity and complexity that the subject matter requires' (Gidron et al. 2011). I began broadening my personal approach to narrative to include all aspects of what I had been doing: academic writing, visual narratives, journal entries, artist book pages and Blog entries along with the more difficult to document development of exhibition narratives and complex texts. This change had been evident in my practice, but less considered and clear in the way I documented my practice. It became a case of the two being both artistic practice and the documenting of it. In addition to this, my teaching practice was deeply entwined with my arts practice and while I had recognized the value it add to my artistic practice there was also space for this narrative to be included in the broader more experimental and contemporary narrative that I was creating to document my research process.

Rite of an Introduced Species

The Rite of an Introduced Species (Appendix 10: Figure 75) in the exhibition 'When will the rain come?' was started at this point while a series of other large-scale collage works were continued and completed. Artworks, particularly collage works, need drying time in between layers, so often 3-4 artworks were going at the same time. It was a complicated time because my practice had moved beyond this but the incomplete works required for exhibition needed to be finished. These are Wall 1.

I undertook another NODE course, *Expanding Exhibitions* and read a lot about narrative theory. One could easily say I had become completely bogged down by it. I also looked at the rhetorical conception of narrative, rhetorical autoethnography, ekphrasis and completed a KickArts exhibition application. This was also a point at which I had begun to consider the stages from initial concept to exhibition.

Appendix 23: The Sixth Wave: Exhibitions and feedback

The lead into any exhibition for me is like trying to get over the breakers and into the sea. I do not like openings, I am not so keen on people and I always feel that putting artwork on walls for people to view, is akin to putting a part of yourself out there too. Once you are past the breakers, you can swim more easily. There is a level of comfort. But you are never quite sure what is swimming around underneath you. While it is not your primary thought, it is one that raises its head from time to time. This is my final wave. It happened at two different times, but what I learnt from both experiences was that out in this huge ocean bobbing along on a relatively calm sea, you are a teeny, tiny part of this really big world.

An Ongoing Process

It might seem a little obvious and it may not seem like a big deal, but the research process is ongoing for me. I realized when I was hanging both exhibitions, that this was not the end. An exhibition is just a point in time, and the conversation, the thinking and the artwork continues far beyond the hanging. What is hung influences the next series of works you begin to create. The feedback from people viewing the exhibition also feeds into future works and practice. And, walking through the exhibition provides you with future ideas about what could be done differently, what worked well and where to go next time around.

Difference in Social Engagement

Both set out in their own ways to create exhibitions on issues of social relevance that involved the community in a positioning of some sort. *'Natural Introspectives'* aimed to find the values associated with botanicals and the environment, by encouraging artists to express their thinking on a theme or topic. *'When Will the Rain Come?'* on the other hand, challenged a value held through presenting varying personal and social texts. In this respect, while still dealing with issues of social relevance the exhibitions were very different in their approaches.

Opportunities to Engage

'When Will the Rain Come?' provided a community space where people were encouraged to contribute artworks and ideas to add to the dialogue. Postcards and pens were provided for people to make contributions then and there. It provided an avenue for a completely different audience to use their voice. Those who attended the opening or walked in off the street could have a say (Figure 96).

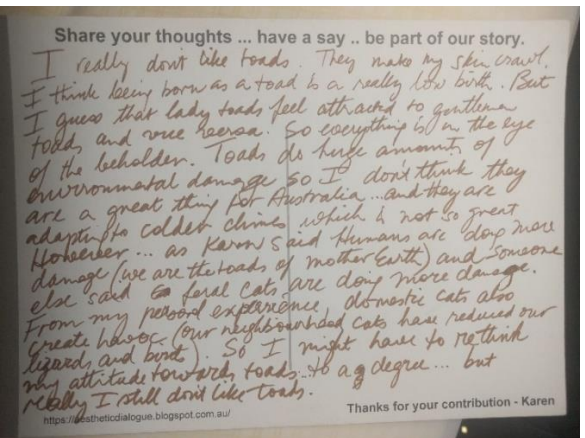
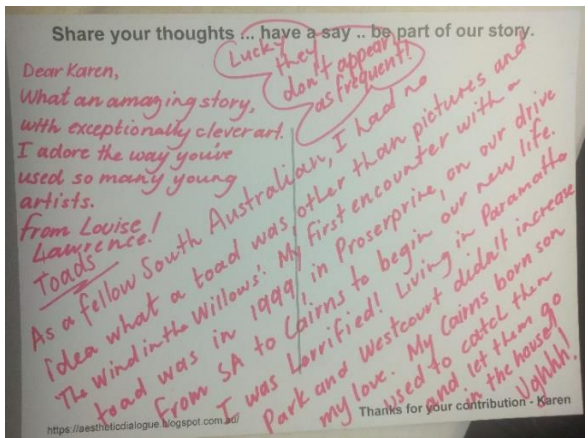
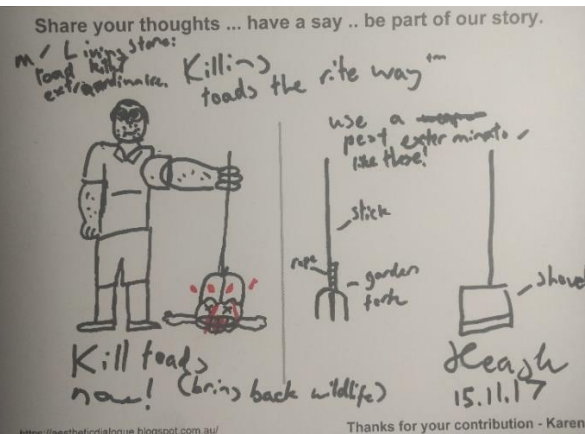
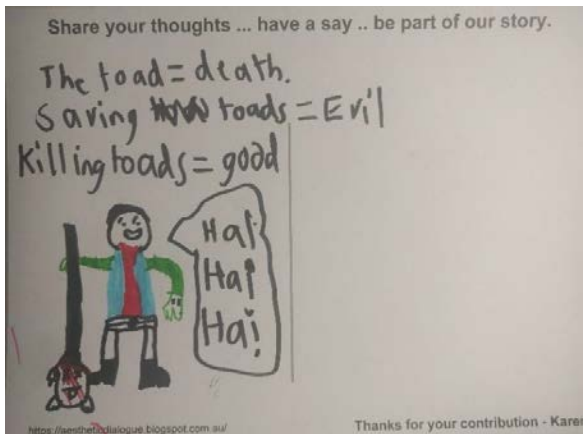
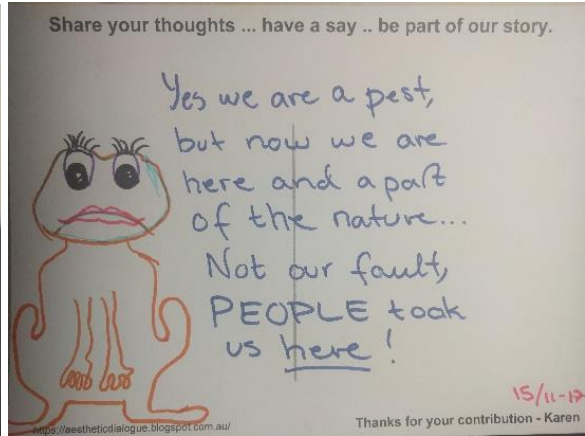
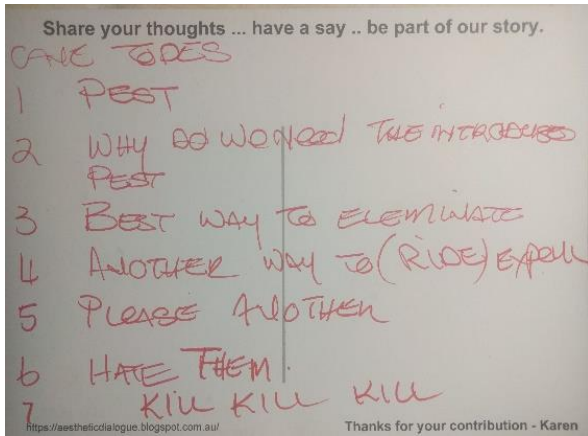


Figure 96 Various contributors, 2017 A sampling of postcards which were add during the exhibition When Will the Rain Come? Public Wall, Photo by Karen Argus.

'Natural Introspectives' gathered those ideas at the outset from people in the community the artists represented, and asked for a response. This was an exhibition that used social intent in two ways: the first where artists expressed the views about the natural world; the second much broader concept was a voice of balance in art understanding across the community by exhibiting on the same concept as the main gallery but from a more contemporary perspective.

This wave was a huge learning experience around the value of exhibiting. While the exhibitions were a small part of an entire process, having people come to an exhibition and talk about your work not knowing who you are while you are standing there is really raw feedback. In my case it provided an opportunity to hear what was being understood.

Enacting Thinking to Contribute to Practice

The writing of narratives, or documentation of thinking in whichever form suits, moves beyond a passive understanding of what has been undertaken to a processing of this, the enacting of thinking and a more active approach. The thinking through of thoughts is a vital aspect of this approach to visual arts practice and time should be spent contemplating the impact sharing has on ones practice. From this point, the original issue of contention or discomfort, may have been resolved. If this is the case the artist returns to the community phase to begin looking for the next aspect of social relevance. Perhaps an alternative nuance of the same issue has raised its head and requires further thinking, and in this case the artist returns to the Ideate phase to reconsider. If neither has occurred and further processing is required, which was my case, then a rework phase is entered. It is important to understand that critical event narratives are formed retrospectively, so can be made up of things from any point in the research that have come together. For this reason, maintaining earlier thinking is vital to the process. This creative approach has not been linear and has been documented in a variety of ways, all contributing their part to a comprehensive whole – a contemporary narrative of sorts. The process is not developmental, where a later experience becomes more important than an earlier one. All of the experiences are valid and of equal importance and can be drawn on at any point and connected with later occurrences. A streamlined chronological documentation is not evident, but the documentation is all dated, so can be used chronologically. Some aspects have been rewritten or condensed to focus on the intent of the story, while some interests followed at earlier times of the research have been left and not revised. Each of these aspects documents the process undertaken throughout this research.

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