

**Contemporary Cypriot Video Art:  
An Investigation of Artistic Practice  
and its Educational Implications for the Visual Arts Curriculum**

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**Nicoleta Avgousti**

Candidate number: 2248243

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## **Glossary**

### ***Art practice as research approach***

A relatively new research approach that regards visual arts as a research practice. It considers that visual experience invokes creative and critical competencies where explanations, analysis and connections are achieved so as new understandings emerge. Artists are actively involved in a dynamic process of relational and transformative research practices that results in meaning-making constructions.

### ***A/r/tography***

A pluralistic and hybrid methodological approach to research informed by qualitative methodologies such as hermeneutics, autoethnography, phenomenology, visual ethnography. It is an emerging arts-based site of inquiry that opens up the spaces between the roles of artist/researcher/teacher and provides a space that encourages the enacting of visual and written processes, allowing meaning to emerge from the art and the writing. The research is located within the values, needs, interests, and real-life actions of communities, and the issues studied have local character and global relevance.

### ***Multimodal texts***

Texts that combine two or more modes of meanings, such as linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial. The aim of the combination of many modes in a text is to offer users the maximum possible experience in regard to the content. This idea is connected with the finding that humans have various and multiple intelligences, and that multimodal texts offer various options of access to information and knowledge. A text can be a piece of writing, a book, an artwork, a video, a comic strip, an audiovisual presentation or a film.

### ***Real-life experiences***

A dynamic term that considers the Heideggerian notion of human's embodied interaction with the world that is vital in order to construct life. Real-life experiences are authentic experiences that may occur in any setting, time and context, and have meaningful content for humans. They may be connected to the real world and everyday reality, where this reality embraces the tangible world, the fantasy or the virtual world. The meanings that are assigned to experiences may comprise of personal and social concerns, apprehension and anxiety about everyday issues, reactions about life events, observation and criticism of the everyday surroundings, happenings and achievements.

***Video art***

An art form connected with the moving image. It usually contains image and sound, as well as elements of other art forms. Video art does not employ the conventions of film or television such as the use of actors, dialogues and plot. Contemporary video art uses new digital technologies, and it is an art practice that has entered the museum and gallery spaces through various forms of presentations such as video installations, single-channel projections, multiple-channel projections. It has also entered the theatre and performance space where it is combined with these art forms.



## **Abstract**

This qualitative project concentrates on the creative research processes of contemporary Cypriot video artists and on their interrelation with the field of visual arts education, examined through the triple role of artist/researcher/teacher. The project contains evidence of the achievement of a tangible research product in the form of an Educational Guide, accompanied by a DVD collection as a creative outcome that presents, in 10 DVDs, the video profiles of 10 local artists with a selection of their video artwork.

The project adopts a pluralistic research methodology, and identifies and presents multiple results that are extracted from the artists' case studies, together with a self-study concerning artistic research approaches to video art-making. The results are transformed through a hermeneutical and semiotic approach into educational suggestions for the employment of video art as an art form, and video as a medium into the visual arts educational context.

The body of knowledge presented contributes to three major areas: the documentation and accessibility of the artistic practices of contemporary living Cypriot artists, the understanding of their artistic research processes, and the attribution of pedagogical value to video art's content and context through the creation of educational materials that consider the availability of the artists' video works. The outcome of the project is intended for general and visual arts educators, artists, art historians and gallery and museum professionals who wish to study the insights of video art in Cyprus through an audio-visual presentation.

The overall contribution of the project to professional practice is summarised in the bridging of the gap between the sister fields of visual arts and contemporary visual arts education, by transforming everyday artistic practice in appropriate material for pedagogical contexts.

# **Chapter 1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Chapter summary**

The first chapter presents the statement of the problem and the research project's main assumptions, context, necessity and significance, as well as its connection to professional visual arts and educational practice. It concludes with the project's limitations.

## **1.2 Development of personal interest in the subject**

My doctorate project attempts to merge my multiple professional roles, and to concentrate on the idea of exploring local artistic creative processes in relation to the concept of real-life experience and its educational potential in the framework of the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011).

The professional roles I have undertaken over the past twenty years as a primary school visual arts educator, a visual arts education advisor to in-service teachers and a practising visual artist have contributed to growth in my interest in undertaking research that brings together these roles. My recent involvement in the development of the Visual Arts Curriculum for the Cyprus Educational System reinforced this desire, as it resulted in my engaging with current literature as well as questioning my professional practice and adapting new ways of seeing my work through the various roles.

The personal curriculum contribution marked my interest in researching improved teaching practice as well as artistic practice. It helped my understanding of managing the autonomy given to educators to function as curriculum designers, and of analysing educators' needs concerning contemporary visual arts resources that could inspire and guide innovative ways of working with students. Being in both visual arts and education fields for many years, I was aware of an absence of resources documenting local art and providing educational suggestions to help educators to structure their art teaching.

As a practising artist, my main interest over the past seven years has been in the field of video art and in experimentation with digital video as a medium. My aspiration to research local video art practice developed gradually, as well as its association with approaches in the field of education. In this context, the ambition was generated to contribute to the development of local educational resources, as well as the advancement of documenting Cypriot contemporary video art practice.

My study adopts a conceptual framework which reflects the importance of humans' primary experiential understanding of the world through the Heideggerian notion of embodied interaction with surroundings that is vital in order to construct life (Dourish 2001, cited in O'Neill 2008; Heidegger 1962, cited in O'Neill 2008). This framework mirrors the constructivist approach in contemporary visual arts and education, where real-life experience stands at the centre of contemporary artists' practices (Sullivan 2010; S. Walker 2001) and becomes a source for constructing knowledge at the teaching-learning process (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005; Day and Hurwitz 2012; S. Walker 2001).

In addition, this set of concepts aligns with the rationale of the Visual Arts Curriculum, which considers real-life experiences as the focal reference point of all learning. The Curriculum's constructivist approach to art learning involves students' understanding, meaning-making and authentic engagement with the self and others that result in exploration, expression, knowledge construction, criticality in real-world situations (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011) (Appendix 1). In order to achieve this kind of student engagement, teachers are called to apply forms of practice that resemble the artists' practices and involve visualization, focusing, reasoning, questioning, and interpreting among other characteristics (Sullivan 2014).

Through my educator/artist identity, I felt to be driven by the aspiration to explore these parallels and/or borderlines of art teaching and art making, and simultaneously propose educational ideas that evolve around the concept of real-life experiences as a focal point that allows for students, teachers and artists to have a deep relationship with the self, the others and the world overall.

### **1.3 Professional significance of the project**

The importance of this qualitative research project lies in its in-depth inquiry into the art-making process of Cypriot video art and its usefulness in pedagogical contexts to approaches to contemporary video art in the visual arts classroom. As video art may appear difficult to comprehend or be appreciated in the eyes of audiences (Viola 1984) and possibly children, researching the creative process and concepts of making video art could lead to new ways of understanding and creating it as a response to real-life experiences.

The outcomes of the project include a multimodal tangible product that consists of a printed Educational Guide and a collection of 10 DVDs featuring edited versions of the artists' interviews *the artists' profiles*, and a number of each artist's video artworks. This product will benefit various professional practitioners working in the field of visual arts and visual arts education. It is expected to be disseminated in the form of an authentic educational resource concerning video art in Cyprus, and provide constructive paradigms to art educators of pre-primary (aged 5 years) to upper secondary (aged 15 years). The resource includes textual and audiovisual elements that can be employed in the design of units of art lessons in the Visual Arts Curriculum and lead to the enhancement of local educators' autonomy as curriculum designers. The resource is also of value to English-speaking art educators in other countries, and those who teach subjects such as language, literature, history and social studies, since many of its themes and ideas belong to these disciplines: identity; family; the Cyprus problem; environmental pollution; and economic crisis.

It is hoped that the disseminated product will contribute to the understanding of the artistic research process and pedagogical value of video art. Additionally, the product may benefit visual artists, researchers, curators, gallery and museum professionals, and art historians wishing to study the development of video art in Cyprus through an audiovisual presentation.

The product is in response to the lack of educational resources on local contemporary art, specifically video art, making it essential for visual arts educators and the official authorities of the Ministry of Education, since it could be used for in-service professional development for teachers. The project hopefully achieves a first focused presentation of Cypriot artists' video work and practice in relation to visual arts education and the Visual Arts Curriculum.

#### **1.4 Statement of the problem**

Video art education is a new area in visual arts education that has not yet been adequately developed internationally. Probably because visual arts education has traditionally focused on still images (Downing 2005; Smith 2011; Spont 2010), it has been stated that there is insufficient discussion on the contribution of video art to contemporary visual arts education in theory and curriculum (Nadaner 2008); of research in the area (Harland 2000;

Smith 2011); of video art resources that contain actual video artwork and not simply video stills (Szekely 2005); of awareness of contemporary video art practice (Viola 1984); and of discussion on its input to anticipating new ways of understanding experience,.

The causes of this paucity might be the negative effect of educators' curriculum-focused concern, a fear of new media and of social change and even decreased interest in the art market (Smith 2011), as well as low representation and accessibility of video art and generally new media art in museums, despite a number of international festivals and online platforms promoting the genre (Grau 2012). This paucity contradicts a notion of contemporary teaching and learning in visual arts that begins from the engagement with and/or the recollection of authentic, real-life experiences through interaction with the environment, the self and others, and the visual culture environment (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005; Avgousti et al 2014; Duncum 2010; Freedman 2003; Greene 1995; Hetland et al. 2007; Lave and Wenger 1991; Krug 2002; Trimis and Savva 2009; S. Walker 2001).

Local video art as part of the wider contemporary Cypriot art scene is also an under-researched area in terms of its limited reference to literature and internet resources. Its perspective needs to be explored and connected to education so as to be approached in the art classroom and contribute to achievement of three of the Visual Arts Curriculum goals, emphasising: (a) the construction of personal or social meanings in students' visual works through associations with real-life experiences; (b) the integration of local contemporary art in the visual arts classroom and; (c) the integration of new technologies as part of students' art experiences (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011).

### **1.5 Relationship with previous learning**

This project is considered a coherent extension of my RAL Level 8 claims related to my involvement in the process of the Visual Arts Curriculum development, and the support I offered to local visual arts educators for its implementation. The experiences I gathered through this process acted as a catalyst for my doctorate research, as they concerned key abilities such as design, coordination and supervision of complex management and educational tasks, and employment of research activity in all aspects of work and learning. This project is also connected to my MA work-based learning studies in terms of the exploration of personal and others' visual artistic practice. The processes employed in my

MA studies acted as a foundation for the execution of an in-depth exploration during this doctorate project.

## **1.6 The main themes investigated**

The research questions of this project deal with personal and other local artists' video art practice, their connections with real-life experiences and their educational potential. More specifically, the questions search for relevancies between video as an art form, video as a medium, and video as a visual arts educational tool and resource. These connections were explored amongst local video art practices that position the role of real-life experiences at the centre of the artistic creative process.

## **1.7 Assumptions**

**Real-life experiences.** The phenomenologist Martin Heidegger accepts as true that one aspect of human existence is its relation to the world: its embodied interaction with people; things; or any unit that exists in the world. Heidegger regards that human presence would not exist without the world, and that the world has an effect on the human existence through this process of embodied interaction with its physical elements (Heidegger 1962, cited in O'Neill 2008). Dourish (2001, cited in O'Neill 2008) explains that this human existence for Heidegger is 'being grounded in everyday, mundane experience' (p.125), and that the human's interaction with the world is the source for constructing life meanings. O'Neill (2008) also points out that Heidegger's philosophy regards human's embodied relationship with the world as substantial in order to understand it, and extends this notion to the manmade world, more precisely to interactive technologies. Winograd and Flores (1986, cited in O'Neill 2008) state that, for Heidegger, humans' primary experiential understanding of the world is more important than any disconnected theoretical understanding; the ability of humans to reflect on the world follows the ability to act in the world.

In this research the concept of real-life experience is regarded as a dynamic term that concerns all aspects of the study and considers the Heideggerian notion of human's embodied interaction with the world that is vital in order to construct life. Real-life experiences are authentic experiences that may occur in any setting, time or context, and have meaning for humans. They may be connected to the real world and everyday reality, where this reality embraces the tangible world, the fantasy or the virtual world. Real-life

experiences are different and unique, because each person, either adult or child, responds to the world through embodied interaction in an individual manner, taking into consideration personal, social and cultural elements. Subsequently, the meanings that are assigned to experiences by each human are multiple and multidimensional. They may comprise personal and social concerns, apprehension and anxiety about everyday issues, reactions about life events and stimuli, observation and criticism of the everyday surroundings, happenings and achievements.

The concept of real-life experience appears important to this study as it is explored in a two ways. Focusing on students' real-life experiences in regards to visual arts education reflects the student-centred pedagogies where '(t)eachers are encouraged to be more sensitive to and aware of their students' daily experiences and their interests' (Day and Hurwitz 2012, p.266), as well as to pay attention to their personal lives. These kind of pedagogies are also supported by the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum. The two approaches of constructivism and critical pedagogy in visual arts education convey as their main principles the following: the importance of students' direct experiences; active participation and connection with authentic-real situations and experiences; the multimodal visual expression and creation; the in-depth exploration of materials and ideas; the acceptance of subjectivity and multiple interpretations; and the advancement of critical thinking and research (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011, p.16) (Appendix 1).

**All art activity is reflective of real-life experiences.** Throughout history, real-life experience has been considered vital to artists and their practice. It can range from intimate and autobiographical to public and social, and plays a crucial role in artmaking by becoming the stimulus that generates ideas, constructs interpretations, establishes connections, motivates, develops satisfaction, and sustains attention and interest in projects (Chapman 1993; Dewey 2008; Sullivan 2010; S. Walker 2001).

The Heideggerian notion of humans' embodied interaction with the world is significant to artists, as they come to understand their creative procedures as everyday experiences and bodily encounters with phenomena, ideas, materials and things that are transformed to explicit knowledge and skills, essential to their creative subsistence. Contemporary art as the reflexive and communicative art practice of our times considers the importance of authentic real-life experiences with reference to the self, interactions with others and the

environment, human body, tradition or religion, while engaging with social, political and economic issues, both current and past.

**Video art is a hybrid art form.** In this doctorate project, video art is regarded as a multidimensional term. Primarily it is a 'media-specific' (Spielmann 2008, p.2), experimental and expressive art form using digital video technology as a powerful and processual medium to represent aesthetic qualities. Moreover, it is considered as a hybrid art form that is open, flexible and inviting to any digital (e.g. computer animation) or analogue (e.g. hand-drawn animation) medium and technique, or both; it is also considered as an art form inviting to other genres such as installation, sculpture, performance, dance, theatre. Single-channel works – works that are viewed on a single display mode and involve a single information source, such as a DVD, as well as a single playback device – take up a great portion of this project, but in addition the study embraces other integrative video forms such as video installation art (Elwes 2005; Mondloch 2010), video sculpture (Elwes 2005), video dance performance and video art for the theatre (Giesekam 2008). After all, '[v]ideo art is a practice which engages in wholly other spaces, the world of gallery distribution, of sculptural installations, of performance art' (Cubitt 1991, p.108).

While contemporary artists continue to experience and explore diverse elements of new technologies and media, and while media artists are regarded researchers of novel forms of image creation, perception and interaction (Grau 2003), contemporary art encourages the critical thinking and visual literacy that is so much needed in our increasingly multimodal lives and educational settings of our visual culture (Art21 2007; Freedman 2003). The sustainability of interest around digital technologies as tools in artists' hands increases as these are becoming more available, more affordable and more engaging. Video has been an aspect of the broad spectrum of technology as an aesthetic means in artists' work since 1965. However, it was not until the late 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s that digital video technology became accessible and easy to use, so as to develop into an important artistic practice (Elwes 2005; Martin 2006; Spielmann 2008). Recent technological developments of the twenty-first century, as well as the flourishing of the Internet, are the broad usage of worldwide websites that are exclusively connected to video and the popularity of professional video editing software, as well as simplified applications for mobile devices. All these indicate video's future creative potential for hybrid art practice.



**Video art holds educational potential.** As contemporary visual arts education moves closer to contemporary working artists' practice and recognises the importance of including such practice in curricula (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005; Efland et al 1996; Freedman 2003; Gude 2004; Nadaner 2002; Sullivan 2002; S. Walker 2001), authentic real-life experiences are becoming considered central to visual arts education.

The recent immediacy of digital video technology has entered students' everyday reality both as a form of viewing and as a tool for making, establishing video as one of their everyday experiences. Some video-related practice that students of various ages may be involved with, both in formal and informal educational settings, include: video/television viewing; video creation; and posting on social network platforms and music video web sites; live video streaming through web cameras; and video editing on computers and mobile devices. If contemporary visual arts education could search for these elements of today's everyday life that students would be interested in having as part of their education, digital video would probably be featured.

Bearing these in mind, contemporary visual arts education could embrace video as a medium, an art form and an area that holds educational value, offering a space for investigations that correspond to the idea of constructing connections between students' school life and real out-of-school experiences and interests. As investigations of the input of video art to contemporary visual arts education are in their infancy, the need for an inquiry into its possibilities is clear, running parallel to the sustainability of interest around video as a powerful medium and art form among artists and students.

Equivalent hybrid content is specified in the term 'video art' when introduced in the visual arts education context, as described above. It primarily refers to the experimental qualities of digital video technology, and simultaneously includes other integrated digital or analogue media and techniques, as well as other genres. Students' engagement with video art refers to video art as an integrative art form, and to digital video as a creative, experimental and inclusive medium.

### **1.8 Project context**

This DProf project was undertaken at an important time for the Cyprus educational system, as the development of a new curriculum was one of its educational reform tasks, an ambitious effort initiated in 2003 and still in progress. The planned reform measures cover

most areas of the educational system and include: curriculum development in the context of the official compulsory education from preschool to *lyceum*; decentralisation of school units; modifications on the educators' appraisal system; establishment of alternative rankings for educators; improvement and extension of the day-long school institution; educators' training development; and policy development on the treatment of school failure and students' delinquency (Educational Reform Report 2004).

The first phase of the new curriculum commenced in March 2009 and was completed after piloted implementations in June 2010. A second phase is currently in progress that includes minor improvements to the curriculum texts and the attainment targets. It is planned to be complete by June 2016. The curriculum was a response to European Union goals for the preparation of students for active and creative participation in social, cultural, political and economic life. In the case of Cyprus, these goals were in a new context because of the unique challenges the children face such as living in an occupied country developed in adverse circumstances and an unstable peace-time environment (Ministry of Education and Culture 2008).

### **1.9 Methodology**

This research began with the engagement and critical reviewing of the relevant literature. It continued with the investigation of personal video artmaking, and the completion and display of four video artworks. Project Phase 2 ran almost parallel with personal video artmaking processes, and dealt with the inquiry and examination of other contemporary Cypriot video art practice. Project Phase 3 explored the potential of incorporating personal and studied artists' video works and practice in the visual arts classroom, with the development of educational associations and tangible resources that met the rationale and content of the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011) (Appendix 1).

The project adopted a pluralistic research methodology of four key methods. Art practice as a research approach (Sullivan 2010) was part of the initial investigation of personal video art practice. Hermeneutics (Gadamer 1989; Heidegger 1982, 2008; Krippendorff 2004; Rapley 2008; Ricoeur 1981), semiotics (Chandler 2007; Crow 2010; O'Neill 2008), and art practice as research (Sullivan 2010) were employed to examine a selection of contemporary Cypriot artists' video art practice, as case studies (Stake 1995; Yin 2005).

The form of arts-based educational approach to research known as *a/r/tography* (Irwin 2004; Irwin et al. 2006; Springgay et al. 2008) was the fourth methodology, which also served as the main framework within which the various project phases were organised. *A/r/tography* also accommodated the final phase, Project Phase 3, the search for educational relevancies derived from personal and other artists' practice, and the design of educational resources based on the findings. This methodology anticipated the contribution of an authentic and original research design to the sister fields of visual arts and visual arts education, promoting their interconnections and interrelations.

### **1.10 Limitations**

My research aims to depict educational implications and develop resources for the approach of local video art in the visual arts classroom. It was not planned to deal with the design of specific art units, or implementation in actual educational settings, as time restrictions did not permit. Its contribution is an inquiry into local video art practice, and the design of educational resources that can guide educators to employ video art in their art units, as curriculum developers.

Research participants were chosen from the local artistic community, taking into consideration their active artistic practice, their contribution to local video art, their accessibility and their willingness to participate. They were also selected according to associations of their video works with real-life experiences during preliminary research, and the appropriateness of their work to students aged between 5 and 15 years, as reviewed by the artists and the researcher. These limitations excluded a number of artists as well as certain artworks. A particular category of artists who were excluded is Cypriot video artists residing and working in other countries.

Another limitation to this research is the lack of relevant literature about local video art, a fact that has deprived specific artistic practice and artwork of any background information to serve as the basis for the research process.

## **Chapter 2 Terms of Reference and Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chapter summary**

In this chapter I present the research statement, the aims and objectives of this project and the initial research questions that were attempted to be answered throughout the research activity. The chapter concludes with the literature review that formed the basis for the project's concepts, aims and objectives.

### **2.2 The research statement – Aims and objectives**

The aim of my DProf project is to explore and document contemporary Cypriot video art, including personal video art, to investigate video art's educational potential and to develop authentic educational resources corresponding to the Visual Arts Curriculum for Key Stages 1 to 4 (students aged 5–15).

The first project objective was to investigate personal video art-making through undertaking art practice as a research approach (Sullivan 2010) in order to explore and reflect on connections with real-life experiences and educational implications in the art classroom.

The second objective was to focus on the emerging intersections between real-life experiences and art practice through the application of hermeneutics (Gadamer 1989; Heidegger 1962, 1982; Krippendorff 2004; Rapley 2008; Ricoeur 1981), semiotics (Chandler 2007; Crow 2010; O'Neill 2008) and the art practice as research approach (Sullivan 2010) in the examination of contemporary Cypriot artists' video art practice as case studies (Stake 1995; Yin 2005).

The third objective was to reflect on research findings and develop educational suggestions that integrate video art in visual arts education for Key Stages 1 to 4 (students aged 5–15).

Based on the conclusions of this project, some recommendations for future research were made.

The questions explored throughout the project's research activity dealt with the following:

1. How can the investigation of personal video art-making shed light into connections with real-life experiences?
2. In what ways do contemporary Cypriot video artists extend their practice in relation to real-life experiences?
3. What kinds of potentials arise from personal and other local artists' video art practice that could have educational applications in the visual arts classroom?
4. In what ways can local contemporary video art practice – including personal practice – and their educational relevancies be addressed in the art classroom and respond to the new Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum framework?

The route that was followed for the completion of this DProf project is comprised of evidence of achievement in the form of a collection of proposed educational resources, and in the form of personal video artwork, accompanied by a written critical commentary that presents methodological and contextual information on the produced outcomes.

A literature review that comprises the basis for the aims and objectives of my project is presented in the remainder of this chapter.

### **2.3 Review of knowledge and information**

**Video technology.** Since the description of the visual process of motion by Arnheim in 1954 (1984) and his depiction as 'the strongest visual appeal to attention' (p.373), much has happened in the advancement of capturing and transmitting motion in the art world. The association of imagery with digital technology and its development into integral parts of the new visual culture environment of the twenty-first century (Freedman 2003) inevitably offered artists new instruments, media, tools and ideas for experimentation. A literature reference that goes back to 1976 presents computers as new and as creative tools in artists' hands and, through case studies and artists' statements, explores their usage, potential and place in visual arts practice (Leavitt 1976).

Video art is a contemporary art form closely related with analogue video technology at its appearance in the mid-1960s, and with digital video technology later at the end of the 1970s. Andy Warhol's (1928–1987) double-screen showing in August 1965 of a simultaneous video and film projection as part of a film installation created a dialogue between established film technology and newly introduced video technology; this was, according to Spielmann (2008), the first videotape ever screened in the history of video art.

Nam June Paik's (1932–2006) public presentation of his first videotape in a New York city café a few months later, in October 1965, was the first single-channel video work in the medium's history. These events marked the birth of a new art form that was established by the mid-1970s in gallery spaces across the USA and Europe, mostly in Germany and England (Elwes 2005; Martin 2006; Spielmann 2008).

As an introduced new medium, video departed from its technological nature and evolved into a medium and a 'media-specific' (Spielmann 2008, p.2) metaphorical expressive form that made use of 'fluid' and 'electronic pictoriality', in contrast to prior pictorial media such as photography and film that used image as a single unit (Spielmann 2008, p.4). This development of video technology into a powerful artists' medium intended to advantage concepts, allegories and aesthetics through video art creation over video's technical potential: 'In other words, an arts approach to video is not determined by technological skills but driven by conceptual and material strategies' (Rahn 2008, p.307). The addition of sound and physical components to the visual element of video creates aesthetic environments that 'immerse the viewer on emotional, intellectual and physical levels' (Elwes 2005, p.14), and locate him or her in the advantaged position of participating in the experience of video projection.

Since its appearance as an analogue technological tool and medium, video has undergone dramatic change in its use of technology, practice of strategies and techniques, and role in society and status as an art form (Elwes 2005; Martin 2006; Spielmann 2008). 'Artists who work with video confirm the medium's changeable nature' (Martin 2006, p.6), such as the renowned Bill Viola, who described video art in the phrase 'No beginning/No end/No direction/No duration – Video as mind' (Martin 2006, p.6). Video's connection to computers in the transition to the digital era is vital, since digital technology developed the medium through more approachable and easy-to-use hardware and software, and pushed its potential further. Video artists today are able to take control of their raw videos considerably more easily than with the magnetic tapes of the 1960s–1980s (Elwes 2005; Spielmann 2008); they can transfer their videos onto computers immediately after recorded to their digital camera's storage space, turning this practice into a direct learning and experimental process that continues during the digital editing procedure. This recently affordable evolution places new power in artists' hands and converts the originally recorded video footage into 'multidimensionally and of omnidirectionally unlimited transformation imagery' (Spielmann 2008, p.5). More potential can be foreseen in the

usage of mobile devices, such as tablets and smart phones, for capturing and editing video, even though at present they may be regarded as unprofessional for the demanding expert artist.

**Contemporary video art and art practice as research.** Art practice has been established as a form of research that seeks to investigate knowledge creation in the process of making art. Dynamic approaches to inquiry can be located within or outside the studio experience where thoughts, ideas and actions result from making art in research contexts. Artists' studios and any other places where artists create and critique new knowledge are powerful sites of inquiry, where they can act as both researchers and objects of study, and their research inquiries about meanings, themes or ideas, processes and products of artistic knowing (Barone and Eisner 2012; Chalmers 2004; de Cosson 2004; Sullivan 2010; S. Walker 2001). Researching the process of making art can be quite enlightening in the case of contemporary art, as it may often appear difficult to comprehend or appreciate. Unfolding the various parts and deconstructing the meanings, thoughts and procedures that take place during artistic practice can demonstrate contemporary art's complex nature and the multi-level paths taken towards its creation.

Throughout art practice as research, artists come across and represent experience in multiple ways, deploying forms of research and expression that can effectively communicate phenomena and ideas (Barone and Eisner 2012; Sullivan 2010). Artists work alone or in collaboration on personal or social narratives, and intuitively take on the dual roles of the researcher and the researched in a reflexive process employing methods such as case studies, interviews, practical experiments and scenario building, among others (Smith and Dean 2009). Interviewing the self was a method used by McNiff who concluded that '[t]here is no better way to understand a particular aspect of creative practice than to research it in this direct way' (McNiff 2008, in Knowles and Cole, p.31).

Video as a medium has always been experimental, since its beginnings and through its several changes in the use of technology, practice of strategies and techniques (Elwes 2005; Spielmann 2008). It provided an exciting platform and creative tool for experiences and ideas to depict and develop, establishing the prospect of applying art practice as a form of research in the area of moving image. Film, video technology's predecessor, maintained the character of an investigational tool for some artists in the 1920s with noticeable examples like Dziga Vertov's avant-garde film, *The Man with a Movie Camera*

(Aitken 2013; Roberts 2000). The movie demonstrated in 1929 how film could be a medium that allows experimentation and contributes to the creative process, beyond merely documenting events and people. Vertov introduced a range of cinematic techniques such as double exposure, fast and slow motion, jump cuts and extreme close-ups that seemed peculiar and provocative at that time. *The Man with a Movie Camera* promoted a departure from the conventions of cinema, theatre and literature, as stated in Vertov's manifesto that preceded the movie, and simultaneously demanded the viewer to 'take an active role as decipherer' (Roberts p.44).

Later in the 1960s Andy Warhol utilised video technology in an experiment to record the *Factory Diaries*, which reflected the events taking place at The Factory, his renowned New York-based studio (Guardiola 2000). He also produced an extended list of provocative films between 1963 and 1977, some of which lacked a formal narrative and included techniques such as multiscreen projection, as in the *Chelsea Girls* (Warhol 1966, in Crimp 2012, Guardiola 2000), and others incorporated the long take that was often projected at silent film speed (Guardiola 2000). Warhol created the first videotape in August 1965; it presented Edie Sedgwick's image on video, as well as on film, in the double-screen film *Outer and Inner Space* (1965, 33', b/w, sound) (Guardiola 2000, Spielmann 2008). At the same time Nam June Paik experimented with the new medium as well as television monitors in video installations; he devoted many years of his career experimenting with video art and live video performances, opposing the power of television and the commercial role it was gaining at that time (Elwes 2005; Spielmann 2008; J. Walker 2001). During the same decade video activists created the so called 'underground video', and the alternative movement, Guerrilla Television, was broadcasting with a focus on attacking the role of the dominant media (Elwes 2005, Spielmann 2008).

Contemporary video artists such as the international pioneers, Americans Bill Viola and Gary Hill, usually set up their multiple monitors or large video screens in dramatically darkened spaces and manipulated them to create intense bodily or metaphysical experiences (Hopkins 2000). In his video installation *Tall Ships* (Hill 1992) (Figure 2.1), Hill created a corridor with projected human figures that approach and 'visit' the viewer, then turn around and move away after achieving the engagement of the viewer's mind and body, with the physicality of the surface and simultaneously the human presence (Hopkins 2000).



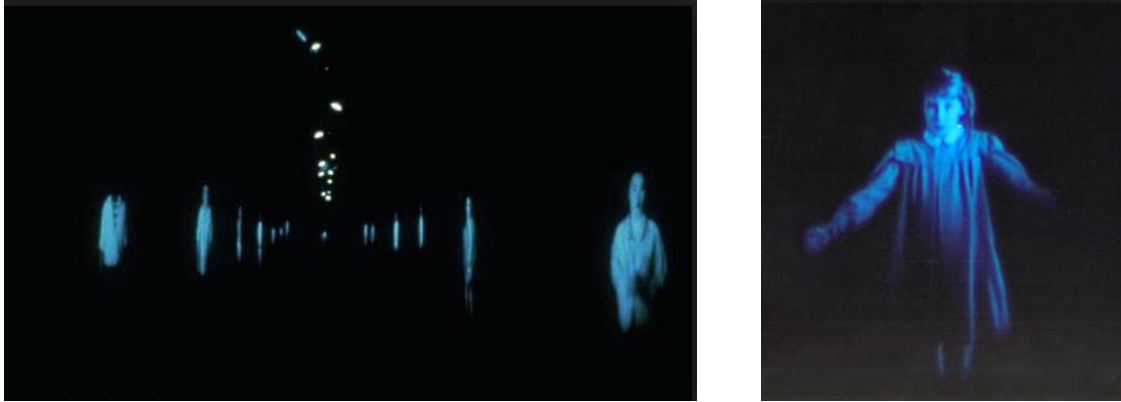


Figure 2.1 Photographs from *Tall Ships*, Gary Hill, 1992. Sixteen-channel video installation or twelve-channel video installation (silent). Seattle: Henry Art Gallery.

Bill Viola pushed to the limits experimentation with the dimension of time, utilising digital technology to serve his needs and desired aesthetic outcomes, and to create works that are described 'as much visceral or emotional as they are intellectual' (Townsend 2004, p.8), deeply religious (Jasper 2004; Wainwright 2004) and epic (Morgan 2004). In his video work *The Greeting* (Viola 1995) (Figure 2.2) he demonstrated an exceptional control over time in hyper-slow motion by slowing down movement and plot, and giving the impression of nearly static and merely animated images (Martin 2006; SFMOMA 2012; Viola 2013). This creates a 'substitution of another way of experiencing time' (Wainwright 2004, p.119) in a video that profoundly references a Renaissance painting.

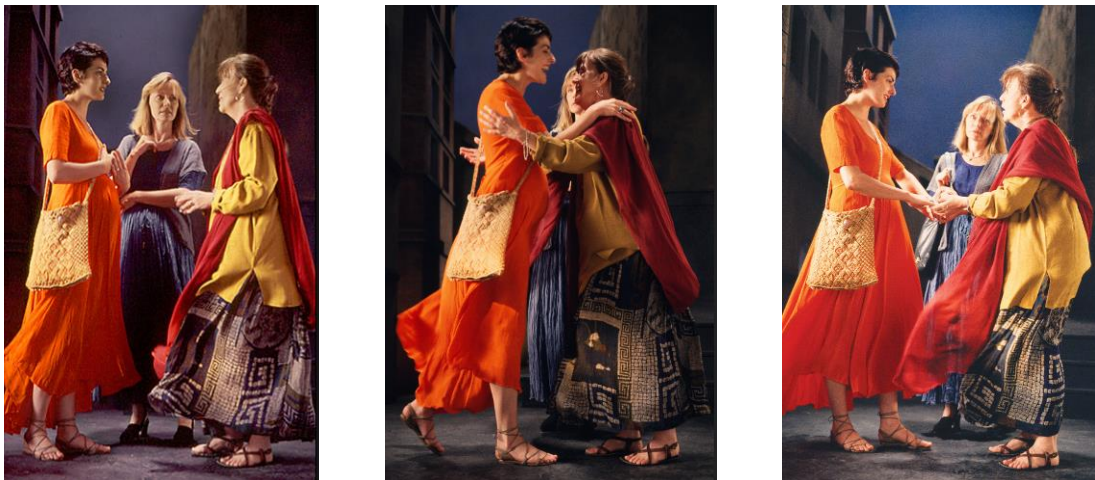


Figure 2.2 Video stills from *The Greeting*, Bill Viola, 1995. Video/sound installation, colour video projection on large vertical screen, 10'. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art.

The Australian artist Jess MacNeil was fascinated by the patterns and movements of the seawater she captured next to a swimming pool full of swimmers, but after she researched her raw footage on her computer for her single-channel video artwork, *The Swimmers* (MacNeil 2009) (Figure 2.3), she took away the swimmers just to see what happened, to create a mystery, to concentrate on things not noticed if everything is visible (MOVE Primary: Art in Motion 2011).

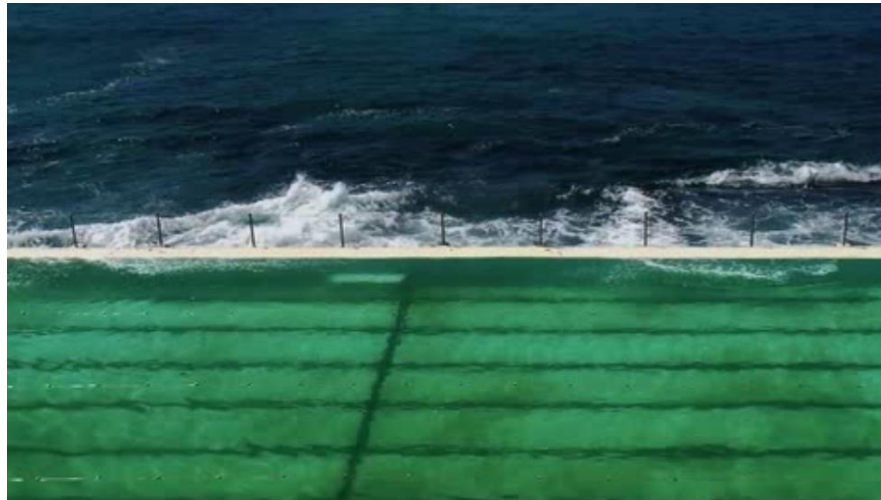


Figure 2.3 Video still from *The Swimmers*, Jess MacNeil, 2009. Single-channel video. Collection of the artist.

Film, and analogue and digital video technology, as they developed throughout the years, allowed for artists to experiment with the fourth dimension: time. Video art's evolution though during its recent history went far beyond initial experimentation and proved the medium's open, flexible and changeable nature. It ignores typical conventions; permits nonlinear narratives; constructs incorporeal video worlds that enhance the active participation of the viewer; builds representations of real or virtual life; extends the existing representations within still images; and becomes 'a rupture that radically changes the terms of art' (Wainwright 2004, p.111).

**Contemporary video art and real life experiences.** During the past three or four decades Western art has rediscovered the importance of critical engagement with personal experience, real-life situations and everyday concerns of the self and society (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005; S. Walker 2001). This premise of contemporary art as a live social, critical and expressive form is found in other cultures throughout history and the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, where art does not serve mere decorative purposes but is a means for telling real-life stories, learning about the inner and

the outer world, and for communicating ideas through aesthetics, artistic skills and techniques (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005). Heartney (2001) states about contemporary art that '[t]here is evidence everywhere of the return of the real. Art today is full of celebrations of the body, nature, tradition, religion, beauty and the self. Plenitude has returned' (p.77). If these characteristics are perceived in conjunction with the postmodern principles of art as defined by scholars over time (Duncum 2010; Gude 2004, 2007), and also studied through the practice of contemporary visual artists, important notions emerge in terms of the role of everyday life in the art world. Principles such as image appropriation, juxtaposition, recontextualisation and multimodality, the significance of memories of the past in art, of everyday objects and images in art and life, as well as practices such as street graffiti and art in public spaces, regard art as part of the daily reality. It seems that the era of postmodernism has positioned real life at the centre of all visual creation.

The above ideas are expanded to include not just the artists' but also the viewers' diverse and multisensory experiences of real life, as contemporary artists tend to invite the audience to move closer to their intentions, decode the works, construct their own meanings (Elwes 2005; S. Walker 2001), and immerse themselves 'on emotional, intellectual and physical levels' (Elwes 2005, p.14).

As video art holds a place among the contemporary art forms (Elwes 2005; Spielmann 2008), it has also proved throughout the numerous artistic practices along its history that it deals with everyday reality, per se. Cubitt stated that '[video] begins its work precisely in the heart of the regime of looking' (p.89, Cubitt 1993, cited in Elwes 2005); 'looking' at personal experiences, relationships, memories, social concerns, the context. Video may, indeed, be closer to real life than any other forms of art, as it captures the essence of life in a better understood manner for the nature of the human eye: it captures movement, time, and controls or alters events. Video-making is truly understood as an artistic practice connected to everyday experience through Heidegger's human embodied interaction with the world.

Throughout its recent history video art has manipulated life experiences in a multidimensional manner. Dziga Vertov aimed at depicting in his films 'life as it is' (Aitken 2013, p.602), and Nam June Paik 'understood video as a model of life' (Martin 2006, p.6) from his very first experiments with the medium and the art form (Elwes 2005; Spielmann 2008; S. Walker 2001). Andy Warhol used video sometimes to depict 'what we do not see'

and create a 'desire to see the "action"', referring simultaneously to social circumstances of his time (Crimp 2012, p.3). Contemporary video art has shown almost static nature images in infinite loops, depicting mysteries and metaphors, such as in Viola's *The Reflective Pool* (1977–1979) (Morgan 2004; Viola 2013). It has engaged the body with technology in real time and used video loops to show simultaneous performative actions in Export's *Movement Imagination No.5* (1974–1975) (Harris 2005); it has used live transmissions from a camera strapped to a balloon and lifted into the air in Pericleous' *Regulated Services: Leaving History* (2012) (*Terra Mediterranea – In Crisis* 2012); it has presented alterations of real life through video editing in Pfeiffer's *The Long Count* (2003) (*Art21* 2012c); and it has involved ordinary people by inviting them to participate in artists' video recordings, such as in Herrings' TASK (2009–ongoing) (*Art21* 2012a; Herring 2008).

**The educational potential of art practice as research and real-life experiences as elements of contemporary video art.** Through everyday incidents in the family, school, social and physical environment, children accumulate a collection of real-life experiences that construct their reality and determine their present and future actions. As Dewey indicated in 1934, '[e]xperience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living' (1934/2008, p.42). Sixty years later, Freire stimulated educators to focus on students' real-life experiences and benefit from them, so as to accomplish relationships between curriculum and 'knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience' (Freire 1998, p.36). Curiosity is regarded as a fundamental element of experience, and consequently of creativity; for Freire, curiosity leads to the transformative process of critical thinking. In a more contemporary note, while Duncum (2008, 2010) connects critical thinking with real-life situations and regards this association as a process that emerges from students' direct interaction and critical examination with real-life situations.

Evolving in this context, contemporary visual arts education has re-examined its role and purposes and set forth a new focus on students' understanding of themselves and others through authentic, real-life experiences (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005; Greene 1995; Hetland et al. 2007; Krug 2002; Lave and Wenger 1991; Trimis and Savva 2009; S. Walker 2001). Teaching and learning in visual arts begins with engagement with and/or the recollection of experiences through interaction with the environment, the self and others, culture, technology, art, materials and techniques, leading students – and educators – to gain a personal impact, an open eye and a critical stance to life and the

world. Contemporary art education also moves closer to the practice of contemporary working artists (Efland et al. 1996; Freedman 2003; Gude 2004), bridging the gap of disassociation between art education and the contemporary art world that was in evidence in the past (Efland 1990). Contemporary art, in this framework, could play a significant role in achieving students' meaningful engagement and learning, and accomplish the connection of school life to various out-of-the-classroom real-life situations.

The tactic of researching the process of making contemporary art, unfolding its parts and deconstructing meanings, thoughts and procedures, that takes place during artistic practice could be especially useful for the notion of approaching contemporary art in pedagogical contexts. McNiff (2008) encouraged 'art-based researchers to immerse themselves in studies of how artists research personal and social experiences and how art has served as a primary agent of change in the world' (p.38). Gude (2004) also stimulated visual arts educators to 'study the art of our times' (p.8), and facilitate meaning-making opportunities for students by *viewing* contemporary artists' creative problem-solving processes that reflect their own environments and contexts (p.12).

Sullivan (2010, cited in Sullivan 2014) presents identical features in the artist's and art educator's nature of work, and considers these as essentials. Either the individual is working in the classroom or in the studio. These 'distinctive forms of artistic cognition' include 'visualizing, sensing, intuiting, focusing, reasoning, questioning, grounding, comparing, and interpreting' (p.279). Since contemporary art education consists of a two-fold *viewing* and *making*, Sullivan's 'forms of artistic cognition' may as well refer to these both. Additional forms could be recognising, understanding and reflecting. *Making* consists of an imperative action in the studying of contemporary art. Springgay (2008) draws on Ellsworth's work (2005) to exemplify the importance of contemporary art 'in the making':

When art education shifts its focus from teaching 'about' contemporary art to an understanding of contemporary art 'in the making', new ways of understanding experience are produced. The power of contemporary art 'in the making' thus lies not only in their encodings of multiple and complex meanings, but also in their ability to create potentialities and possibilities in new spaces and unanticipated contexts (Ellsworth 2005). Thus art education 'in the making' is imbued with the potential of creating new forms of corporeality, embodiment, knowing, and being (Springgay 2008, p.23).

*Viewing and making* contemporary art involves researching the connections of the artists' processes with the concepts involved. Mayer (2008) states that contemporary visual arts education should 'fashion instructional activities that have the students examining, reflecting, questioning, and responding to the important issues of their world by engaging with the concepts and inquiry that spurred the artists' thinking and art-making' (p.79). These concepts, issues, central themes (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005), or big ideas (S. Walker 2001) such as identity, family, community, power, technology, consumerism, natural environment and culture, form the organisation of contemporary visual arts education curricula, and help in contextualising the main human concerns of our times in order to facilitate teaching, attain meanings, and construct learning. Direct contact with contemporary artwork can be treated as a 'site of possibility for making art, thinking about art, and teaching art' (Sullivan 2002, p.29). Contemporary artists, on the other hand, may serve as role models who inspire about the birth, development and realisation of ideas in response to their experiences of today's world (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005; Art21 2007; Nadaner 2002; S. Walker 2001).

Emery (2002), however, identifies a difficulty faced by visual art educators in choosing contemporary issues and art practice to deal with students 'from the vast plethora of available possibilities...', since issues are often challenging and complicated, and artwork may not always follow aesthetic rules, and may even reject them: 'This plurality of possibility can seem overwhelming for art teachers faced with limited [teaching] hours in which to present very complex ideas to students' (p.38). Emery's discussion presents a problem faced by Cypriot art educators as well, a problem that emerged in a more intense form after the introduction of the new Visual Arts Curriculum in 2010. The need for the design of appropriate educational visual arts resources is identified as a solution to the problem; these resources should carefully select and present contemporary artists, examine issues and art practice, and suggest activities to form the basis for the construction of lesson plans and art units that approach contemporary art.

As technological imagery has become an important and dominant aspect of contemporary art and artists' work (Harris 2005) it has similarly entered students' lived experience and their reality (Freedman 2003). Video, a technological means with immediate digital imagery relevancies, is already considered a part of students' visual culture both as a form for viewing and as a tool for making. As the literature signifies the importance of incorporating elements of students' everyday visual culture into curricula (Boughton 2005;

Christopoulou 2010; Duncum 1997; Freedman 2003), it is anticipated that research in educational settings will demonstrate this in practice.

It has been acknowledged that video art 'is the art form for the download generation' (Move: Video art in schools 2008) that offers new motives for producing something fast, communicative, effective and sharable. Video art can begin from '[a] motion, an occurrence, a change' and continue as a visual study that requires further looking and responding to life, similar to the work taking place in a classroom (Nadaner 2008, p.24). A notion from perceptual psychology's perspective argues that the moving image is the basic form of representation and that '[m]oviemakers are closer to life than picture makers' – like photographers or painters – who create only a part of the whole (Gibson 1979, p.293, cited in Nadaner 2008, p.21). Consequently, children should ideally come across movies and videos among their first art experiences. Regarding this idea, the crucial question that emerged is that we may have been inversely initiating children's art education, since still images are only *part* of the movement and motion pictures show the whole, or at least more than the part, as depicted by the human eye.

Artistic creation through video could expand students' capacity for noticing aspects of their experiences; it might possibly restore individual voice and identity since it helps them separate reality projected from mass media from the reality of their own life and culture (Rahn 2008); it could bring closer the two realities and search for commonalities. Simultaneously, video creates its own world and presents opportunities for extending perceptual awareness through changes of time, place and motion that would not exist without the use of the medium (Nadaner 2008). Contemporary video art could deal directly with the 'big ideas' or 'central themes' of humanity, and focus on connecting real-life experiences, perception and knowledge construction through the processes of data collection, management, experimentation, synthesis and viewing. Data include the collected images, either photographs or works of art or both, text, sounds and music.

One research finding on the introduction of video art in the secondary education of the State of Victoria in Australia indicates that the use of video art has the ability to re-engage students who might be at risk of failing within formal education settings. The same research exemplifies the potential development of students' involvement in artistic processes that last beyond their project's finalisation (Indoor Laneway Project 2013). Another study mentions that a possible reason for secondary art students' sensitivity to

video art is the contemporaneous nature and relevance of this art form (Smith 2011). A third case study at a primary visual arts classroom in Cyprus reveals students' in-depth involvement in deconstructing an artist's video artwork and in constructing new meanings based on a children's story and through the creation of their own video art (Avgousti et al. 2014). Video art has the prospective to reach students intimately if it becomes part of their art programme for, as Hansen (2004) argues, 'technology allows for a closer relationship to ourselves' (p.589).

**Cypriot art.** Visual arts in Cyprus appeared in the late 1800s under problematic social and economic circumstances because of the island's occupation by the Ottoman Empire since 1571. The roots of art creation were long established in the rich religious iconography and the folk handicrafts. In 1878 Britain took over Cyprus with the agreement of the Ottoman government. Gradually, people started migrating to England and some began to study fine arts, mainly in London and usually with financial difficulties. The other location of fine art studies by Cypriots was the Athens School of Fine Arts. Notable is the first Cypriot woman artist, Loukia Nicolaidis, who managed to study in London in 1933 and was among the first to organise solo art exhibitions in Cyprus. Artists were disappointed at the indifference of local audiences regarding art; the audience was likewise reluctant to accept new art trends and alternative representations of reality (Christou 1983; Nikita 2002).

Early influences in the local art at that time were inevitably from the twentieth century European artistic movements. As Cyprus is said to have no history in avant-garde art (Nikita 2002; Pellapaisiotis 2014), local artists extended these influences in their own context and content, creating art that reflected the life, people and beliefs of that time. 'Strengthening and promoting national identity' (Nikita 2009, p.14) was the role of art in the troubled years after 1950, with the National liberation struggle in 1955–1959 to cultivate a sort of anxiety towards foreign elements possibly threatening the local culture, a belief that influenced the artistic creation on the island (Nikita 2009).

In 1960 the country gained its independence and two important organisations were formed in following years. The first was the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, with the aim of identifying and promoting the arts, and selecting artists for the country's participation in international art events. 1963 was the year of the first international representation of Cyprus, at the Alexandria Bienalle (Nikita 2002). The second was at the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, formed by a number of leading local



artists of the time. The Chamber's role has been significant in endorsing artistic events and nurturing artists' interest in developing their work (Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts 2010).

The political situation that followed the Turkish invasion in 1974 was central to change in the thematic development, as well as the elements of drama and emotion portrayed in visual art. The local art scene entered the postmodern era, and in more recent years the buffer zone that divides the country has attracted curator projects promoting a socially critical art and exemplify symbols, narratives and meanings (Pellapaisiotis 2014). In the decades since 1980 and as the economy grew, many young people were able to study abroad. Upon their return, they formed the local contemporary art scene by experimenting with new trends, art forms, materials, media and themes. Additionally, artists are nowadays located at international art centres and are 'insiders' in the international art scene, either forming their own Cypriot artistic identity that is connected with their home country (Stylianou 2014, p.249) or regarding their home as 'a point of departure' (Stylianou 2014, p.257). The recently formed School of Fine Arts of the Cyprus Technological University will commence operation in September 2015, accepting its first master's level students and aiming at inaugurating undergraduate and graduate courses in future, and promises to play a critical role in the artistic events of the country.

**Video art practice in Cyprus.** The State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art, as the official institution that collects and maintains local art, holds in its official records twenty-two (22) video artwork created by 20 artists who are either Cypriot or permanent residents. These works were bought from the State and belong to its collection. The above information was personally obtained verbally and in written form by a gallery staff member in April 2012 and reconfirmed in December 2014. This list (Appendix 2) was created for an art event held for the European Night of Museums in May 2009, and complemented the screening of parts of video artwork from the state collection. The DVD screened at the event was acquired from the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture after personal contact with an officer. The list and the DVD include 16 of the 22 video artworks belonging to the collection. The remaining works were mentioned verbally by the gallery staff member, who admitted in conversation that the Gallery's video art records are not well kept and that an updated and detailed record should be generated in the near future. These data formed the basis of the research that I later developed.

In the aforementioned list and DVD, the oldest video artwork seems to be Nikos Kouroussis' *Metamorphosis*, from 1986 (Kouroussis 1986) (Figure 2.4). It is an experimental work in a series of four videos created in New York during the artist's scholarship at Pratt Institute (information obtained during the artist's interview). Kouroussis created an earlier video artwork there in 1982, *Labyrinth* (Kouroussis 1982) (Figure 2.5) now missing from the artist's archives; only photographic stills have survived. Details of these two works can be found in the artist's profile (DVD 9) and the Educational Guide (pp.47–50).



*Figure 2.4 Video still from Metamorphosis 1, Nikos Kouroussis 1986. Single-channel video. Nicosia: State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art (video still was provided by the artist).*



*Figure 2.5 Video still from Labyrinth, Nikos Kouroussis, 1982. Single-channel video (the video is missing from the artist's archives. Video still provided by the artist).*

Another source of documentation of the local video art that proved useful for this research was the retrospective exhibition and catalogue of *Cyprus in Venice 1968–2009*, held in Nicosia in 2010/2011 as a tribute to the forty years of Cyprus' participation in the Venice Biennale of Visual Arts. The exhibition showed a collection of artwork in this significant international art event. The few video works representing Cyprus were also shown, the first chronologically being Maria Loizidou's video installation of 1986, *The Myth of Ariadne in Three Acts* (Loizidou 1986) (Cultural Services, Ministry of Education and Culture and Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre 2011; Cyprus Today 2010). This video work, together with Kouroussis' *Labyrinth* (1982) and *Metamorphosis* (1986), probably signifies the period when video art first appeared on the local art scene.

One reference in local current literature that offers some information about video art in Cyprus is a publication by the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts (2010) – the official representative body of local professional artists – accompanying the curated group exhibition of its members entitled '50 Years of Artistic Creation'. The publication refers to 16 local artists who work either exclusively or occasionally in the medium of video, describing some exhibited video artworks. One of my own was included in this publication (*Existence with Difficulty*, Avgousti 2010).

A substantial archive of the video art in Cyprus by the non-profit local organisation NeMe (2004) is in its infancy, initiated by Cornell University with the aim of documenting and preserving video art created by artists in a number of countries worldwide, and the founders of NeMe, visual artist Helene Black and architect Yiannis Colakides, are in charge. The interview with Black and Colakides was invaluable for this research since it revealed that to date their archive features 68 local artists (information obtained during artists' interview). These artists have created at some point in their career within the medium of video. Our discussion was centred on the main names in this archive who have a substantial body of work to show. The list includes all the aforementioned resources, indicating that the current artists total 68. This conclusion is significant to my research, determining the sampling as described in section 3.8.

Even though video art in Cyprus seems to have emerged as an experimental art form in the 1980s, it was not until 2002 that a festival concerning video art appeared on the local scene. The Pantheon Xperimental Film and Animation Festival was established as an annual international event, and celebrated its tenth year in November 2012. The festival's

founder and gallery owner, Petros Lapithis, stated that its success over the decade lay in the fact that it invited various styles of works, either in technique, in concept or in aesthetics (Pantheon Cultural Association, 2013). A year later the festival was discontinued and the Pantheon Cultural Association wound up. (I had the privilege of showing one of my video artworks at the 2011 Festival.)

Another local popular festival, originally dedicated to the genre of documentary, switched in 2012 to animation. This is the Animafest Cyprus, Views of the World (Animafest Cyprus, Views of the World 2013). The festival accepts animation entries at international level, and is organised every summer at various rural locations around the country.

The latest addition to the local scene is the International Motion Festival Cyprus, organised for the first time in 2012 (International Motion Festival Cyprus 2013). The festival has a clear focus on motion graphics, but also presents a mixture of video works that range from video art to documentary and animation, depicting the thin line between these genres. My work *Existence with Difficulty* (Avgousti 2010) was screened at the first Festival, and at the 2015 Festival was shown my video art collaboration with Katia Savvidou *I am Alone, Nobody is Here* (Savvidou and Avgousti 2014).

A major exhibition organised by the Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre in July 2012–July 2013 was 'Terra Mediterranea – In Crisis'. It was held under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU and included a number of video artworks by international artists and five local artists with the aim of investigating and presenting their reflections on today's economic, political, religious, social and deeply existential crisis of identity (Nicosia Municipal Arts Center 2012).

An exhibition called 'Stories in Screen' opened in early 2013 in a private gallery in Paphos, exclusively featuring three video works by five local artists, screening one video per week (Chiaki Kamikawa Contemporary Art 2013). Periodically there are video works presented in solo and group exhibitions, among other art forms. Artists who show video art regularly include Yiannos Economou, Helene Black, Klitsa Antoniou, Lia Lapithi, Maria Loizidou and Kyriaki Costa. Other distinguished Cypriot video artists who live abroad show their video work regularly in European and international art events and include Haris Epaminonda, Marianna Christofides and Christodoulos Panayiotou, who represented the country in 2015 at the 56th Venice Biennale.

Recently, three major Pancyprian group exhibitions were held by the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts between October and December 2014 in three cities, featuring works by 79 local artists. All three included just five video artworks by three artists: Kyriaki Costa (one work), myself (three works), and a collaboration between Katia Savvidou and myself (one work). A video still from my work *Where Did the Butterfly Hide? SLEEP-RESTART* (Avgousti 2014) is in the catalogue accompanying the exhibitions (Cyprus Chamber of Fine Art 2014).

**Connections to the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum.** As part of the Cyprus Educational System Reform, the Curriculum for the Schools of the Republic of Cyprus aims for an educational system that offers active participation in work and citizenship, input into knowledge development and well-being in conditions of freedom, democracy and social justice. The Curriculum advocates that every child has the right to become an educated human being of the twenty-first century, with equal inclusion and participation. Young people of the Greek-Cypriot community should be supported to develop their national, religious and cultural identity, learning at the same time to respect the various characteristics of their schoolmates who are natives of other countries, and the identities of other communities of Cyprus such as Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians, Russians and Arabs. For children of different background the Curriculum supports the development of their own unique identity (Report of the Committee to the Council of Primary and Secondary Education 2008).

The Visual Arts Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011) (Appendix 1) reflects the above rationale by focusing on learners' interests and experiences. Real-world connections are considered important in structuring meaningful classroom art-making and employing students in investigations and expressions of important issues and ideas, paying attention to their apprehensions and facilitating suitable settings and processes that can foster change. Teaching and learning begin with engagement to and recollection of experiences through interaction with the environment, self and others, culture, art, technology, materials and techniques, leading students – and educators – to gain a personal impact, an open eye and a critical and active stance to life, to the world and its sustainability.

Through their two main views of learning, the constructivist approach in art education and the critical pedagogy in art education, visual arts strategies and activities promote a child-

centred tactic that exploits the interests and experiences of students in real-authentic situations, at the same time cultivating their creative expression and critical thinking.

The constructivist approach in art education uses real-life experiences as a means to design and implement activities that have a developmental character and take place in an interactive learning environment. Emphasis is given to direct experience; active participation and connection with authentic-real situations; multimodal artistic expression; the development of meta-cognitive skills; in-depth investigation of materials and ideas; and reflective action (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012, p.13).

The critical pedagogy in art education focuses on the development of critical thinking skills that could lead, through creating appropriate environments and procedures, to social and cultural change. Students' concerns are at the centre of designing activities that aim for self-knowledge, social critique, cooperation and active citizenship. Contemporary art has a central part in this pedagogical approach, as this kind of art directly connects Visual arts education with students' life and experiences. Visual arts are regarded as action; they promote connection with realities about the self and the surrounding environments; they accept subjectivity, multiple perceptions and dialogue; they endorse critical thinking and research; they encourage decision-making and experiential learning (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012, p.14).

The Visual Arts Curriculum incorporates an integrated frame for a sequential and unified curriculum that ranges from pre-primary, age 5 years, to upper secondary, age 15 years. The Curriculum content, objectives and success indicators are divided into four key stages as follows:

Key Stage 1: Pre-primary–Grade B' primary

Key Stage 2: Grade C primary–Grade E' primary

Key Stage 3: Grade St primary–Grade B' lower secondary (gymnasium)

Key Stage 4: Grade C lower secondary (gymnasium)–Grade A' upper secondary (lyceum)

By means of this structure, the continuity of a united and cohesive body of knowledge is achieved, as well as long-term objectives relating to attitudes and behaviours. Additionally,

there is potential to achieve certain competencies at all Key Stages (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010, 2011, 2012).

The Curriculum content is comprised of core content, named 'Visual Expression and Thinking'; plus six interconnected thematic areas: 'Identity', 'Local Cultural Heritage', 'World Cultural Heritage', 'Space–Place', 'Visual Culture' and 'Society and Life'. The core content and these thematic areas reflect the knowledge, abilities and attitudes that students are expected to develop in the Key Stages 1 to 4. The core content refers to experimentations with materials, enrichment of experiences and investigation of the visual language through experiential activities. It also embraces students' interaction with stimuli from the surroundings and works of art (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011). Each thematic area includes suggestions for themes that refer to all Key Stages, with content that presents interaction, allowing educators for flexibility in their choices (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011).

Avgousti (2011) stated in one of the first references to the Visual Arts Curriculum that the employment of video as an art form and as a medium in the visual arts classroom has the potential to attain Curriculum goals and facilitate the development of students' active participation, critical thinking skills and reflective attitude. This is through elaborating on issues concerning the self, the socio-cultural, political, economic and natural environments and their sustainability, and students' contemporary interests. At the same time, video art should be investigated as an instrument in educators' hands with the potential to spark creativity through experimentation with technology and its conjunction with other art materials, media and techniques; reinforce the perception of time, space and sounds; promote active viewing and listening; engage with creative problem-solving; stimulate compositional and analytical skills; promote the construction and interpretation of messages through moving images and sounds; and develop social, interpersonal skills and cooperative learning.

***Video art education in Cyprus.*** The approach of video art was probably initiated in local primary and secondary schools by a small number of educators, including myself, in the years 2005/06 (personal observation as an art education advisor and from conversations with colleagues in secondary education). Examples of students' video artwork were first presented in a Pancyprian art competition in 2011 and archived in the official website of

the Ministry of Education (Visual Arts Education, Educational Resources for Primary Education).

A group of twelve in-service primary educators had the opportunity, during the year 2010, to be acquainted with video as an art medium throughout a sixth-session Pedagogical Institute seminar that was designed and delivered by myself. The seminar, which was the first of its kind among the official in-service teachers' training, offered me valuable insights into educators' needs and the ways they receive the approach of new media and video in particular into their daily teaching routines. Curiosity, anticipation, as well as fear were some of their reactions towards the new challenge, but at the same time they showed willingness to expand their knowledge and explore the medium's creative potentials.

Another one-day training event took place in Nicosia that involved 20 in-service primary educators of visual arts in the process of video making. It was organised by myself through the European project *Viducate* (2012) (described in the next section 'The international scene'). It focused on the approach of video in education, on good practices from some European countries, on teachers' acquaintance with specific software, and on the production of a short video. At the end of the training a questionnaire was distributed that revealed teachers' needs for future hands-on training on video-related activities and for the approach of video as an art form.

This experience I had with children and adult education, and the approach of video as art form and medium, led to making a proposal for the design and delivery of a unit for the new course 'Current Trends in Art Education' offered to student teachers at the University of Cyprus in 2010/2011. The course unit was both theoretical and practical. It addressed the history of video art and implementations of digital video practice in the primary art classroom. The course concluded with the creation of video works forming part of the students' art portfolios and a written assignment that involved the implementation of a video art practice with one or more schoolchildren. This involvement reinforced my view that video art, as an art form, and video, as a medium, have the ability to capture both children's and adults' interest and engage them in meaningful creative processes, as well as an appreciation and understanding of video art.

The activity described above formed the foundation for the inclusion of video art as an art form and medium in the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum (2011) (Appendix 1). During the



piloting phase that followed the development of the Curriculum, an art unit was developed with my guidance by a teacher who incorporated the production of video art in the visual arts classroom (Antoniou and Avgousti 2011). The unit focused on students' engagement with artistic inquiry that led them to the creation of video artwork, as well as other forms of art. This educational implementation revealed the ease with which students of ten years of age learn new software and become involved in personal artistic choices through video-making. The art unit and students' video artwork are currently used as a paradigm at various teachers' in-service training seminars by the Ministry of Education.

***The international scene.*** A limited number of educational resources and projects were noted in international literature as attempts to promote video in education, either as a medium or an art form. The first of the two educational resources dealing exclusively with video as an art form is the *MOVE* series compiled by the *MOVE: Video Art in Schools* DVD collection for secondary schools. This has been distributed free to secondary schools in Australia since 2008 (*MOVE: Video Art in Schools* 2008), and *MOVE Primary: Art in Motion*, an online resource for primary schools (*MOVE Primary: Art in Motion* 2011). The resource was produced by New South Wales Department of Education and Communities of Australia in collaboration with Kaldor Public Art Projects. It embraces video art by selected Australian artists to stimulate students to explore contemporary art further. Both versions offer artists' video artwork, artists' interviews about specific works and suggest activities to approach specific video artwork in the visual arts classroom.

The *MOVE* resource provided substantial ideas for the production of the educational outcome of this study. *MOVE*'s philosophy was presented through an interactive computer-based environment, something that was not planned for the educational section of this research. It was regarded as a complete resource for a range of ages that presented a variety of related activities, mainly focused on video-making and perhaps not giving appropriate attention to exploration of the video art's content. Nevertheless, it was considered the most relevant resource to be studied as an exemplar for the educational outcomes of the present study.

The second relevant resource that was found is a publication by editors George and Ilona Szekely (2005) that engages with the approach of video in education as a medium and an art form, and explores its effectiveness and pedagogical value through various school and community projects. Its title, *Video Art for the Classroom*, is rather ambiguous, in my

opinion, since the contributors refer to projects and ideas that are not necessarily connected to the genre of video art but to a broader application of video as a medium in film-making, animation, media arts, music video, media education, documentation, and video as a teaching tool, to name some. An important interview with the video artist Renee Shaw is presented. Renee teaches video art as a separate subject area in a US primary school and helps students to produce their own video art with various techniques, including animation (Szekely 2005, pp.79–84).

An educational resource that takes account of video art but is committed to the promotion of American contemporary art more generally is the Art21 Education Initiative, part of the Art21 non-profit organisation 'dedicated to engaging audiences with contemporary visual art, to inspiring creative thinking, and to educating a new generation about artists working today' (Art21 2012). The resource includes online films dedicated to contemporary American art that are broadcast on the PBS television channel and distributed on DVDs and online educators' guides. The aim is to provide 'access to the voices of artists through film and online media' which 'present a new paradigm for engaging students in art and art making – as well as teaching in innovative and inspiring ways' (Art21 2012). This idea was considered central to the kind of work that I was planning to accomplish; I wished to offer educators the same access to local artists' voices so as to explore their video art through the artists' ideas, creative input and approach to art practice as a form of research.

A European initiative with a focus on video education was the three-year project Viducate (2009–2011). It embraced the approaches of digital video across the curriculum and researched the advancement of active citizenship in intercultural contexts through a process that is both reflective and developmental (Ferguson and Hottmann 2011). The project's main products include a website with a video gallery of best practice in dealing with video production in educational settings (Viducate 2012), and a publication exploring relationships between video and education, European perspectives on cross-curricular educational projects and teacher training (Gutiérrez 2011). Viducate's activities include teacher training workshops about video education in various countries, and European forums addressed to educators and other media professionals. Ten European institutions, universities, schools and ministries constituted the project team, including the Cyprus Ministry of Education that was represented by myself and a colleague. My participation offered valuable educational ideas on how to employ video as a creative tool: not just for

art production, but as a way to explore ideas and promote media education through a cross-curricular concept.

Mediamanual is a project organised by the Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture of Austria, that operates as an interactive online platform for integrating media work in schools and offers resources for practical media education in the form of lectures and workshops (Mediamanual 2012). It is also a forum that for the last 12 years has organised a successful annual competition, Media Literacy Award (MLA), intended to motivate students in European schools to increase their ability to read and produce media texts, to 'thematise media competence as a political, social, cultural and personal qualification and to help establish culturally appropriate use of media in an everyday context' (MLA 2010). Categories include video, radio broadcasting, print media and comics, multimedia and new media. The winning entries are published online, creating an archive of best practice in media education (MLA archive 2011). The Mediamanual and Viducate online platforms were both presented as educational resources to University of Cyprus students during the period of my teaching. Students found their content extremely useful and used the best practice in their own practical projects as artists and educators. *Mediamanual* consists of another resource for the realisation of this project, since it presents the multimodality and multidimensionality of the educational character of video as a means for creativity in a cross-curriculum setting.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Chapter Summary

In this chapter the research paradigm is contextualised within the visual arts domain, and the chosen research approaches of a/r/tography, art practice as research, semiotics and hermeneutics are presented in relation to the research activity that took place. The techniques used for the data collection are: visual-reflective research diary; video interviews; participant observation; and focus groups. The data, the methodology and the investigator are triangulated to achieve of validity and reliability. The chapter concludes with the choices made for sampling, the qualitative data analysis strategies employed, the ethical considerations throughout the research activity and the positionality that concerns the project context.

### 3.2 Contextualising constructivism as a research paradigm in the visual arts domain

The project is positioned in a constructivist paradigm of inquiry that draws on a relativist ontological perspective, with emphasis on the multiple realities of personal and social constructions, and on the subjectivist epistemological characteristic that positions the researcher as an active participant during every part of the project phases. The constructivist paradigm regards the nature of reality as the result of individual and social associations, and considers knowledge or meaning to be constructed rather than pre-existent or given (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Crotty (2003) extends this notion by stating that:

all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (p.42)

As constructivism is characterised by relativist ontology, it considers the world as created by individual perceptions of it. A relative interpretation of practice is its investigation as a personal and social creative construction. It is also a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and understanding (Burr 1995). The epistemology is subjectivist and involves the researcher in the multifaceted role of identifying researchable problems raised *in practice*, so as to respond to them *through practice* (Gray and Malins 2004). Interaction with the research material is recognised, and knowledge is associated with context and

personal formations. The researcher becomes a practitioner–researcher and also an insider–researcher, where the inquiry process is centred within ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-art practice’, bringing personal implicit and tacit knowledge to interact with pre-understandings that result in new meaningful constructions (Schön 1983, 1987).

Constructivism as a philosophical position has been influential on the two professional fields relevant to this research project: visual arts and visual arts education. Visual arts reflects a constructivist approach when it positions real-life experience in the centre of creation and builds, rather than finds, meanings through knowledge management in social contexts, and interpretations and problem-solving during the artistic inquiry (Sullivan 2010). Art-making is conceived as an exploration and expression of authentic human issues, and contemporary art seems to adapt this stance as it is interested in current ideas, trends, events, values and beliefs of real life (S. Walker 2001).

In visual arts education a constructivist approach argues that the goal of teaching is students’ understanding, meaning-making and authentic learning, and that students construct knowledge and not simply reproduce it or gain it by an expert or authority, as in the past. The implications are that students do not merely make art from formulas or for the purpose of exploring media and technical skills, but become engaged in making art so as to explore ideas, experiment with media and materials, solve problems, and express concerns, emotions and criticality in the real-world context, considering the self and others (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005; S. Walker 2001). The constructivist approach in the context of visual arts education contrasts with the nature of art education as it has been enacted in classrooms over the years in Western educational systems. Efland, in a 1976 article, criticised curriculum choices by pointing out that art produced in school settings did not demonstrate students’ free and self-expression; it merely presented that there are creative opportunities offered to students during their school life (Efland 1976, cited in Gude 2013). Gude (2013) indicates that forty years later the problem is still there, with many art projects remaining similar even though the model or pedagogical methods have changed. She suggests a clear focus of teaching and learning in meaning-making activities that engage students at a personal level. These activities could be derived from artists’ practice or from students’ personal stories, influences, experiences or fantasy, or in response to the context (Gude 2009).

The characteristics of constructivist art-making are considered essential to this research, as already stated in the previous chapters. The characteristics form the fundamental principles of the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum, since constructivism as a vital visual arts education and pedagogical method is employed and combined with other methods for the design of the teaching-learning process (Curriculum for the Schools of the Republic of Cyprus 2010, 2011).

Constructivism, like other theories, has a few limitations that were carefully considered throughout the implementation of this research. One limitation deals with its focus on classroom practice, such as accepting various students' perspectives, modifying ideas in the light of new evidences and encouraging active participation. This leads to overlooking the lesson planning procedure, since many of the lesson's variables depend on students' responses and cannot be predicted (Snowman et al. 2011). It is also connected with the idea of constructivist teaching as being 'overly permissive and tends to lack rigorous content' (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005, p.30). Throughout the project's phase of educational associations with contemporary artistic practice, these characteristics of constructivism were thought about in order to make appropriate suggestions for teaching ideas and learning activities.

On the one hand, despite its weaknesses, the constructivist paradigm was considered the most appropriate for the design and implementation of this multi-phase project. Relativism, on the other hand, can be regarded as a key characteristic of the nature of visual arts, and especially of contemporary artistic practice. The value of multiple mental constructions, ideas, concepts and perceptions that are individually, socially and experientially based was recognised as indispensable for this project's implementation. With regards to epistemology, subjectivism was a necessity since I position myself as an active participant who is the producer of the research data, a self-observer and an observer of others in placing them in the research context and extracting and constructing new knowledge from their practice.

### **3.3 Research approaches**

The research approaches of this project concentrate on the artistic creative processes and their educational potentials and connections. The creative processes examined involve both local artists' and my own artistic practice, therefore the project was conceptualised

with an insider–researcher and a practitioner–researcher approach. As an insider–researcher my work focused on conducting research within the community of contemporary local artists to which I belong, and on connecting research findings with visual arts education. As a practitioner–researcher the inquiry into artistic practice generated new knowledge that was eventually examined to connect it to educational applications. The practitioner research was undertaken with exploration *through* practice, where intimate self-study examination through a visual-reflective research diary and a self-interview took place concerning personal artistic practice. It additionally took the form of exploration *on* practice, where the self-study inquiry findings were utilised for the connection to the educational field.

The approaches to the accomplishment of this multi-phase qualitative inquiry encompass a pluralistic research method that is tailored to the project and involves a synthesis of four key methods: the art practice as research approach; hermeneutics; semiotics; and case study. All four approaches entail a multifaceted and detailed portrayal of art practice and experiences in authentic contemporary local contexts, and strive to construct bridges so as to bring closer the two sister fields of visual arts and visual arts education. The arts-based educational approach to research known as *a/r/tography* served as the main framework within which the various project phases were organised. *A/r/tography* is comprised of the three interconnected roles of artist/researcher/teacher, and its function within the project was to connect the artistic and educational parts and foster, direct and shape the application of the four research methods. Figure 3.1 below illustrates the three project phases, methodological connections and interconnected roles:

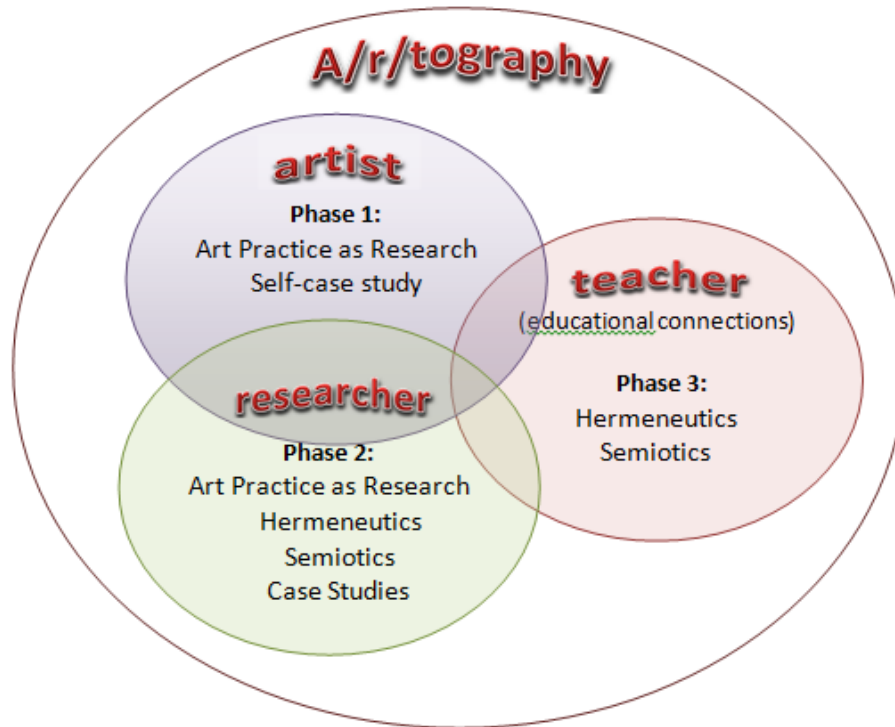


Figure 3.1 Research methodology. *A/r/tography* serves as a framework to connect the research's artistic and educational parts.

**A/r/tography.** *A/r/tography* is a pluralistic and hybrid methodological approach to research informed by qualitative methodologies such as hermeneutics, action research, autoethnography, phenomenology and visual ethnography. It is an emerging arts-based site of 'living inquiry' (Springgay et al. 2008 p.84) that opens up the spaces between the roles of artist/researcher/teacher and provides a site that encourages the enacting of visual and written processes. '[A]/r/tography sets out to record embodied practice by distinctly overlaying the functions of teacher, researcher and art maker' (Greenwood 2012, p.16) in merging and uniting the visual and the textual, allowing meaning to emerge from the art and the writing (Irwin 2004; Irwin et al. 2006). Theory/research, teaching/learning and art/making are integrated into the method (Springgay et al. 2008) so 'knowing, doing and making...' (Irwin 2004, p.29) merge. As a 'living inquiry', the research is located within the values, needs, interests and real-life actions of communities, and the issues studied have local character and global relevance (Sullivan 2010).

*A/r/tographers* theorise through inquiry, have an active stance to knowledge creation and invite an interpretive, hermeneutic approach to inquiry where their personal perspectives are inseparable from the research process. Their inquiries are emergent, generative,



reflexive and responsive, and they recognise that art, research and teaching are lived in real-world contexts. *A/r/tographic* inquiry starts with the aim of creating art and a written piece for dissemination, too. The research process is continuously connected with the creative artistic process and writing; new questions may evolve as relations constructed within the project inform the direction of the research (Irwin et al. 2006). The method is described with the powerful metaphor *métissage* (Irwin 2004, p.30), wishing to show the integration of the three roles in the professional as well as personal lives of the artists/researchers/teachers.

In this project's design, *a/r/tography* functioned as a method of investigating the meaning-making of real life experiences through its three interwoven concepts. Additionally, it acted as a framework for all the research phases, interconnecting personal creative practice, the research of other artists' practice and the development of educational resources as a creative outcome of this research. Furthermore, *a/r/tography* was an invaluable approach during analysis and interpretation of the research's data, when new artworks – the edited video interviews – were created from the data. Moreover, *a/r/tography* functioned during the final Phase 3 of the project when the design of educational resources was realised. Specifically, the method helped by accommodating the particularities of the roles of the artist/researcher-as-teacher and facilitating the multiple needs of this triple role, in an educational proposal that aimed to fulfil the absence of educational resources in the area of video art. The method considered the variables of the first two roles – artist/researcher – based on the investigations' findings, so as to proceed to the examined educational relevancies with the framework of the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum.

**The art practice as research approach.** Within the framework of *a/r/tography* and the explorations of the researcher as an artist, the 'art practice as research' approach was utilised as a first project phase for an in-depth investigation of personal video art practice. The same approach was employed during the second research phase to direct the structure of the interview questions addressed to artists (further discussed in the section on data collection techniques).

Visual experience invokes creative and critical competencies where explanations, analysis and connections are achieved so new understandings emerge. These processes are the basis of seeing visual arts as a research practice (Sullivan 2010). Visual arts practice is considered 'a vital and viable area of research that generates new lines of inquiry, offers

different theoretical orientations, and encourages ways to continually question the adequacy and accuracy of the knowledge we create and construct' (Baxter et al. 2008). Through art practice there is space for individuals to experiment, discuss and present their diverse perspectives and multiple conceptions. The 'art practice as research' approach locates visual arts practice at the heart of exploration and inquiry, where knowledge, experiences and the capacity to interfere, interpret and act upon issues reveal new understandings and construct meaning-making. Artists, according to Sullivan (2010, 2014), are actively involved in a dynamic process of relational and transformative research practices that may begin from ideas, issues, problems and questions, and follow various non-linear paths in order to visualise and structure research projects in visual arts. These paths could lead to an 'empiricist inquiry', where investigations on relevant artwork, perspectives, methods, media and models might prove useful; or to an 'interpretive discourse' with an examination of human involvement and decision making through narratives and texts. Alternatively, they may take the road to a 'critical process' where situations, actions, collaborations and events are investigated with criticality, and suitable settings are used as sites of inquiry.

My research project regards art practice as a specific and special form of research that recognises artists' aptitude to make meaning from images that they either create, or existing, and construct connections (Sullivan 2010). In addition, the project '(...) enable[s] readers and viewers to see aspects of the social world that they might have overlooked otherwise' and 'raise questions about conventional, commonsensical, orthodox ways of perceiving and interpreting the meaning of social phenomena' (Barone and Eisner 2012, p.166). The project considers art practice as research that generates data and produces visual image as the research outcome. The results may relate existing knowledge or adapt past practice in new contexts, change perceptions, or create novel ways of seeing and understanding (Sullivan 2010).

Limitations of the art practice as research approach that were considered for the design and realisation of this research involve genuinely personal routes to art-making that inevitably result in demonstrating self-preferences and self-constructions of meanings as a contribution to the studying of local video art practice and their connections with education. This characteristic of the approach was planned to be met by utilising and combining other approaches for the analysis of collected data such as hermeneutics (Gadamer 1989; Heidegger 1962, 1982, 2008; Krippendorff 2004; Rapley 2008; Ricoeur 1981), which

focused on each artist's own constructed meanings and reflections, and promoted 'participant involvement to explore analytical meanings' (Jewitt 2011, p.26), as in dealing with the limitations of a multimodal research (Jewitt 2011). Semiotics (Chandler 2007; Crow 2010; O'Neill 2008) were additionally employed as a response to the approach's limitations, facilitating the forming of a tool for analysis that was consistently applied in each artist's case study so as to be connected with educational practice. If this research is to be regarded as multimodal, linking the artists' own meanings to 'context and social function' (Jewitt 2011, p.26) through educational proposals, in this case, is the way to overcome the limitations of the 'art practice as a research' approach.

**Case studies.** The second phase of the project involved the examination of a selection of contemporary Cypriot artists' video art practice as case studies. This was achieved through the employment of hermeneutics and semiotics as methods of analysis, and the 'art practice as research' approach to constructing the interview questions addressed to artists and within the researcher's role of the a/r/tography framework.

A case study has been defined as an empirical investigation that examines a single real-life situation in its original context, and is presented as an 'interpretative position of a unique case' that 'reports on a project or innovation or event over a prolonged period of time by telling a... story as it has evolved' (McKernan 1998, p.74). A case study allows detailed in-depth study, produces credible and accurate descriptions of participants' actions (Gray and Malins 2004) and proves to be efficient when there is no control over the contextual situations or events being investigated (Yin 2005). It has been categorised as intrinsic, where the interest is around making sense or increasing knowledge of the understanding of the investigated case; instrumental, where insights of an existing theory are sought after; and collective, where multiple instances are used to construct an instrumental case study (Stake 1995).

For this project multiple intrinsic case studies were planned in order to assemble local artists' video art practice, reach out for investigations and understandings, and portray and document their work. The research was conducted through personal contact with artists' work settings, where a study was pursued to understand the ways in which they act and account for their actions (Miles and Huberman 1994). The research concentrated on producing information and constructing knowledge regarding their particular video art practice, and eventually identifying implications and generating informed suggestions in

the framework of the Visual Arts Curriculum through specific data collection techniques, as presented in the section Data Collection Techniques below. The artists' cases that were studied also included a self-case study that drew on personal video art practices.

Drawbacks of the case study method considered here include its time consuming nature, participants' possible influence on the researcher, and its failure to produce generalisations beyond the specific case under study (Gray and Malins 2004), a fact that seemed to serve rather than limit the aim of this research since it attempted to search for and inquire into unique authentic artistic practice.

**Hermeneutics.** The qualitative approach of hermeneutics (Gadamer 1989; Heidegger 1962, 1982, 2008) focuses on the rich interpretation of the lived human experience that can inform practice. A hermeneutics study aims to unveil real-life experiences, permit the viewer/reader to see new ways of being (Diekelmann 1990, cited in Wilson and Hutchinson 1991), describe and interpret participants' meanings and practices so as to lead to a non-generalised understanding, and keep an open stance towards dialogue, change and criticism.

The term 'hermeneutics' has its roots to the Greek word 'ερμηνεύω' (*herminevo*), which means 'to interpret'. It has reference to Hermes, the ancient Greek messenger god, who was delivering the gods' inexplicable messages to humans in understandable forms of language and writing (Thompson 1990, cited in Wilson and Hutchinson, 1991).

Hermeneutics as a research approach has its origins in philosophy and is grounded in the views of the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who sees our inherited language, history and culture as intuitive and embodied. Human nature, for Heidegger, is directly connected to the world, which would not exist as it is without the specific world elements (Heidegger 1962, cited in O'Neill 2008). For him, the lived human experience is veiled, so the researcher, together with the participants, has to unveil the experience and practice and discover meanings that will lead to interpretation and understanding.

Heideggerian hermeneutics places emphasis on meanings and practices in lived experience, on embodiment with the world and on the background of phenomena under study, as well as the 'average everydayness' (Wilson and Hutchinson 1991, p.266). For Heidegger, human existence is unified and interwoven with the world in the sense that humans would not exist without the world. Embodied interaction, with its physical

elements, is fundamental in understanding life and constructing knowledge (Heidegger 1962, cited in O'Neill 2008). These characteristics have great educational relevance to contemporary constructivist pedagogies that consider children's experiences of the everyday world to be at the centre of teaching and learning, promoting at the same time critical thinking and creative expression (Day and Hurwitz 2012; Ministry of Education and Culture 2012).

Heidegger also wrote on the concept of art. For Heidegger, art is a means to create culture and concurrently to expose culture; a work of art shows the world the existence of human beings and their understandings (Heidegger 2008). Gadamer (1900–2002) elaborated on Heidegger's ideas by arguing that there is no specific process to find meaning in a text or an artwork, but there can be an analysis on how understanding is possible. An artwork remains another kind of text that encapsulates knowledge and calls for interpretation and hermeneutic understanding (Gadamer 1989). Educational practices such as reading meanings, ideas and related information of an artwork are possibly related to these hermeneutic notions, which reinforces the importance of the context in regards to art in the framework of contemporary pedagogies.

In its contemporary structure, hermeneutics is connected with individual meaning-making regarding various forms of expression such as text, discourse, interview records, artwork, artefacts, images and events. It deals with the indication of meanings that participants contribute to the phenomenon under study. The goal of the researcher is to understand the participants' production procedures of these meanings; it is less of a goal to illustrate the researcher's own interpretations (Iosifides 2008). Hermeneutics is informed, in part, by social constructivism, the tradition that asks questions about everything in life: practices, knowledge and understandings (Rapley 2008). It is presented as a 'thick description' of people's identified and interpreted detailed stories that serve as prototype cases of authentic real-life practice within their given contexts.

One of hermeneutics' contemporary pioneers proposed that 'what the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author means' (Ricoeur 1981, p.139). This results in dialectic and interpretive kinds of research in which the meaning of the text, image or event is the outcome of the interaction between the creator's meaning and the observer's interpretation. From a psychological point of view, hermeneutics is concerned with

individual meanings placed on experience and everyday living, their interpretations and the role of symbolism in constructing these meaning (Hayes 2000).

In the visual arts domain, all the above ideas denote the creation of an interpretive space among the artist, the artwork, the setting, the viewer and real-life experiences, the constructive dialogue among them, and the association of multiple and open meanings. Hermeneutics is regarded as a strategy for knowledge creation where meanings emerge through dialogue between the text and the inquirer (Koch 1999, cited in Paterson and Higgs 2005). A dialogue unfolds with a return 'to the object of inquiry again and again, each time with an increased understanding and a more complete interpretative account' (Packer 1985, p.1091, cited in Paterson and Higgs 2005). In the case of this study, the object of inquiry is the collected data from the personal and artists' interviews; the dialogue that unfolds is between the researcher and the data:

- i) through the process of the interviews' video editing that, in combination with the artists' video artwork, resulted in the creation of new works of art, the edited artists' video interviews – the artists' profiles
- ii) through a hermeneutical coding of the artists' profiles, which aimed to depict meanings, ideas, perceptions and representations that either come from interviewees or from the researcher, or from both (Iosifides 2008)
- iii) through the process of applying a constructed analysis tool for associating the artists' profiles and their video art with the context of visual arts education.

The above concepts were planned to underpin the research activity of the project and assisted in the analytical investigations and understandings of the artists' case studies. They also resulted in a purely open data analysis with several multilevel perspectives, as this is an integral part of the research process (Guba and Lincoln 1989) that simultaneously poses the approach's limitations. The possible effect of the researcher on the collected and presented data is referred to as reactivity (Hammersley 1990). Care was taken to avoid this phenomenon from influencing the tangible products directly connected to the data. As the products include edited versions of the collected artists' interviews compiled by myself and two professionals working under my guidance, much effort was employed to present artists' ideas and reflections in the most authentic manner.

**Semiotics.** The theory of semiotics deals with the study of signs and can be applied to any system that signifies meanings. It was initially rooted in linguistics, with Saussure as its main devotee, but it has evolved to theorise many art forms such as literature, architecture, painting, photography, media (television and radio programmes, film, advertisements and cartoons) and new media art such as computer graphics, video art, internet art and video games. The basic question that semiotics asks is what is the meaning of the text, the artwork or the video, with the aim of modelling the system by establishing fundamental conventions, and identifying characteristics and differences (Chandler 2007; Crow 2010; O'Neill 2008).

Most texts, artwork or videos that are used in our times dynamically combine more than one system of meaning; they are multimodal, merging two or more modes to one system, and all work together to produce meaning making (New London Group 1996). The focus on the importance of semiotics has increased because of the rise of the multimodality of meaning through the various meaning systems. These systems were defined by the New London Group (1996) as linguistic design, visual design, audio design, gestural and spatial design (p.83). Since then they have been adapted by scholars such as Cope and Kalantzis (2009), who proposed a group of modalities that include the written language mode, oral language mode, visual representation mode, audio, tactile and gestural modes, the representation to oneself mode and spatial representation.

The above modes of communication inevitably introduced multiliteracies as the new approach to literacy pedagogy; these modes constitute the multiple ways students and educators may construct meaning in the contemporary educational scenery. Kress' work was influential in this field as, together with other researchers, developed Halliday's social semiotic theory of language (Halliday, 1985) and extended it to embrace other modes such as sound and images (Böck and Pachler, 2013). Kress' and Van Leeuwen's (1996) proposal on reading images was a significant contribution in the field of visual arts as well, by introducing a kind of grammar for a semiotics analysis of western society images. In their work, the researchers provide major compositional structures and analyse their usage for meaning making. They deal with various types of pictures and elaborate on issues such as the independence of the visual component of the text from the verbal text itself; the role of pictures in books; the types of conceptual representations; the interaction between pictures and viewers; pictorial composition and the construction of meaning through the

use of materials and technologies; the depiction of meaning in film stills (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996).

Relevant for the investigation in this research is the analysis of the visual language of film as presented by Van Leeuwen (1996, cited in Goodman and Graddol 1996), especially the examination of the visual and audio modes that are encapsulated in the moving image. Van Leeuwen studied the relation of sound, speech and their dynamism on the construction of meaning in film. It is acceptable though that some systems are more 'open' than film; they invite hermeneutic interpretation (Guiraud 1975, cited in Chandler 2007), as they encompass aspects of other systems. Metz (1974, 1986, cited in O' Neill 2008) characterised film as a 'meta-medium' that brings together different media, and at the same time exemplifies the problematic situation in its semiotic analysis. Van Leeuwen's interpretations of the film characteristics provide knowledge on the various choices that are useful for film producers, but they cannot entirely address video art's features. Video art is such an open system, with an experimental vocabulary and a research character (Elwes 2005; Martin 2006; Rahn 2008; Spielmann 2008), and no fixed number of options or certain types of codes that are easy to recognise (Crow 2010). Cubitt (1993) states that there will never be a body of knowledge called video theory, in the way film theory or television studies have been constructed. Video artists' selections may include a combination of codes of numerous, diverse and experimental art forms that are continually in the process of evolving. As the medium of each text signifies which particular codes should be used so as to decode it (Chandler 2007), the chosen elements for the development of an analysis tool for this research were related to the nature and multimodality of the medium of video.

Video art is a combination of multimodal texts, a 'meta-medium', and as such, the codes that could be recognised in it are found in film, documentaries, photography, music videos and animation among some, making the semiotic analysis difficult to accomplish. In addition, video art acts as a 'transmitter' that communicates its meanings in different contexts from the original sources; the potential use of semiotics on video art ignores the performative characteristic of its nature (Kogawa 1996).

The above discussion positions semiotics by itself as an incomplete method for analysing such a multimodal kind of text. This was thoroughly considered as the use of semiotics in this research was limited in facilitating the design of an analysis tool that would identify



distinctive elements of each artist's video artwork that, in conjunction with the artists' own voice, would result in a coherent connection with the field of visual arts education. Codes that were included in the semiotic analysis tool (Appendix 11) were selected as 'choices' mainly from the area of film studies, in order to focus on important video art's aspects, without limiting the range of codes that could be chosen and studied by other researchers.

It was regarded as appropriate that these codes were chosen in relevance to the multiliteracies approach of pedagogy, the two Visual Arts Curriculum areas of *viewing* and *creating* (2010, 2012), and related with the work on semiotics of Chandler (2007) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), with Giannetti's (2014) and Bordwell's and Thompson's (2010) publications on film studies, as well as Spielmanns' (2008) and Elwes' (2005) works to the nature of the medium of video through numerous examples from the history of video art. The *viewing* label of the constructed tool included areas associated with the paradigmatic nature of video art and its content. It also integrated the participating artists' references to their own video works, as they had the opportunity to reflect on their video art practice during the interviews. Under the *creating* label, conventions related to the syntagmatic organisation of video, the video-making and its editing process were categorised (Appendix 11).

The collected data gathered through the tool were interpreted in a creative manner for the development of the Educational Guide. There was no textual analysis of the video works, apart from texts in the combined form of text-and-questions in the Guide that were constructed for each studied video artwork and are addressed to educators and students; this was the role that the tool was designed to serve, in the first place. The purpose of these educational suggestions was to lead the receivers towards multiple and open interpretations and provide them, as addressed by Crow (2010), with the ability to generate different range of choices since:

[i]t is possible for the collection of signs in any given paradigm to change over time, where meanings of words, images and gestures change through the natural evolution of social change. The important thing to remember is that where there is choice, there is meaning (p.43).

### **3.4 The conception of methodology design**

The research's methodology design was generated from my initial personal desire to bridge any probable gaps between the two professional areas I belong to, visual arts and

visual arts education, so as to construct personal meanings and understandings with the connections of the two roles. It also derived from my aspirations to investigate and learn from other artists' practice, and to distribute this knowledge and experience by proposing authentic educational resources as suggestions for engaging art educators – and students – with the under-researched area of video art. Flexible and open qualitative research methods resulting from practice were compiled so as to embrace the project's phases as a whole, and lead to its conclusion and the final outcomes.

The methodology was considered appropriate as it is hermeneutic and dialectic, open, flexible, and driven by the requirements and special characteristics of artistic practice, visual arts education, and their creative associations and dynamics. The methodology is also emergent, as it could be modified and re-designed at various points during the research to accommodate new findings (Patton 2002), an action that occurred in minor cases only since the research process unfolded smoothly during all three stages.

### **3.5 Alternative research approaches**

My initial methodology plans included action research as a supplementary approach. It was regarded appropriate for facilitating an additional planned phase that would be based on the research outcomes, dealing with the design and implementation of specific art curriculum units with the integration of video art, as an art form, with video, as a medium. However, this phase was soon abandoned due to the project's time limitations, with the hope that other visual arts educators would wish to engage with it in the future.

Action research was initially considered because it illustrates the idea that educators can act as reflective practitioners in their actual educational settings, face teaching practice as a research procedure and test teaching materials to develop them further (McNiff and Whitehead 2005). Teaching and researching become interdependable, as the action research method can help educators to critique and evaluate their practice, and search for proper pedagogical principles that can improve them (Elliot 1993). Case study is characterised by constant active investigation, and informs theory through practice and everyday work experience.

A number of other research approaches were also considered for the realisation of personal artistic investigations. These were successfully combined in research conducted for my Master's in Work Based Learning (Avgousti 2006). Narrative inquiry was chosen

since visual artists tend to narrate stories and explore their autobiography in order to connect to life experiences in relation to the way they approach their artistic practice. Life story is described as 'the active construction of people's view of their life' (Miller 2000, p.139), and artists present their act as autobiographers who 'give their lives to be understood by others in a dangerously elaborate form' (Sturrock 1993, p.4) and invite the audience into their intimacy.

The historical approach was also considered because of its connection with artists' actions that may sometimes resemble historical research, and as 'historians' interpret past events and deal with peoples' past acts and thoughts (Patton 2002) in attempting to answer their own research questions.

Another approach considered was ethnography, as the characteristics of artists' self-case studies are sometimes identical to those of ethnographic research. Ethnographic elements include subjectivity, non-generalisability, multiple perspectives, exploration, and creative sincerity and authenticity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001), all relevant to artists' self-case studies as they form part of their conscious and unconscious processes of art-making.

This combination of the abovementioned three different methodological approaches was eventually discarded, after the art practice as research approach (Sullivan 2010) was comprehensively studied and felt to be a complete method to portray all possible directions artists may go during their creative journeys. Art practice as research differs from narrative inquiry, the historical approach and ethnography, to the fact that it constitutes a precise yet flexible framework that is grounded in the theories and practice of the visual arts. Visual arts is seen as a hybrid discipline centred on art-making and also involves art writing. Inquiring into the visual arts denotes a study that can be connected to and translated into other forms of research language if and when needed (Sullivan 2010).

### **3.6 Data collection techniques**

Faithful to the constructivism research paradigm described above, during the process of collecting data I engaged deeply with participants. This was to achieve authentic accounts of how video artists construct their social reality; how the researcher constructs personal social reality as an artist and a source of data, and also as the interpreter of findings; how educators receive a sample of the educational resources developed by the researcher.

Highly flexible data collection methods were implemented so as to gather diverse kinds of data. Data were collected in a natural 'real-life' setting such as artists' studios and other workplaces where video artwork is created, with the goal of showing how and why things happen by incorporating artists' motivations, emotions, concepts, conflicts, and connections with real-life experiences. Data from two of the nine case studies were collected in other locations due to participants' wishes/and or other circumstances. Data were also collected from educators in two meetings held in an educational setting.

Considering the limitation of video art as a final product that 'is by definition hermetic, involved as it is in its antagonistic stance toward the mainstream or in the subjective explorations of the author' (Rahn 2008, p.307), an in-depth inquiry was designed that emerged into selected artists' creative research practice, and looked for relevancies with their personal and social experiences. This used a variety of data types to unveil hidden conceptual processes and undisclosed meanings of the local video art practice under study. The variety of data included artists' and personal narratives on experimentations with media, processes and video artwork; the researcher's study on video artwork; video recordings of the artists' interviews, and the study of personal visual-reflecting research diary entries.

Employing focus groups meetings with educators provided a space to present a sample of the tangible product of this research, and receive reactions about its practicality and future usefulness. Gathering a variety of data types such as the aforementioned, contributed to the construction of the kind of thick descriptions (Gray 2009) through which the designed methodology connects theory and practice, and potentially presents the possible connections of visual arts and visual arts education in real-life settings.

Data from the artists' interviews remain open to multiple interpretations. They include the voice of the artists studied, as well as that of the researcher (Flick 2009). Moreover, data embrace the voice of the researcher as a practising artist, ensuring that reflexivity becomes part of them, as a researcher's own reflections and feelings on actions and observations count. A dialogue with this 'polyphony of voices' offered rich in-depth analysis that ensured reflexivity and validity in the presentation of findings (Flyvbjerg 2001). Simultaneously, the analysis of video interviews as the final video productions and part of the research's outcomes, as well as the interviews' summarised transcripts, are provided

so as to be exploited by readers and other researchers promoting alternative data reinterpretations.

The prime qualitative data collection techniques are: a visual-reflective research diary, video interviews, participant observation and focus groups.

**Visual-reflective research diary.** A visual-reflective diary helps to raise self-awareness and construct, externalise and maintain a reflexive position (Miles and Huberman 1994), where reflection on/in/for action can take place; 'on-action' denotes the reflection and evaluation on the past, in-action indicates the present experiences, practices, insights, questions and the contact on-the-spot experiments (Schön 1983), and 'for-action' proposes the needs, hopes, planning and reflection for future action (Cowan 1998).

The diary keeping in concern to my research work facilitated the collection of resources, knowledge, creative and reflective practice, the building up of the analysis of the project's development over time, and considered and recorded the continuous change of the research environment and its elements providing evidences and examples, since the project was situated in the complex and changing realities of everyday life. More specifically, the visual-reflective diary was chosen as a suitable way to organise all material that underpinned my research work such as thoughts; visual ideas; experiences; perspectives; experimentation with media and processes; development of skills; documentation of work in progress; personal narratives and conversations with self; events and relevant 'life' information; critical incidents; interactions with others; details of contextual references such as visual examples of other artists' work. A possible drawback is the insertion of idiosyncratic data that may be irrelevant to readers (Gray and Malins 2004). Nonetheless, these were highly meaningful and honest to the researcher regarding the successful development of the project.

My diary eventually took on both a digital and a handwritten visual and textual form, appropriate to each situation, event and practice that was recorded. It consists of many ring binders, notebooks, boxes with printed visual and textual documents, large digital files on my computer, on external hard disks and on DVDs with multimodal materials such as artists' video artwork, artists' interviews, instructional videos, texts, photographs, links to websites and personal notes.

**Video interviews.** Interviews are considered an efficient way to collect high-quality information, from the participants' points of view. Qualitative interviewing considers the perspective and stories of others as meaningful, coherent, and able to be made explicit. It is suitable, among other cases, for research that emphasises the significance of specific events and issues to the participants, and where individual insights of processes are to be studied (King 1994, cited in Robson 2002, p.271). The success and validity of interviewing is greatly dependent on the interviewer's skill, technique, and genuine interest in the rich variation of others' experience (Patton 2002), as well as on the relationship between the interviewer and the participant that can affect and differ the participant's actions during interview time (Maxwell 2002).

Video interviews incorporate the conducting of interviews and the collection of video and audio as data simultaneously, and they form 'the most complete record of an interview' (Gillham 2005, p.93). Even though it was not until recently that video technology became widely accessible and easy to employ, researchers have experimented with using video records as primary data collection for more than a century 'to gather richer and more reliable data about complex social interaction that is possible with traditional alternatives like field notes, participant recollections, and transcripts of audio recordings' (Pea 2006, p.1324). The implementation of video technology has significantly contributed to various scientific fields such as anthropology, archaeology, ethnography, physical sciences, social and educational research, and teacher education (Erickson 2011). However, there is a serious weakness in the analysis and presentation of video research findings that is, in general, restricted to text. It concerns the compilation of the visual video sources for re-analysis to enable multiple interpretations by readers and other researchers (Pea 2006). To overcome this, in my research edited video interviews were planned to be provided and disseminated as part of the tangible educational outcomes of the project. In this way, the video interviews remain open to multiple readings, so educators will hopefully engage with the material in their classroom settings.

Another limitation of video data refers to their presentation through video, in this case video interviews. There is a possibility of a superficial and unoriginal subject appearance, filled with unrelated narrative (Rahn 2008), a constraint that was planned to be faced in three ways. First, the interview questions were carefully designed to target artists' genuine motives, ideas, concepts and creative processes; secondly, I undertook personal experimentation with appropriate video recording techniques such as facial close-up

framings and recordings of contextual visual elements that, at the time of interviewing, facilitated the exposure of subjects' intimate and unique world; and last, by utilising appropriate data analysis and video editing practice during the remote editing process on the researcher's part, unnecessary video parts that did not contribute to the whole composition could be omitted in a way that did not distort the actual conversation or the interaction of artists with their experiences, processes and products.

For this project, face-to face video interviews of local video artists were planned and conducted by myself, and video-recorded at their home and/or workplace in order to gather information about their practices, values, experiences, preferences and attitudes (Cohen and Manion 2001), to portray their behaviour and body language, to capture and present their profiles and particularly their connection with real-life experiences. To achieve successful video interviewing, the above considerations led to the development of personal interviewing and video-recording skills through studying and practice, to achieve a positive social atmosphere during planning and conducting disciplined and thorough interviews. Additionally, I recorded a self-video interview as part of researching my own artistic practice, where I repeated the process described above and responded in the same manner as if somebody else was interviewing me.

Semi-structured video interviewing was chosen as a research technique for its exploratory nature, probing detailed responses, exploring in-depth meanings, allowing people to reflect on their work and events, and facilitating a way to be heard. Interviews were planned to have a semi-structured format with predetermined written questions (Appendix 3) as a reminder of the key areas to be searched, similar to the interview guide approach of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001, p.271). Topics and questions were specified in advance, and the interviewer decided on flexible ordering, omissions and additions according to the interviewee's responses and the interviewer's insight into what seemed most appropriate (Robson 2011). A short checklist was designed and used (Appendix 4) to summarise the questions. This proved helpful, as some details of the pre-planned questions were not covered by the interviewer or the artist.

Considering possible omissions of information and biased perspectives from participants' responses, direct observations were planned in order to balance the interviews' limitations and provide better and more informed insight into participants' actions, beyond the interview settings.

**Participant observation.** Participant observation is argued to be one of the most comprehensive research strategies, since it can offer more data than any other method implemented in a study (Becker and Geer 1970, cited in Patton 2002). Data such as descriptive observations of practices, settings, artwork, and the meanings that participants attribute to them were considered appropriate to be observed and video recorded during the interviewing procedure and the additional time spent with artists before and after the interview. Video recordings were used as a form of field notes that followed discussions and visual findings, at the same time following the interests and the observational focus of the researcher, simulating the work of an ethnographer (Mohn 2006).

Using participant observation, especially through interviewing and video recording, allowed for a detailed description of information as well as the researcher's reflections on the context of the subject's responses. The researcher's reflections may not be actually 'heard' in the recordings, as only the artist is physically visible and heard during the video interview, but the reflections remain apparent through the interview flow and the development of the discussion, which is unique to each artist's case study.

Throughout conventional participant observation it is understandable that not all evidence can be directly observed, such as feelings, thoughts, intentions, voice tone and other non-verbal communication aspects (Gillham 2010). Thus the observation through video recordings was considered the most appropriate for revealing data otherwise missed. Written field notes were not made during the interviews since I had simultaneously to control the flow of the discussion and the handling of the video camera. Taking written field notes would result in paying less attention to the procedure and the essential reflection I had to demonstrate during the interviewing.

During the research implementation I participated, as a member, in the local artistic community being investigated, and as a member of the local educational community that indirectly informed the research process. I was also an observer who engaged in artists' discussions and was involved in their processes by asking questions relevant to the context of their work. Video recordings were collected as observatory data that acted in their own distinctive ways in detailed presentations and captured reactions. Video-recording the observed events assisted in reducing the unreliability of diverse interpretations when seeing them on different occasions. Data were reviewed on video, and re-interpreted so as multiple meanings were constructed. The recording of data was



important because it mitigated the danger of human error in recalling observed events. Reliability was increased by completing the aforementioned checklist (Appendix 4) with the summary of the interview questions during observations and during the video interviews.

**Focus groups.** Focus group meetings with invited educators were used in the final stages of the research as a complement to the other above-mentioned methods for data collection. Powell et al. (1996, p.499, cited in Gibbs 1997) defines a focus group as ‘a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research’. As one focus group might be insufficient due to showing unique group behaviour (Morgan 1988, cited in Cohen et al. 2001), two group meetings were organised with educators from various geographical areas of the country who teach visual arts education in one of the three Key Stages (students’ ages 5–15 years old). Key persons and stakeholders were also invited and participated, such as visual arts education inspectors and advisors.

The topics discussed related to the evaluation of a sample of the educational resources developed during the research after the conclusion of Phases 1 and 2. Discussion was generated on the resources’ possible implementation in designing art units and teaching in real-classroom situations, and suggestions were invited to improve the final versions.

The value of focus groups, if prepared and functioned successfully, lies in the large amount of data produced in a short period of time that is derived from the expertise of participated individuals and their interaction (Cohen et al. 2001; Gibbs 1997). The method is particularly suitable for triangulation with other methods (Morgan 1988, cited in Cohen et al. 2001), as it can validate data and results amongst a professional community. The organisation of the meetings needs great attention, however, as some factors are crucial such as sampling, participants’ experiences and their actual attendance of meetings. Through cautious planning of the meetings, these issues were dealt with in relative ease.

### **3.7 Triangulation**

A complete study of a dynamic and multifaceted domain such as the visual arts requires a collection of data sources and complementary methods, ‘mostly visual and mostly derived from practice’ (Gray and Malins 2004, p.31), in order to explore the complexity, reveal hidden aspects and produce critical findings. Triangulation denotes a combination of diverse approaches and numerous data sources. Its focus is on obtaining confirmation of

findings through convergence of different perspectives (Jakob 2001, cited in Yeasmin and Rahman 2012), on deepening the understanding of the examined issues and generating an interaction of learning (Olsen 2004), on promoting the quality of the research and on 'further enriching and completing knowledge and towards transgressing the (always limited) epistemological potentials of the individual method' (Flick 2009, p.444).

Validity and reliability are two key concepts that refer to the quality of the research, as validity takes into account the way instruments are designed and distributed to fit the research's purposes, and reliability or robustness deals with the correspondence of findings to the methodology and collected data. It is argued that in qualitative research there are different procedures for attaining validity and reliability (Kirk and Miller 1986). In qualitative studies such as this, validity and reliability are viewed connectedly and tend to be expressed by terms more appropriate to real-world and practice-based inquiry, such as trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln 1989) and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba 1986).

Trustworthiness encompasses the term validity by referring to the associations and findings' credibility towards the research context (Guba and Lincoln 1989). Authenticity refers to the reflexive consciousness of personal perspectives, appreciation of others' perspectives, and fairness in representing meaningful constructions (Lincoln and Guba 1986). Authenticity can also be depicted in the writing of the qualitative study as it allows alternative exploitations by making the data widely available and by giving various directions other than those finally revealed by data analysis. This kind of writing adds credibility and reveals authentic inquiry implemented in meaningful real-life constructions (Patton 2002).

For this project, the use of a variety of methods for gathering information relevant to the main questions, and for gathering data from multiple sources using a range of techniques, was expected to reduce any chances of error, control and enhance data reliability, present a comprehensive and versatile knowledge spectrum, develop deeper understandings, and assure the validity and reliability of the research. Triangulation comprised sources of data derived from the researcher's triple role as artist, researcher and teacher. From the visual artist's point of view, data included assorted visual and written commentaries within the diary-keeping technique, in accordance with the creation of four video artworks. From the researcher's position and the research conducted on other artists' practice, data were derived from semi-structured interviews and visual data within the participant observation

technique. Finally, from the teacher's perspective, the research used the data resulting from the other two roles to produce educational proposals. These were validated by two groups of educators in focus groups meetings. Figure 3.2 presents a simple triangular shape with the three dynamic roles at its points that produced the examined data.



Figure 3.2 Triangulation comprised of sources of data derived from the researcher's triple role.

Denzin differentiates two subtypes as part of *methodological triangulation* (cited in Flick 2009, p.444), where the first, *between-method triangulation*, is a combination of various data collection techniques, and the second, *within-method triangulation*, involves variations in collecting data through one single data collection technique. For the realisation of this research, *between-method triangulation* was achieved by using a combination of semi-structured interviews with diary keeping, participant observation and focus group meetings. *Within-method triangulation* was achieved by employing diverse visual observation data through the participant observation technique, assorted visual and written commentary within the diary-keeping technique, as well as a plethora of peers' oral reflective comments through the focus groups technique.

*Data triangulation*, according to Denzin (cited in Flick 2009, p.444), is the use of multiple data sources and suggests studying the researched issues at different dates and places and by different people. For this research, all data were collected at different dates across 13 months, with a few intervals for on-going evaluation and redesign. Data were collected at different places such as personal and artists' studios/work places across the country; they were also composed of evaluations by educators who live and work in various cities and villages on the island.

The use of focus groups as a method for triangulation led to validity checking of the research's data and findings, as well as the tangible outcomes of the project, by my peers and relevant stakeholders. In focus groups my peers took on the role of examiner and critiqued my product's usefulness in real-life work situations and pedagogical value. Their suggestions verified a need for the product and simultaneously revealed demands to be considered in writing up the product.

Triangulation was intended to use multiple media (Gray 2009; Gray and Malins 2004) in the sense of integrating different kinds of media to provide diverse multisensory information and involve all human senses, so as to offer a comprehensive perspective on the explored issues. These include original video artwork, artists' edited video interviews and observed video-recorded/photographed practice, personal visual-reflective diaries and diagrams.

Triangulation in its various types was used in the research to maximise its validity or trustworthiness, its reliability or authenticity, and capture hidden and rising multiple associations and perspectives (Lincoln and Guba 1986). Trustworthiness is believed to be accomplished by the correct design and distribution of data collection techniques, and by producing authentic representations of artistic practice connected to artists' everyday real-life experiences and educational settings. The project activity is anticipated to be transferable to similar research activities, such as investigation of other contemporary visual arts genres. Authenticity is achieved by giving diverse directions to research findings, and allowing alternative exploitations of data.

### **3.8 Sampling**

The goal of sampling in a research can be twofold: to ensure the researcher's understanding regarding the range of phenomena in the setting, and to examine emerging

ideas about that setting by choosing those crucial to the ideas' validity (Maxwell 2002). As one of this study's purposes was to obtain insights into particular artistic practice within a specific geographical location, context and time, it planned to use purposeful intensity sampling (Patton 2002) with a strategic selection of information-rich cases dealing with the practice of video art intensely and in depth. Information-rich cases constitute those that contribute a great deal to the research's key issues, and can offer understandings rather than empirical generalisations (Patton 2002).

Information-rich cases for this project were drawn from the general research population of the particularity of contemporary Cypriot video artists. The chosen sampling strategy, purposeful intensity sampling, sought to illuminate a considerable number of local artistic practices in video art (Phase 2) to collect data that would enable the continuation to the next phase of developing related educational suggestions (Phase 3). The selection of artists' case studies was accomplished according to their appropriateness to satisfy both research Phases 2 and 3, and according to the criteria described below:

- a) Associations of artists' video artwork with real-life experiences that are related either to personal issues such as childhood memories, family; social issues such as consumerism, citizenship, human rights; environmental issues, other themes related to locality and so on. Artists' works were preliminary studied through available secondary data so as to be associated with examples of real-life experiences; if their works failed to be associated, they were not considered to be included in the research sample unless there was a notion that more research would reveal the opposite.
- b) Artists should be active, produce bodies of work and frequently exhibit their art.
- c) Participants' accessibility and willingness to contribute to the research. It was decided from the beginning that artists who reside and work abroad would not be approached and interviewed, even though this could be achieved through internet technology and relevant computer applications. The case studies needed for my research had to reside in the country so as educators will be able to approach the artists in the future and invite them in their art classrooms for collaborations in teaching and learning in visual arts, as this practice is supported by the Curriculum.
- d) Appropriateness of artists' work for viewing by students of ages between 5 and 15 years old; if an artist was chosen to be part of the sample and agreed to

participate, he/she would be asked to select the works to be included in the research.

- e) Involvement of artists of various ages and expertise so as the research would document the range of practice involved and in different time periods. This was important because of the change in video's technology over the years.
- f) Selection of artists that approach video art with numerous artistic processes, so as the diversity of the art form and the medium would be depicted.

The population's initial size was determined during preliminary research on relevant local resources, as described in section 2.3, Review of knowledge and information. The initial number was 25 artists. After the initiation of Phase 2, however, and interviewing the founders of the NeMe non-profit organisation, who are in the process of developing an archive for video art in Cyprus (also described in section 2.3), this was modified to 68 local artists who have created video art at some point in their career. Discussion with the founders resulted in narrowing this list to possibly 23 significant artists, a number almost equal to my initial population of 20.

The sample size needed to be less than the population, as time constraints did not permit the interviewing all the artists. Another factor crucial in determining a sample of fewer cases than the population was the aspiration to achieve depth in studying artists' cases and in the related tangible educational products of the research. Table 3.1 illustrates the relationship of the population and the sample size.

*Table 3.1 Research population and sample size*

<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Contemporary Cypriot video artists (estimation 23 artists)	N < 23 (including self-agent)

The sampling design stayed emergent, in the sense that after fieldwork activity began and the first few case studies had been selected and studied, more cases were added to the sampling to the point where I felt they contributed a great deal to the research's important issues and purposes, offering a valuable insight into local artistic practice. The overall number of artists interviewed was 14, involved in 12 video interviews – two interviews included two couples. Two of these interviews resulted in problematic data and were

discarded. Nine interviews were conducted to consider local artists' cases and one was my self-interview.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

A qualitative constructivist analysis using the hermeneutic approach as a strategy for knowledge creation, semiotics as a method for constructing a tool to identify elements, and the 'art practice as a research' approach were implemented. There was corroboration between the different perspectives of the artist/researcher's, the local video artists' perceptions and reflections on their video art practices, the educators' opinions and the researcher/teacher's observations.

Data analysis started with a first-stage analysis that involved reduction of the video interview data and the first attempts at video editing. During the second video editing the participants' narratives were associated with video artwork, scenes from the video interview and additional resources, where needed, for example with video segments from artists' exhibitions, in order to emphasise a particular way in which the video work was displayed. These extra resources were provided by some artists after completion of the first round of video editing of the interviews. New forms of organisation of the data took place, sometimes linear but usually non-linear, and new data reduction followed in a third and fourth round of video editing.

The hermeneutic approach shaped the procedure of video editing as a personal dialogue with the involved data, with constant revisiting that aimed at knowledge creation. The process served as the main analysis technique through which crucial data were identified, preserved and presented. The aesthetic quality of the video interviews was a major focus during the whole process of editing, since the final videos of Artist Profiles are presented under the *a/r/tography* framework of research approach as new works of art, and at the same time they convey the 'live' quality of the narrative (Gillham 2010, p.92).

The Artist Profiles presented broadly key elements from the interviews, according to the semi-structured interview schedule. These were transcribed and assembled into a matrix (Appendix 10) relating artists' narrative summaries, exemplar quotations and relations to specific video artworks that were discussed in the interviews. Participant observation data were included in the same matrix and mainly referred to the altered focus of each interview's questions, according to the uniqueness of each case study. These data were

collected during the process of each video interview, embedded in the interview procedure and revealed during their revisiting to become cumulative information for the study of each case.

Data analysis continued with the development of an analysis tool in matrix format to identify semiotic codes of the video artwork provided by artists as part of the educational resources. The transcribed interview parts that were relevant to the video artwork were repeatedly entered in this tool matrix, as in the interviews' matrix. The association of this information with the semiotic codes identified in the video artwork helped in presenting an overall picture of the video analysis and in transforming this into relevant educational suggestions (Appendix 10). A third matrix was developed that referred to the focus group analysis and related the research's educational suggestions to the professional opinion of peers (Appendix 13). This data analysis led to the formation of categories regarding the artists' video artwork in relation to the Visual Arts Curriculum and the developed educational suggestions.

The abovementioned course of data analysis was complemented by a discussion on the 'art practice as research' approach, applied to my own video art production, which eventually became part of the totality of the collected artists' video interviews. Data derived from the researcher's visual-reflective research diary were interpreted with the help of a chronological matrix that regulated its activity, content, relationship to context and analysis of significant outcomes (Appendix 8).

Much effort was involved throughout all the above processes to stay faithful to the data collected during the process of data reduction, without eliminating crucial facts and meanings. This hopefully eliminated the danger of bias in visual data, and illustrated as efficiently as possible artistic practice.

Hermeneutics was expected to 'elucidate and make explicit' (Packer 1985, p.1088) the practical understandings of the artists' and researcher's actions, by providing the researcher's interpretations based on the available evidence. At the same time the edited versions of the video interviews remain available to the readers and educators so as they can formulate their own multiple meaningful constructions, that may be unlike the researcher's constructions. According to Gillham (2010), '[t]he reduction of the narrative strands of an interview is more faithfully represented by an edited version of what the



interviewee actually said than by a translation into the researcher's words' (p.126). Robustness, in this way, was achieved through the visible, and readers hopefully have a clear picture of the particularities of the researcher's meaningful constructions and conclusions.

An evaluation of the analysed data followed, to establish relevancies, validity and robustness, and facilitate assessment of their information value. To achieve this, a hermeneutic dialogue was developed between the emerging findings, the project's fundamental ideas, the rational, context and content of the Visual Arts Curriculum, and literature. The educational relevancies and suggestions were completed according to the data's assessed information value, and constituted a subjective interpretation and knowledge construction that accounted the findings derived from the focus group meetings held with educators.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues were handled with immense care throughout the research. Related to the case study method, the video-interviewing and the participatory observation, considerations included the authority to record, copyright issues regarding original artwork and issues of confidentiality. These were met by obtaining artists' informed consent to video record them in their personal space, observe their artistic practice, and publicise their artwork and edited video interviews for the purposes of this research. Edited video footage was assured not deliberately to mislead or distort original data. A communicative validation procedure (Gray and Malins 2004) was conducted so interpretations, edited material, emergent categories and the information value of data were discussed and reviewed with engaged artists to check and prevent possible misleading representations.

Regarding the actions of observation of individual artistic practices, the analysis of the personal visual-reflective diary and the production of my own works of video art, integrity and honesty in communicating personal data, ideas, practices, perceptions and interpretations were employed. Considerations of local educators' perceptions and needs that either directly or indirectly informed the research activity were used with respect and integrity, and their anonymity preserved. The educational outcome of the project was taken care of, to correspond to the rationale, context and content of the Cyprus Visual Arts

Curriculum, to avoid misleading educators and ensure the provision of authentic educational resources.

### **3.11 Positionality**

The implementation of my research project conceptualises personal involvement, epistemological and individual reflexivity in the roles of insider-researcher and practitioner-researcher. As a member of the local artistic community under investigation, the insider-researcher role has a clear focus on conducting research within the community and on connecting findings with the Visual Arts Curriculum and the field of visual arts education. Research interpretations based on evidence and gathered primary data are made available to readers, so they can formulate their own multiple constructions.

In addition the project focuses on personal visual work as a practitioner-researcher, where this role enquires into video art practices for the construction of new knowledge that is eventually transformed to educational suggestions appropriate to the Curriculum. The communication of personal data and outcomes are hopefully executed in a reliable and honest way to ensure a clear picture of the researcher's meaningful constructions and conclusions. Self-reflexivity acts upon values, attitudes, meanings and aims, and their influence on the procedure of the inquiry into personal artistic work.

## **Chapter 4 Project Activity**

### **4.1 Chapter summary**

The project fieldwork concentrated on Phases 1 and 2 of the research and resulted in the collection of data from personal artistic processes and nine local artists' video art practices. Data from this project activity were used in Phase 3, including deskwork that fostered the creative design of related educational resources. Together with the artists' edited interviews, these data comprise the evidence of achievement in this project. This tangible product considered the suggestions of educators and stakeholders so as to grow into a suitable and authentic resource appropriate for usage in real school settings.

### **4.2 Fieldwork**

The project focused on the investigation of the under-researched area of video art practices in Cyprus and included my own video art practices, as well as other nine local artists' practices. Specifically, the project activity during fieldwork explored local video art practices and their connection with real-life experiences. Later, during the deskwork phase, it examined local video art's educational potential through the design of appropriate resources for art educators. The research questions looked for relevancies between video as an art form, video as a medium, and video as a visual arts educational tool and resource.

During the project fieldwork I concentrated on Phases 1 and 2. Phase 1 included the inquiry into my own video art practice as a self-case study, and was initiated in March 2013. After a seventh-month period Phase 2 commenced, comprising the planning, physical meeting and interviewing of local video artists. Both phases continued simultaneously from October 2013 to June 2014. Phase 1 and 2 resulted in the collection of data from personal artistic practices and nine local artists' practices. The study of these data led the project to its final Phase 3, which was essentially composed of four stages: a) analysis of data and development of new artwork, namely the Artist Profiles; b) design of sample educational resources based on the Artist Profiles; c) presentation of the sample resources to focus groups; and d) the design of the final educational resources (evidence of achievement).

**Self-case study (Phase 1).** Through the project activity my artistic practices and the produced video artworks were studied as data. The starting point of personal artistic practice was considered to be the moment ideas were conceptualised as the result of experiences, events, critical incidents and thoughts that were either long kept and nurtured, or sudden and even accidental. Ideas occasionally enforced immediate artistic experimentations with techniques such as printmaking (Figures 4.1, 4.2), mixed media – drawing, stamping, paper cutting, constructing (Figure 4.3) and collage (Figure 4.4). I find this instantaneous way of being involved in hands-on creative processes to be beneficial to the development of my ideas and concepts, since visual elements in combination with my hands activity had always been the protagonist in my work and life.



*Figure 4.1 Photograph of personal artistic practice with printmaking (1).*



Figure 4.2 Photograph of personal artistic practice with printmaking (2).



Figure 4.3 Photograph of personal artistic practice with mixed media.



*Figure 4.4 Photograph of personal artistic practice with collage.*

Some of the initial artistic experiments were later collected and included in a visual diary s to form a documentation of the artistic processes involved in my video art creation (Appendix 9). Other ring binders contained written text (Figure 4.5): the digital version includes video footage and photography (Figure 4.6). It is frequently hard for me to document in detail or recall the actual processes of the birth and development of an idea, even with the help of such tools. The moment of conceptualisation is unique, and can only be represented through visual and written elements, without offering in detail the actual process that grows in the visual mind. These forms of representation, the data, either still or moving, digital or in hard copy, can generate meanings, create connections and grow into complex structures that become unique to the artist. Existing knowledge, past practices, as well as new additions and addictions, novel perceptions of the self, social reality and inventive understandings, all 'mash up' to construct personally perceived imagery that finds a 'live' performative space in my video artwork.





Figure 4.5 Photograph of personal visual-reflective diary in hard copy form.

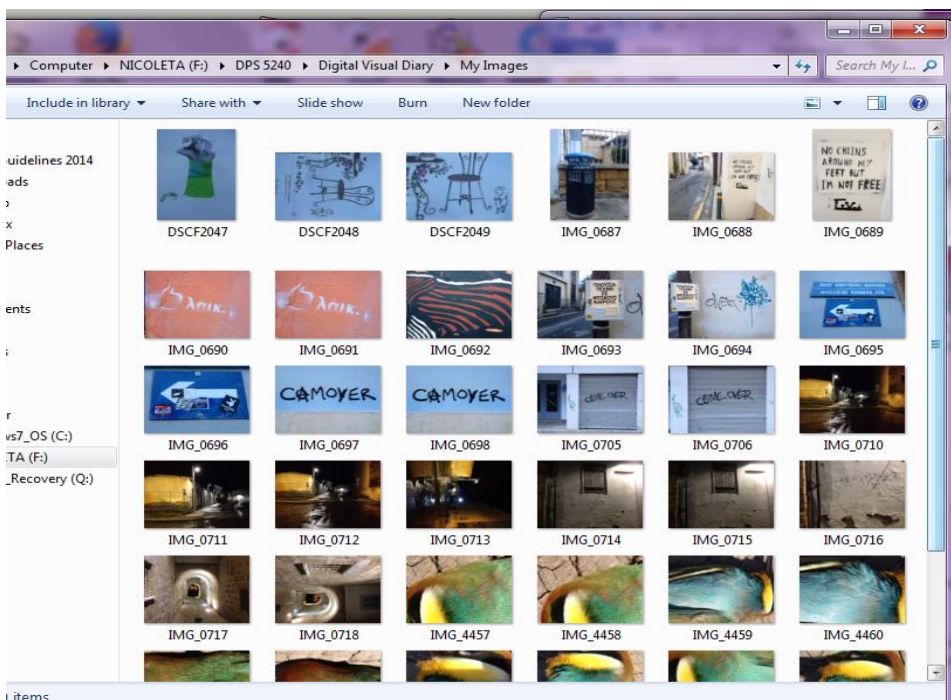


Figure 4.6 Photograph of personal visual-reflective diary in digital form.

The data collection techniques that accommodated this self-case study were designed according to the needs of the approach. As a practicing artist of many years' standing, I

have experience of acknowledging the tools that fit into my practice and help record my progress. Even though I am not fond of writing on my thoughts on personal art processes, I acknowledge the importance of written comments as well as other forms of visual elements. The diary was a tool used in my MA studies that served numerous aspects of my artistic research. For this DProf research the diary took the form of digital still and moving as well as handwritten data that referred to experiments with media and processes, ideas and meanings, personal narratives and collections of related textual material. Photographing my own processes also served as documentation of my practice.

The most significant content from my diary entries was accumulated in a chronological matrix and is presented in Appendix 7, as well as analysed in Chapter 5. In the text that follows in the section below, a reflection on my art practice is presented that is derived from the diary entries of Appendix 7, and refers to the activity concerning my video art making and its approach as a form of research.

### ***Personal art practice***

My initial plan during the design of this project was to create one video artwork and analyse the process of its making, but in due course I developed four: three solo works and one in collaboration with Katia Savvidou. I believe this was because of the personal constant involvement with the creative processes of artists through their interviewing, as well as the proposal that I should to create a collaborative work. Table 4.1 shows the details of the works I produced.

*Table 4.1 Personal works produced during the research project.*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<i>Swipe Here to Paint</i>	2014	Video (video, stop motion animation, smartphone application)	6'30''
<i>Little Fish, Alone, Searching</i>	2014	Three-channel video	3'00' loop
<i>Where Did the Butterfly Hide? SLEEP-RESTART</i>	2014	Video (photography, computer animation, website recording)	6'00''
<i>I am Alone, Nobody is Here (with Katia Savvidou)</i>	2014	Video installation	4'00''



*Swipe Here to Paint* (Avgousti 2014) (Figure 4.7) was conceptualised in March 2013, but it was not until the spring of 2014 that it was developed. For this work I needed to experiment with images, techniques and materials to create tangible elements and set up three-dimensional scenery that I video-recorded later. This problem-solving process embraced trial and error processes, and it took a prolonged period of time to finalise what actually worked to achieve the desired results (Figure 4.8). The final video artwork uses selected elements from these experiments.



Figure 4.7 Still image from *Swipe Here to Paint* (Avgousti, 2014).



Figure 4.8 Being engaged in the problem-solving process during the making of *Swipe Here to Paint* (Avgousti 2014).

The concept of *Swipe Here to Paint* lay in a sudden socioeconomic event: the financial crisis that influenced Cyprus in early 2013, with the closing down of bank institutions for a period of two weeks, the decision of the Euro Group meeting for massive cuts in savings bank accounts, the loss of jobs and cuts in salaries. Every person experienced a shudder during that period and it seemed that nothing would be the same again, at least for a long time.

Two days after the Eurogroup event I received in the mail a bank statement for my credit card account showing the bank's motto: 'Double cash for you, double privileges' (that is, when you use your credit card). I suddenly sensed the irony in the motto in the light of the recent tragic events in the economy of my country and the lives of its people. As the credit card statement was connected to money expenditure, I realised that money's buying power suddenly disappeared. This led to the idea of approaching the lifestyle change that would inevitably occur, in an ironic way, as the bank's motto was received. The stereotyped identity of women as shopping obsessives and fashion enthusiasts was decided to serve this idea.

Searching through my image collection that acts as a source for my art practice, I found old pictures of women fashion models displaying designer clothes. After visualising and testing their appropriation by transforming them in black and white photocopies, trying to achieve dramatic looks and the feeling of 'freeze frames', and playing with the image of the women's gazing eyes, I opted for a structure of raw material that would possibly lead me to create a ridiculously ironic video work and illustrate my initial ideas.

A search for new materials followed that aimed to achieve the actual 'freezing' of the fashion models; the solution was found in the resin, a chemical liquid that, when mixed with a liquid hardener, undergoes a reaction resulting in a solid three-dimensional object taking on the form of the mould used. The images of the girls were inserted into the mould, covered with the resin and, when solidified, created an object that could be manipulated during video making. The fashion models were finally frozen inside a clear capsule that would hold their past glamour.

A tactic that stimulates my thinking in my recent work was also featured in this video: the searching for words or phrases that may depict irony when combined with real-life situations. Magazines and newspapers are regarded as textual resources for examining

possible word or phrases; text is isolated and undergoes thought and related processes until a satisfying idea is generated. The text selected for this video artwork, 'your look is complete', was inserted in the resin mould with the women's image (Figure 4.9).

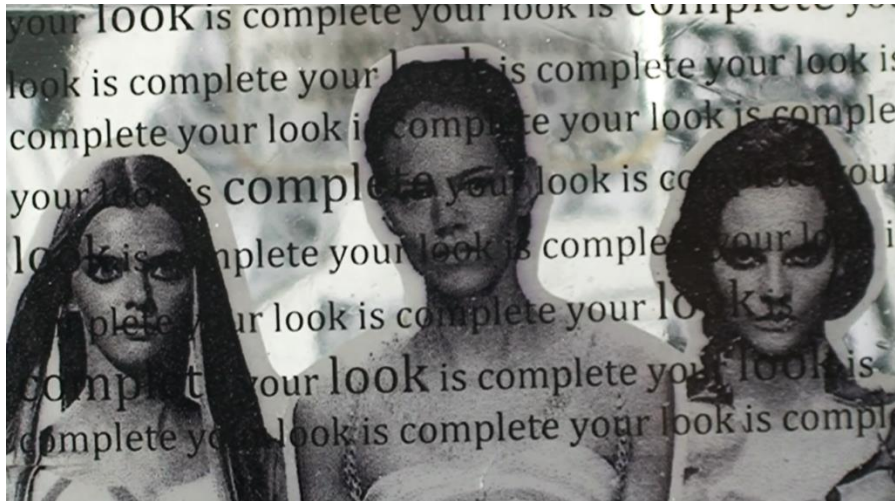


Figure 4.9 The result of experimentation: the translucent resin with image and text.

What followed was the experimentation with the setting up of all the gathered materials – images and resin pieces – in a small-scale three-dimensional scene (Figure 4.8) that was later video recorded from various camera angles. The video editing process was crucial to the final result as video footage was selected, repeated, multiplied and combined in a musical piece chosen because it was considered to hide the actual meaning of the image.

The first raw material of *Little Fish, Alone, Searching* (Avgousti 2014) (Figure 4.10) was recorded in March 2014 and sequential material was captured later until the idea of the video work progressed in the summer of 2014. While driving through the seaside town of Limassol where I teach, I noticed an announcement in the street regarding a scheduled event of boat's sinking. The action aimed to be the creation of an artificial reef that would eventually attract diving tourism. This initial notion was connected a few days later to our fish bowl at home which, apart from providing a little liveliness and attraction, stood like a spot for hostages that existed only to amuse. The fishes worked as a symbol of opportunism; either captive in a bowl or offered a new home through the artificial reef, their existence was to serve somebody else's purpose. Gradually, the idea for *Little Fish, Alone, Searching* was born, realised with my own footage of the boat sinking event, a local television station's footage from cameras on actual sinking ships and my recordings of my own humble 'hostages'.

The work was finalised to be viewed simultaneously on three television screens (Figure 4.17) or three projections on wall. This was one of two out of four video works that I created during this research that did not use any experimentation with traditional media and tools. It was executed in a purely digital form from the collection of video footage.



*Figure 4.10 Still from Little Fish, Alone, Searching (Avgousti 2014).*

*Where did the butterfly hide? SLEEP-RESTART* (Avgousti 2014) (Figure 4.11) was my work that captured all previous and new personal experiences concerning the Turkish invasion in Cyprus and the occupation of part of the country since 1974. I was two-and-a-half years old at the time; my first childhood memories are the sounds of airplanes bombing the area around my parents' house and images of our neighbours moving to our house because it had two roofs and was considered safer than the others with only one.

The summer of 2014 was the fortieth anniversary of the Turkish invasion. The anniversary, in conjunction with my childhood memories and my recent visits to the occupied areas of the country, one in October 2013 and one in March 2014, shaped the groundwork for a new video artwork. I visited the occupied village of Rizokarpaso and its elementary school as a Ministry of Education's representative, with the aim to initiate and implement two collaborative visual arts projects with the Greek-Cypriot students at the school. Rizokarpaso is one of the two villages that is still inhabited by Greek-Cypriots under the Turkish occupation. This settlement was reached in 1974 for those people who wished to continue living at their villages after the war. A small primary and middle school

(gymnasium) have been operating since then, with educational staff appointed by the Ministry of Education.

The two visits I conducted were not my first since the 'opening' of the borders of the divided country in 2004. This 'opening' of a number of military border checkpoints was initiated by the Turkish Cypriot leader as an act of goodwill towards Greek Cypriots; what followed during the ensuing days and months was a massive wave of people waiting in line, on both sides of the borders, to visit the other side after thirty years of segregation. I was one of those people waiting in line the day after the happening, and went on foot to the occupied city of Nicosia. In 2005 I made a long trip by car and went to the peninsula of Rizokarpaso, but since then I had not gone again until 2014. The recent visits reminded me of my first impressions; they also brought back the problem of my country that is present in everyday life but to which I deliberately refuse to pay attention. As my generation, born a little before or after the war in 1974, was forced to grow up in a divided country without experiencing the occupied part, feelings of inequity embody the issue that seems to remain unresolved. *Where Did the Butterfly Hide? SLEEP-RESTART* reflects hopes for the country's unification that could not be realised during forty years of recent history; the butterfly is as a metaphor for the hope for unification of the country that is unreachable; sometimes it *sleeps*, and other times it *restarts* as a programmed animated 'fake' image that wanders above the divided country, unable to fulfil its goal.

Photographs from my recent trip to the occupied areas were used for this video work, combined with paper butterflies that were stamped, drawn, cut to shape and cut through their shape; paper matchboxes were added to form new settings, as well as new meanings, together with the butterflies placed inside and above them to resemble an embalmed species in a science museum, symbolising the dead hope for reunification of the country. During editing, these photographs were related to digital wallpapers and specific broadcasting news narrative that mentioned the political dialogue that continues for years regarding a solution to the problem. The photographs were linked to the local news website that presented the fortieth anniversary issue. The photograph of the paper butterfly was animated through the editing software; essentially, no video footage was used in the making of the video, apart from the computer screen recordings of webpage browsing. The connection between the *SLEEP-RESTART* command in the Windows computer environment came at the final stage of the editing procedure; the Cyprus issue is



regarded to be frequently in the 'sleep' mode, and other times in the 'restart' mode, with political talks in process.



Figure 4.11 Still from *Where Did the Butterfly Hide?* SLEEP-RESTART (Avgousti 2014)

The collaborated work *I am Alone, Nobody is Here* (Savvidou and Avgousti 2014) (Figure 4.12) was initiated and finalised in the summer of 2014. The cooperation with Savvidou materialised after I interviewed this artist for my research. At a later date we had the chance to get to know each other better through informal talks at our workspace, as she was also a visual arts educator advisor for secondary education at the Ministry of Education at that time. The proposal for collaboration came from Savvidou suggesting that we worked together on a video to be created for an art residency event at a rural village, Lazania; she had the idea but she did not see how she could realise it. Our cooperation put her idea into action and we ended up spending much time together, capturing footage and editing the final video. The raw material for the work included an interview of more than an hour with the only habitant of Lazania, Mrs Maria, age 72 (Figure 4.13). Selected interview extracts were used in a video motif combined with footage from the village landscape, with key phrases captured from Mrs Maria's interview. The final video was exhibited as part of an installation (Figure 4.14), and also as a single-channel work during the Lazania *plein air*.

The process for this video work was unlike previous videos I had created, mainly because of Savvidou's interest in documenting life stories and exploring memory. Being involved in

this collaboration opened up new areas of research interests for me; simultaneously, it reminded me of past actions, when I interviewed my grandmothers when they were alive, and recorded the poetry and folk tales they narrated.



*Figure 4.12 Still from I am Alone, Nobody is Here (Savvidou and Avgousti 2014)*

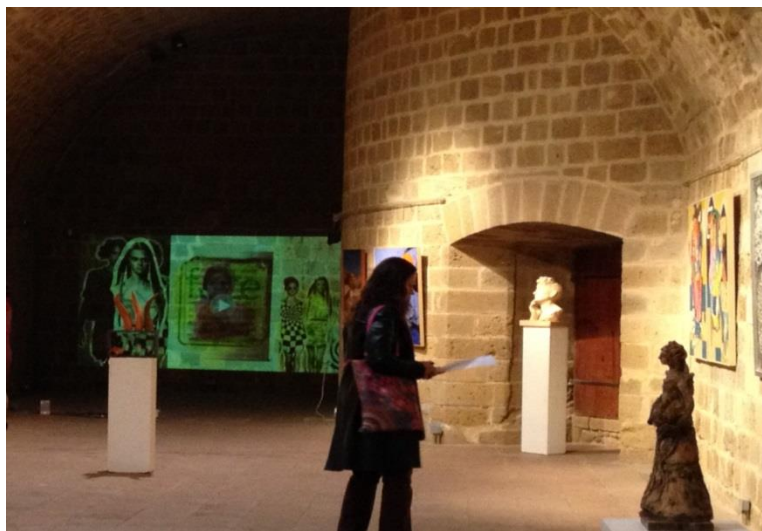


*Figure 4.13 Video-interviewing Mrs Maria at Lazania village, with Savvidou.*

All four video works were shown at public art events throughout this research. The exhibitions (Figures 4.14–4.17) were documented by video and photography that were later used in the making of my own artist's profile. I was involved in the setup of my video works for the events, which encompassed a study of the available gallery space, equipment and relations with the rest of the exhibited artwork. A still photo from the work *Where Did the Butterfly Hide? SLEEP–RESTART* was published in an exhibition catalogue (Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, 2014).



*Figure 4.14 Video installation, I am Alone, Nobody is Here (Savvidou and Avgousti 2014). Exhibited at the National Exhibition of the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, Larnaca Municipal Gallery, October–December 2014.*



*Figure 4.15 Swipe Here to Paint (Avgousti 2014), exhibited at the National Exhibition of the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, Famagusta Gate, December 2014.*





*Figure 4.16 Where Did the Butterfly Hide? SLEEP-RESTART (Avgousti 2014), exhibited at the National Exhibition of the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, Larnaca Municipal Gallery, October-December 2014.*



*Figure 4.17 Little Fish, Alone, Searching (Avgousti 2014), exhibited at the National Exhibition of the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, Lanitis Foundation, Limassol, November-December 2014.*

The study of my artistic process continued with the planning of my own interview, which took place at my home, where I also practise my art. Preparation included draft notes on paper regarding the semi-structured interview questions, which were the same as those sent to the artists before their interviews (Appendix 3) (interview questions are discussed in the section Artists' case studies). Another practice I arranged beforehand was to collect my video artwork in a computer folder for convenient access during the interview process. The interview was recorded in August 2014, after the completion of my video works and before public viewing at exhibitions (Figure 4.18). The interview was regarded as a reflection on ideas, concerns, interests and artistic processes. This self-dialogue mostly

followed the written semi-structured interview plan but, as in the other artists' cases (discussed in section Artists' case studies below), the dialogue departed to an extent from the planned structure to follow the artist's individual voice.

My husband was of significant assistance in checking the recording equipment and taking photographs, just as he was during the other artists' interviews. Having another person in the room during the interview also meant that I could address him while talking about my art practice.



*Figure 4.18 Photograph from the self-interview.*

The preparation of Phase 2 started in June 2013 with the design of the semi-structured interview questions, based on the research's questions. The aim of this interview plan (Appendix 3) was first to investigate all aspects of the research and, second, to serve as a reminder of the key areas to be examined during the sessions. It was preferable to be flexible to permit omissions and additions, according to the interviewees' responses and the artwork they referred to, and the interviewer's perception of what seemed most important. Two interview plans were designed; Plan I was for to artists who were also art educators, and Plan II was for those who were not (both are included in Appendix 3). The plans are essentially the same, but Plan I includes an extra set of questions inquiring into the artists' opinions from the perspective of an educator.

The initial interview questions searched for information on the development of the artists' interest in video art and the artistic processes that their personal video art production

involves. The next set of questions investigated the relevancies of the artists' video work to real-life experience, and possible ways that video technology may enhance this. They requested further details about the artists' approaches and their relevance to interdisciplinarity. If the artist was also an art educator, the questions focused on teaching practices that might involve the artist's own video works in the art classroom, and the way students might have responded to them or suggestions on how their work should be approached.

In most cases a few questions from the interview plan were omitted and new ones were added, after the interviewer's observation and reflection on the specific artist's comments and/or video artwork. In some circumstances a question was put into new words in order to connect to an earlier response of the artist or rephrased to capture a wider area of ideas. In other cases, a question was not asked at all because it was already in the interviewee's previous answers.

Since the research outcome was intended to be addressed to the local educational community, Greek was used as the main language of the interviews. English subtitles were planned to be added to the final videos after data analysis was completed. This would assist evaluation of the educational resources by the university and also allow the resources to be studied by English-speaking educators, artists and scholars. One interview was undertaken in English because the artist was raised in Australia and she asked to speak the language in which she was most fluent.

During my preparation for the interviews I reviewed relevant literature and watched a number of artists' interviews on CDs and the Internet, looking for suggestions and advice on how to be effective throughout the interview sessions. Some video recording techniques, such as avoiding speaking to the interviewee from behind the camera (Rahn 2008) and encouraging interviewees to speak after an interval of a few seconds of the question were particularly helpful. I tried to deconstruct interview settings, visual conventions and unseen particularities of the video sessions. For instance, the distance between the researcher and the interviewee that is created when the researcher is behind the camera may not allow him or her to be completely present in the experience of the interview (Rahn 2008). This issue was confronted by being fully aware of it beforehand and making conscious efforts to stay focused on the content of the interview, to reflect on

the artist's answers, and to pose additional questions that may have not been planned, when necessary.

A mock interview was planned as a next step, to put into practice what I had learned. I was the interviewer and my husband took the role of interviewee. The mock interview generated the necessity for a nearby list to remind me of important points that the interview should include. This seemed invaluable, especially in cases where the interview diverted from the planned questions. I ended up with a checklist (Appendix 4) primarily related to Plan II questions, for artists who were not art educators. An artist's consent form (Appendix 5) was created, intended to be given to them after the conclusion of the interview and the submission of the video works in their edited video profile. This form included details about the ownership and release of data, such as an agreement on the researcher's handling of the artist's name and artwork in educational materials produced, and any feature articles and presentations of the research results. The consent form did not include details about any related future commercial publications since it was regarded as an issue to be dealt after the successful completion of the Doctorate.

Besides the interviews, Phase 2 involved visits to art exhibitions in those cases where artists in the research sample exhibited their work. Video recordings of segments of the exhibitions took place that later complemented their video interviews during the process of data analysis and video editing. Following local cultural events was an integral part of the research process, as data were recorded in my visual-reflecting diary. Moreover, the visits to the artists' events served another purpose; they worked towards maintaining an authentic relationship with interviewees. As Rahn (2008) states, it is important to maintain such a relationship throughout the course of the research and not display interest only for the data collected. If artists did not display their work in exhibitions during this time, the relationship was maintained through email and telephone communication.

### **The Interviews (Phase 2)**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, section 3.8, purposeful intensity sampling was the chosen strategy to search for local artistic practice in the area of video art (Phase 2), so as to collect data to enable the study's continuation to the next phase, that of developing related educational suggestions (Phase 3, described in section 4.3). Artists' cases were selected according to their relevance to both Phases 2 and 3, and according to the criteria described in section 3.8. An introductory number of artists' cases were chosen after

studying preliminary data from the State Gallery's records and the few relevant available local literature references. An additional number of cases were added to the sample as research activity progressed, and as new data emerged such as the NeMe archive of the Cypriot video art, in the initial stages of development. A few cases were chosen as a result of years of personal involvement with the local artistic community and my study of the artists' work. All artists' cases were chosen after a number a preliminary study of their video works and associated real-life experiences. Experiences might have served multiple roles: as motivation; main concepts; big ideas that generated knowledge construction and/or imaginative thinking and visualisation; or new roles that were to be revealed in the interviews.

I invited 14 artists to participate; 13 accepted my invitation, and one declined. The reasons for this rejection were twofold. The first had to do with the copyright of her video artworks belonging to galleries in Greece; the galleries would not give their consent for the works to be used for research purposes. The second reason had to do with her personal viewpoint about video art. She believed that video art is not an art form on its own and does not have a place in her own work as an individual art form, but instead complements her work. Her second reason was regarded as irrelevant to the rationale of my research, since I specified that my research regards video art as a multidimensional and hybrid art form that is open, flexible and inviting to any medium, technique and genre. She was not convinced enough to participate, and anyway her first reason, in my opinion, would prevent her participation.

The first contact with artists was by telephone or email, depending on my relationship with them: email was preferred if I did not know the person beforehand; a phone call was regarded as more direct for people I had met in the past. Three artists were physically approached in art exhibition openings when I accidentally met them; they were on my list to approach by telephone, but since meetings occurred I decided on the spot to give them an introduction to my research and an invitation to participate. Either way, an email was sent to all of them eventually that included a document (Appendix 6) describing the research rationale, their role in the project, the interview particulars and the details of their consent such as ownership of data and details on the release of data. Some information about the researcher were also included.

What followed their acceptance to participate was generally email correspondence, most often accompanied by phone calls, to introduce the interview questions and to set up an

appointment for the interview. The interview plan (either I or II, according to the artists' involvement in education) was sent to them so that they would have time to prepare by: reflecting on their practices; choosing the video artwork to which they would refer during the interview session; preparing any materials and/or techniques they would like to display; thinking about and preparing their workplace or any other venue for the interview. The only constraint from me was that they should select artwork that they considered appropriate for educational use, regarding the content and the issues presented. I retained my rights as the researcher possibly to disagree with their selection, as artists who are not educators might have difficulty in making an appropriate selection. Additionally I offered support in reviewing their works in their presence to reach a shared decision about what to include.

Setting up interview appointments was not always an easy task. Artists' work and life commitments were often obstacles to setting an interview day. Some artists were interviewed as early as two weeks after the initial communication, but most were interviewed after a longer period of time that extended up to eight months. Each artist's case was different, hence each one was approached in a different way. Artists whom I had met in the past were the easiest to approach for the purpose of the interview. Trust was already built, and the nature of their work was not new territory for me. With new acquaintances I had to undergo an introductory stage so as both of us would feel comfortable. This would usually include extended conversations over the phone, and informal meetings when we talked about their work and defined which works to refer to in the interview.

Appendix 7 presents the names of the 13 artists who were interviewed, as well as details of the video works they submitted for the development of their video profiles and educational resources. The 13 participating artists were involved in 11 video interviews, since two of the interviews were couples in work and life. Two of the 11 interviews were considered to produce problematic data, so the research actually studied 9 artists' cases, besides my self-study. The two interviews considered unsatisfactory for further analysis were because of the following: one interviewee's oral responses could not be edited for a final video profile because of the fast pace at which the artist was talking and the incomplete answers given, regardless of my repeated indications throughout; and the other case study was regarded as inappropriate for the educational part of the research, because the artist could not provide any video artwork to be included in the produced educational resources. If time would permit, there might have been a second approach to

at least one of these artists to arrange a new interview session, but this was not feasible. It could be a future plan for my thesis development after the finalisation of the DProf.

The following is a description of the interview procedure with each selected artist, as well as accounts of decisions relevant to the interviews that were recorded in note form in my diary during observations. Extracts from these notes are presented in Appendix 8 throughout the chronological diary analysis.

### ***Yiannos Economou***

The meeting with Economou was the first, since he was an old acquaintance. This was considered a helpful strategy to initiate the interview process (Figures 4.19–4.20). Economou is most possibly the only artist in Cyprus who is completely dedicated to the medium of video. On his website he states, ‘Yiannos Economou, video artist’; and his work demonstrates that this is true. Over the years he has created works with a range of techniques dealing with issues that directly refer to his homeland, its problems and its people, and the way in which these are dealt with from various perspectives. The task of choosing four works from his video collection for the interview was not difficult; most of them are structured to be directly related to the educational part of my research (i.e. have appropriate content), and to the investigation of real-life experiences as their central concern. Economou is also an educator at secondary level (ages 12–17), consequently we had a conversation about his selection for the study before the interview.



*Figure 4.19 Interview setting at Economou's studio, Kissonerga, Paphos, 9 November 2013.*





*Figure 4.20 Outside video recording after Economou's interview. Kissonerga, Paphos, 9 November 2013.*

### ***Klitsa Antoniou***

Antoniou was the second artist to be immediately available for interview. Although it was against my interview requirements, I decided to respect her request to conduct the interview at an alternative venue to her personal place (Figure 4.21). Antoniou was one of the artists I certainly wanted to include, so I regarded her request as a minor difficulty. She is mainly an installation and time-based artist who uses video to express certain ideas, or employs video as one of the main features of her work but considers its input as supplementary. Interviewing her was an experience that forced me to reflect on installation art in relation to video, and to consider concepts such as space, three-dimensionality and interactivity when responding to her opinions.

Antoniou considered one of her single-channel works appropriate for educational use and suggested it for inclusion in the research. It relates to the war in Cyprus in 1974 and the artist's childhood memories as a refugee. She wore a single dress during the period of these events, which she kept and decided to use in her video as an adult artist. The work, up to this point, was regarded to have strong educational connections, but her next presented act was problematic: visiting fortune-tellers to find out about the dress' past and future, as well as the artist's. After deep thought I decided to include this work in the educational resources, since the story surrounding the dress has important meanings related to the country's history as well as to the Curriculum. The problematic act presented, even if it is important to the artist, may be ignored in the development of educational resources by placing the emphasis on the symbolism of the dress. On the



other hand, educators may reflect on the work and decide it is inappropriate for students, as in the case of all the artwork in this study.

During the editing of Antoniou's video interview the need arose to include additional footage to compose the artist profile. Communication with the artist resulted in collecting many videos from the artist's exhibitions, but revealed that the first video she created for the installation *In the Horizon of the Game with the Other* (1999) was in VHS format. Antoniou admitted that it was an opportunity for her to transfer her video to digital format, so she took her tape to a specialist studio and submitted a digital version.



Figure 4.21 Interviewing Klitsa Antoniou at a local bookshop, Nicosia, 16 November 2013.

### ***Achilleas Kentonis and Maria Papacharalambous***

Kentonis and Papacharalambous are a couple in both life and work, and their interview was scheduled to take place together since they have collaborated for many years. Their work includes a wide range of media and techniques such as sculpture, painting, video art, animation, short film, performance and Internet art. They are the founders of one of the most prominent art institutes in the country that functions as an arts research centre and exhibition and performance venue, the Artos Foundation.

During their interview it became evident that their work in the video/film category is probably the largest in terms of volume among Cypriot artists, numbering 42 videos/films since their first low-cost animation of 1999, *An Egg* (Kentonis and Papacharalambous 1999). They proposed including eight of their video artworks in a collection for my study, and gave me the authority to choose whichever of these I considered appropriate for educational use. I eventually chose four, considering the appropriateness of the content and issues presented.



Figure 4.22 Interviewing Achilles Kentonis and Maria Papacharalambous at their institute, Artos Foundation, Nicosia, 9 December 2013.

### **Theodoulos Gregoriou**

Theodoulos is an installation and mixed media artist who frequently incorporates TV signals in his enormous sculptural pieces and video sculptures. In one of his distinguished works, *A Roof for Homo sapiens* (Gregoriou 2001), he combines video projection in a cube installation with mirrors that allow the projection's infinitive repetition. This work is a personal favourite of mine, especially after I experienced it at the Terra Mediterranea – In Crisis exhibition in Nicosia in 2012. I decided to include the artist in my research sample in anticipation of exploring this work through the artist's reflections. Our meeting took place at his enormous studio space in Nicosia, an old warehouse that allows him to build and store his huge art pieces. He talked about *A Roof for Homo sapiens* and the role of video and technology in this work, as well as his creative process in general (Figure 4.23).

Since *A Roof for Homo sapiens* is an installation piece and the video footage used is regarded as an integral part of the work, there was no artwork submitted by the artist for the needs of this project. In the artist's archives there were photographs, which he provided, but no video recordings of the installation apart from some low-resolution video clips from the Internet. The fact that there would be no video works to accompany the artist's profile appeared problematic; since there is no alternative way to present an installation work after its real-time exhibition, photographs and video recordings are the only tools to offer even a fraction of the experience, and these were missing. Thinking it through, I decided to exclude this interview from the analysis of my data and the research

results, and to conduct supplementary research at a later date in the hope of discovering more data. This will be accomplished after my commitments to DProf work are complete.



*Figure 4.23 Interviewing Theodoulos Gregoriou at his studio in Nicosia, 21 December 2013.*

### ***Anna Fotiadou***

When I first met Anna ten years ago she was working as a freelance graphic designer. Since then she has evolved into a video artist, and a theatre and performance video artist. When I approached her to take part in the research she was in the process of designing video art sets for a theatre production, so I suggested recording footage of the rehearsals. Consent was required from the theatre director and was quickly arranged, and our meeting was in the theatre when a rehearsal was scheduled. I observed Anna in the control room, calculating video projection distances as her co-worker was adjusting the sound. I also observed her behind the scenes, moving and placing a mirror so as to achieve, in combination with her video projection, specific effects. Actors started arriving for the rehearsal and I continued observing silently while video-recording. I was informed beforehand that at certain points Anna would project her work on stage during the rehearsal, so I was alert to capture these scenes.

Anna's interview was scheduled to take place at the same theatre some days later (Figure 4.24). Her work in the theatre was the focus of our talk, but it also considered other aspects of her work such as her single-channel video art and videos for dance performances. I had constant communication with Anna throughout the next phase of my research, because I chose her to work with me on the video editing of the artists' interviews that followed (described in detail in section 4.3).



*Figure 4.24 Interviewing Anna Fotiadou on the stage of the Cyprus Theatre Organisation in Nicosia, 17 January 2014.*

### **Konstantia Sofokleous**

have been acquainted with Sofokleous' work since she participated at the Venice Biennial in 2005 and had approached her video work in my teaching at the University of Cyprus and primary school classes. I met her in advance of the interview at her request, which helped to plan our conversation regarding a new video of hers that had not previously been shown in public. The interview took place at the artist's home where she also has her workspace (Figure 4.25). Her living room was filled with toys belonging to her little girl, a scene I thought to be connected with her interests in her art: childhood toys and books, popular children's songs and old family movies. Her approach to describing and reflecting on her work processes also indicates a childlike approach that, in my opinion, has a special presence in the local art scene.

Our meeting concluded with my invitation to her to collaborate on an art unit for schools. My main goal was to investigate her ideas on how she approaches her own video artwork with students in a school setting. Being a teacher herself at university level – at the Technological University of Cyprus – I thought it might be of interest to her to teach at a lower level for a short period of time. The teaching would take place at one of my art classrooms in the school where I work in Limassol, which happened to be the primary school she attended as a child. She was excited by the idea, as childhood memories arose once more for her, as it happens in her art. We agreed to exchange emails over the following days to plan the art unit and the meetings with the school.



Figure 4.25 Konstantia Sofokleous at her workplace in Limassol, 8 February 2014.

### **Helene Black and Yiannis Colakides**

I met the artist Helene Black and the architect Yiannis Colakides at their home and studio at the historic centre of Limassol, a place that often generates ideas for their video art (Figure 4.26). It was a starting point for the video *Distance Relative* (Helene Black, 2004–2009), where Helene Black recorded her neighbour, an elderly prostitute who was living alone, poor and still practising her profession. When she passed away in 2009, Black concluded her video work with the woman's funeral, where no one was present. This video was one of the artist's suggestions to include in the collection for my research, and was the only video I disallowed. On second thoughts she agreed that the video's content was not appropriate for the audience this research was addressed to, therefore we focused our interview discussion on two other videos she chose.

Helene Black is an Australian-born Greek-Cypriot artist who moved to Cyprus twenty years ago. She requested in advance to conduct the interview in English since she was more fluent in it than Greek, which would not be a problem since the video interviews were planned from the start to be translated and subtitled. In 2004 Black, together with her partner Colakides, formed the Cyprus-registered cultural non-profit organisation NeMe. This focuses on contemporary theories and their intersection with the arts. As mentioned in Chapter 2, NeMe is in the preliminary stages of generating an archive of video art created by local artists, a project initiated by Cornell University. The organisation is responsible for collecting the necessary information and works, and the university will preserve the works in digital format. While interviewing Colakides, valuable statistics arose



for my project such as the total number of artists he has in his records, as well as some important names that he suggested I should interview. Colakides needed some information from my research data regarding names of the artists I planned to interview, and himself was interviewed for my research as a collaborator with Black.

During the editing there arose the need to collect two of the earliest works of the artists to present in their profile, and it was extremely difficult for them to find high quality versions. After some months' searching in their archives they finally succeeded and provided *Loop* (2001) and *Rite of Revolution* (2003) for inclusion in the project.



Figure 4.26 Interviewing Helene Black and Yiannis Colakides at their home in Limassol, 17 February 2014.

### **Katia Savvidou**

I communicated a wish to Katia to interview her months before the interview actually took place, and she seemed reluctant to participate because she regarded herself as inexperienced concerning the artistic processes of video art. I told her that when I viewed *Summer of 2012* (Savvidou, 2012) in the exhibition *Mare Nostrum*, it did not occur to me that she was an artist new to the medium of video. I also explained that I intended to include emerging video artists in my sample, since involvement of artists of various ages and expertise would document the range of practice. She was persuaded to participate, and we met at her apartment for the interview (Figure 4.27).

Katia referred extensively to her work during a *plein air* event at a traditional rural village, where she decided to knock on people's doors for permission to video record their interiors. She later submitted to me her collaboration on a work that to be created during a

new *plein air* event at Lazania village. Her concept evolved around interviewing the only inhabitant of the village and creating a video with her as the protagonist. The old and its contrast with the contemporary is a notion that seems to occupy her interests constantly.



*Figure 4.27 Katia Savvidou at her home and studio in Nicosia, 18 February 2014.*

### ***Lia Lapithi***

After my initial contact with Lapithi, she suggested conducting her interview online since, as she stated, she does not work at a physical studio space so cyber space would be most appropriate. I struggled to convince her that showing only her face on a computer screen would not make as an exciting an artist's profile as i video-recording her in real life. After exchanging a number of emails she was persuaded to grant a face-to-face interview, and invited me to her yacht at Larnaca marina for the session (Figure 4.28). There, Lapithi clarified once again that she creates art at various places and spaces with mobile technology and other media, without owning a studio in the typical sense. She also had a unique way of describing her art: she admitted she had anxieties and wanted to say what she thought without being interrupted. She wanted to speak as in a normal conversation without noticing the camera or making necessary pauses, and this resulted in a problematic recording that was almost impossible to analyse. This was a strong reason for excluding the case study from the research data, with the determination to record a supplementary interview during future thesis development to complete the artist's profile.



Figure 4.28 Interviewing Lia Lapithi on her boat in Larnaca, 8 March 2014.

### **Nikos Kouroussis**

Information about the earliest video artwork of Kouroussis is misleading. The works were considered as video documentations of performances, and not as pure video artwork. This opinion was stated both by the State Gallery staff and by NeMe founder, Yiannis Colakides. Since I was not certain about the nature of the artist's work, I was reluctant to contact him for an interview. The preceding session with Lapithi was a critical incident that helped me to advance my research by including Kouroussis in the sample, at her suggestion. They have collaborated for years and she knew the context of particular videos.

I met Kouroussis at his home, where he also maintains a studio (Figure 4.29). He seemed content to talk about his first video art experiments that are not well known to the public, even though his 1986 video artwork was purchased by the State Gallery. He commenced his experimentations in New York city in 1982 during his work with students at the Pratt Institute. A student performance, based on one of his three-dimensional works, was indeed a starting point that generated his need to use the medium of video to create his first experimental artwork. This video, *Labyrinth* (Kouroussis 1982), is unfortunately missing from the artist's archives: only photographs exist.

His second video artwork was once more produced at the Pratt Institute in 1986, based on the same idea of video recording a students' performance, but computer manipulation was incorporated at this work and experimentation was carried out with all the possibilities of their integration. Four different videos were produced, entitled *Metamorphosis I, II, III and IV* (Kouroussis 1986). This is the video art series that is regarded as ambiguous by some



local professionals, and is considered a performance instead of video artwork. I personally suspect a misinterpretation about this specific work, because of the narrowness of the term 'video art' that some people use.



Figure 4.29 Interviewing Nikos Kouroussis at his home and studio in Nicosia, 15 March 2014.

### ***Evanthia Tselika***

Tselika is the youngest artist who took part in my research. She was the second to request that the interview took place at an alternative space. She suggested recording it at the Fine Arts studio of the University of Nicosia, where she teaches. I accepted her request since I had decided in a previous case study to accommodate such a desire. The interview took place at the university studio with her works projected on the wall behind her (Figure 4.30). Tselika contributed to the research with her involvement with socially engaged art. This was a new form of art not introduced by other artists, even though Helene Black's work *No Place Like Home* has strong connections with this art form. Socially engaged art is a collaborative kind of art that involves the public's participation in art projects that deal with social issues. Her input was regarded as imperative since connections to educational relevancies could be directly constructed.

One of Tselika's video works that were discussed and submitted for the project exist only in low resolution; Tselika mentioned that she had misplaced the high quality version, and even on her website shows the low quality one.

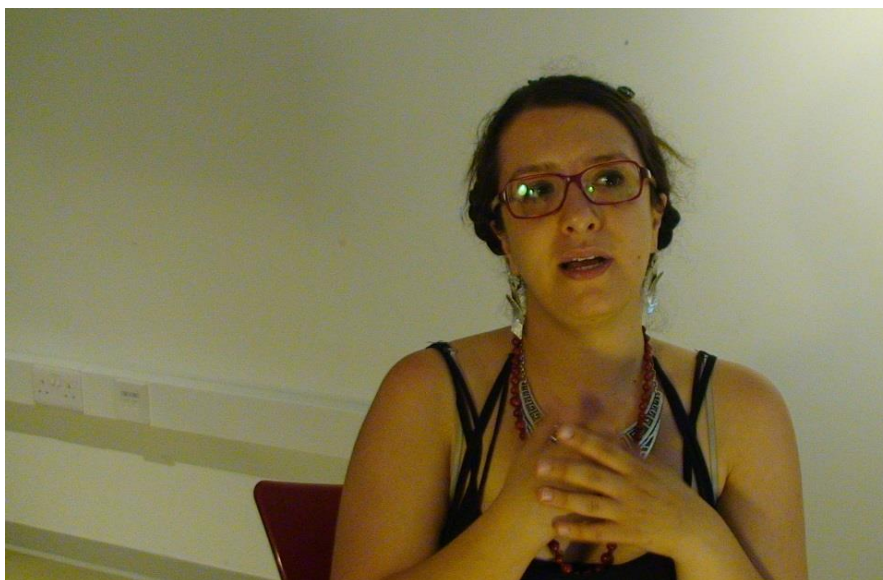


Figure 4.30 Interviewing Evanthia Tselika at the Fine Arts studios, University of Nicosia, 19 May 2014.

### 4.3 The design of educational resources (Phase 3)

The third and final phase of the research activity dealt with the analysis of the collected data and the design of educational resources. Specifically, Phase 3 was composed of six stages:

- (a) preliminary analysis of data accumulated from personal and 9 artists' video interviews, and development of edited versions of the interviews combined with the artists' works, named the *Artist Profiles*
- (b) thematic analysis of the Artist Profiles
- (c) semiotic analysis of the Artist Profiles
- (d) design of sample educational resources for one selected artist
- (e) presentation of the sample resources to two focus groups
- (f) analysis of the focus group findings and design of the final educational resources (evidence of achievement).

#### ***a) Preliminary analysis of data and development of the Artist Profiles***

Analysis of the collected data began a few days after the conclusion of the first interview. The goal was to prevent data accumulating and to deal with them immediately, a goal that was partially achieved since after analysis of a few cases it was time to proceed to the next stage of designing sample educational resources in order to present them to focus groups. During the period June to October 2014, both activities took place simultaneously

and it was quite difficult not to let the data build up. The remaining case studies were analysed during the writing stage of the project, from November 2014 to April 2015.

The initial analysis was executed through video editing, a process that took a great amount of time. Since I realised that I could not spend so much time on all ten interviews, I requested help from two video professionals at this stage. The work associated with data analysis was executed by me; my assistants followed my instructions.

Preliminary data analysis of the video interviews followed the rationale of the project and the research questions. It searched for artists' authentic words referring to connections of their video art making to real-life experiences, including my own case, and additionally looked for those concepts and practices that would possibly have educational potential and connection to the Visual Arts Curriculum.

The video editing process followed the steps below:

- multiple previewing of the video-recorded interviews
- data reduction through selection of appropriate video and audio segments, according to the project rationale, marked in the form of time codes
- selection of artists' video artworks to be used as backgrounds to the interview; these artworks did not necessarily have to display educational potentials
- selection of artists' video artworks to be used in educational contexts, according to the project rationale
- communication with the two video editors regarding the details of each video interview and the delivery of time codes
- video editing and delivery of first edits by the video editors
- previewing of the first video edit by myself, and reworking for improvements in the form of time codes, always bearing in mind the rationale of the project
- communication with the two video editors for the delivery of the reworked time codes
- video editing and delivery of second edits by the video editors
- previewing of the second video edit, and reworking for improvements in the form of time codes
- communication with the two editors for the delivery of the reworked time codes
- video editing and delivery of third edit by the video editors.

If it was necessary, the procedure would continue for each individual case study until the anticipated video artist's profile was constructed. Translation of the edited video into English would then follow. I would provide the translated text to the video editors showing appropriate time codes, so they could add the subtitles. Additional previewing was necessary so as to finalize the subtitling procedure.

Data reduction of the narrative elements of the video interviews involved the preview and selection of appropriate segments as a semi-detached observer. A distance from the collected data was crucial at this point of the research so as to evaluate them, make judgements and extract their essence. Hermeneutics, as described in Chapter 3, was used in a contemporary structure during data reduction and connecting with artists' works. Knowledge construction was achieved through repeated dialogue with the data, aiming to increase understanding. The process strived to present artists' stories, serving as authentic cases of real-life practice within their context.

Through the data reduction process, the selection of video segments explored the relevance of the artists' words to the research questions and aimed to indicate the richness and uniqueness of each case. The process omitted repetitions of issues, general comments that did not refer to a research question, analysis of issues that seemed difficult or irrelevant to the research's audience, and elements that seemed out of sequence. At the same time the process attempted a fair depiction of each artist's voice.

Data reduction led to a new data organisation that resulted in production of the edited videos in a widely accessible form. The edited videos aimed to convey the 'live' qualities of the narratives (Gillham 2010, p.92). Sometimes they followed a linear presentation of the sequential structure of the recorded footage, especially where artworks were described in the specific chronological order in which they were created. A non-linear presentation of the narratives was more common, where the sequence of events or ideas did not seem important to convey, and their non-linear arrangement added to the aesthetic value of the final result. The editing process also considered the multimodal nature of artists' video interviews that combine dialogue and image, and the artists' moving images – the video artwork. The blend of these methods, combined with the frequent revisiting of data through the application of hermeneutics, led to numerous rearrangements of the video sequences.

The editing procedure utilised various technical procedures to depict artists' ideas and working processes, and additionally to reveal possible hidden elements that would not be revealed without the researcher's impact. Such procedures included the overlapping of video scenes and audio descriptions, slow motion and freeze-frame techniques, and the conversion of colour footage into black and white. Respect for the artists and the data were important matters throughout the process. Imperative data were not omitted but, on the contrary, were highlighted through the aforementioned techniques.

The time duration of the 10 Artist Profiles varied between 12 and 16 minutes, with the exception of one profile with a duration of 19 minutes. The duration of each profile depended on the richness and importance of the content of the original interview regarding the research questions, as reviewed by the researcher.

The Artist Profiles portray an aesthetic result and are regarded as new works of art. Considering the a/r/tography framework that was implemented throughout the research, the developed Artist Profiles are simultaneously regarded as educational products and were further analysed to connected with textual resources addressed to visual arts educators.

This stage of Phase 3 of the research included the first instance of data triangulation. An electronic or a face-to-face communication with each participating artist aimed to deliver the edited video profile for examination, suggestions or validation of the presented data. If suggestions were made, they would have been considered at the final video editing, but there were none apart from some corrections to works' titles; the artists' comments were more than positive about the edited result of their interview. Some commented on the successful marriage of sound, dialogue and image, while others expressed their satisfaction at the genuine and aesthetic presentation of their selves, their creative processes and their art. The edited videos acted as a basis for further interpretation, which led to the next stage of this phase, the thematic analysis of the Artist Profiles.

#### ***(b) Thematic analysis of the Artist Profiles***

Besides serving the purpose of subtitling, the translations of the video text were used as transcripts. The translated text was entered into the table in Appendix 10, according to the categories derived from the interview questions. These formed the main categories for analysis:

- i. Development of interest in video art / first video artwork
- ii. Video art practice as research
- iii. Connections with real-life experiences
- iv. Relevancies with educational contexts.

In some artists' cases additional transcribed interview text was entered into this table that was not included in the edited videos; this mainly considered artists' opinions about educational relevancies that were deliberately omitted from the videos, since this information was meant to be used as contextual data to support the educational part of the project.

The interview's transcription was associated with codes in the form of notes in full short phrases made either in the margin of the transcript column or below the transcript. A priori codes identified through the preliminary research phases, as well as empirical codes that emerged from data, formed the set of codes applied to the transcript.

Study of the commonalities of codes' placement in the above four categories led to the formation of sub-categories that referred to some shared video art research practices among the interviewed artists, as well as similar influences in their art. As the application of coding 'draws attention to a commonality within a dataset' (Gibson and Brown 2009, p.130, cited in Harding 2013), this was evident in a number of codes. The identified sub-categories are listed below:

i) Development of interest in video art / first video artwork

- as part of formal education
- as part of creative practice after formal education

ii) Video art practice as research

- technology usage / knowing technology not a necessity
- video elements from reality / created in the studio
- influences from narratives / music / objects / animation / photography / text
- creative strategies: observation / interactivity / the study of space / interviewing / music / sound / silence

iii) Connections with real-life experiences

- connections with reality and life
- experiences as metaphors of ideas or situations
- connections with the past

iv) Relevancies with educational contexts

- importance of direct experiences in education
- shows own video works to students
- invites students to incorporate own work in their art
- video's relevance to children

Additionally the application of coding resulted in identifying differences between artists' practices that demonstrated a uniqueness in each artist or each artwork presented. It was clear from the analysis that no codes appear when trying to analyse exclusive processes used when artists are working on specific works; descriptions of the creation of each artwork, from the conception of the initial idea to the presentation of the final result, encapsulate various concepts and procedures that are unique. This led to an examination of relationships between artists' cases and their video art practices, as presented in Chapter 5.

***(c) Semiotic analysis of the Artist Profiles***

As discussed in Chapter 3, video art is considered to encompass a combination of multimodal texts, and as such, the codes that can be recognised are found in many other art forms, making a semiotic analysis of video art difficult to accomplish and representing an incomplete method for this task. Therefore, selected elements were included as codes in a table – a tool – mainly from the area of film studies, with a focus on identifying important aspects of video art. These codes are presented in Appendix 11, where they are combined with artists' own words concerning their artwork. The table was regarded as a tool because its aim was to help in associating the artists' video artwork with the context of visual arts education through the construction of educational suggestions. This tool was a basis for further interpretation leading to the next stage of this research phase, the development of sample educational resources.

#### ***(d) Design of sample educational resources***

This stage aimed to prepare an example of a resource to be presented to the focus group, when peers and policy makers would be invited to express their opinion and offer feedback. This design stage encompassed all available research data up to a specific point, so as a sample of educational materials would be constructed for a single artist from the research sample. The existing research data that were used included the new videos that presented the Artist Profiles, the actual video artwork of each artist, the thematic analysis of the Artist Profiles, and the semiotic analysis of their video artwork. The profile of an artist was selected to be used for the construction of the sample materials because the video editing work was finalised at a specific time, and the other Artist Profiles were still in progress.

During the design of the educational sample, new research questions arose on related issues:

1. Are all video artworks suitable for each educational Key Stage (1–4, students' age 5–15)?
2. To which issues of the visual arts curriculum can the video artwork be connected?
3. In what ways could artists' processes be connected to students' creative and reflective processes?

During the writing, decisions had to be taken concerning the above questions: 1) to determine for which Key Stage each video artwork was appropriate; 2) to relate the video artwork to the suggested issues in the content of the Visual Arts Curriculum (2010, 2011); and 3) to design relevant activities to address the artists' processes and concepts through the pedagogical framework of the Curriculum. Besides these issues, the Guide's structure had to be developed, as well as various introductory texts to guide educators' approach to the resources. For this reasons, various educational materials from the international scene were studied, such as from Art21 (2007), Tate Gallery (Tate St Ives 2014; Tate Modern 2004, 2011), Guggenheim Education (2013) and MOVE Primary: Art in Motion online resources (2011). However, the ultimate direction was provided by the rationale of the Visual Arts Curriculum (2010, 2011) and the Visual Arts Curriculum Educator's Guide (2012), two essential documents that have shaped Cyprus' visual arts education since



their introduction in 2010, and that translate theory into the practice that takes place in local visual arts classrooms.

The structure of the Educational Guide, as well as the introductory texts, was developed gradually and in conjunction with the development of the main section of the Guide, the artist's sample pages. Both sections were revisited numerous times for adjustments, additions and removals. Graphic design decisions had to be taken regarding the layout of the Guide. The whole design process was executed by me; to some extent simultaneously with the writing of the Guide, and at a later stage after the writing process was finalised, by returning to the product and reconsidering it from different points of view.

In order to answer the new questions that emerged from the data analysis, it was considered appropriate to begin from Question 3 and commence the development of the sample's activities. This was expected to lead to answers to the other two questions. The practice of interpretation through hermeneutics was used as a strategy for developing relevant activities for the Guide and addressing the artists' processes and concepts through the pedagogies of the Curriculum. This knowledge emerged through a hermeneutic conversation between the text and the researcher (Koch 1999): among the interview data as presented in the Artist Profiles; between the data offered through the thematic analysis of the Artist Profiles; and the semiotic analysis of the video artwork.

Knowledge also emerged through the researcher's two-fold roles: as an artist and as an art educator/advisor. Experiences from these roles were an integral part of knowledge construction in the development of the educational activities. The returning to the object of inquiry – the Artist Profiles and their video artwork – again and again, each time with an increased understanding, produced a collection of activities regarding the artist's creative works and processes.

The Artist Profiles in digital video form and the artists' video artwork were treated as primary texts for the development of the sample educational resources, not as supportive illustrative material. More precisely, the Artist Profiles and their video artwork are essential resources that should be viewed by educators before continuing to study the written text that complements the artwork and profiles. The written text includes pages with educational activities devoted to the featured artist, as well as introductory texts on video art and suggested approaches for its educational integration in the context of the

Curriculum. This kind of information would be even more constructive if studied after the viewing of the videos.

The proposed educational activities were chosen to be written in the form of questions and statements in the second-person plural. This would allow the text to be regarded in two ways: as direct questions and statements that teachers could ask or discuss with their students; or as questions and statements addressed to teachers themselves as they are asked to be involved in studying the artist. A selection of direct quotations by the artist was used at each artist's pages, taken from their video interview. These were chosen carefully so as to reflect the artist's temperament or creative processes, or an idea central to his or her work.

The activities on each artist's page were divided in two sections, *Explore* and *Create*, which correspond to the two directions of the Curriculum that emphasise acts of viewing and creating. The structure and activities of the Guide were designed according to the rationale of the Curriculum and the two pedagogical approaches it embraces; the Constructivist Approach in Art Education, and the Critical Pedagogy in Art Education (as described in Chapter 2, section 2.3). As a result, the activities:

- use direct experiences, authentic responses and multiple perceptions in viewing the artists' works and in creating students' works
- promote active participation, connection with authentic-real situations and students' concerns in both the *Explore* and *Create* sections
- encourage the in-depth investigation of materials and ideas and the multimodal artistic expression;
- stimulate critical thinking, reflective action and visual research
- employ problem-creating and problem-solving situations, decision-making, self-acting and collaboration.

At this stage of the research, the educational material was considered to have a sample form. It included most of the introductory texts (Figure 4.31) as well as the presentation of one artist through proposed activities (Figure 4.32). It was written in Greek as it was scheduled to be presented and discussed at two focus group meetings with local art educators. The text files of the sample material may be viewed in Appendix 12 (in Greek).



Figure 4.31 Photograph of the printed version of sample educational material in Greek– the introductory pages.

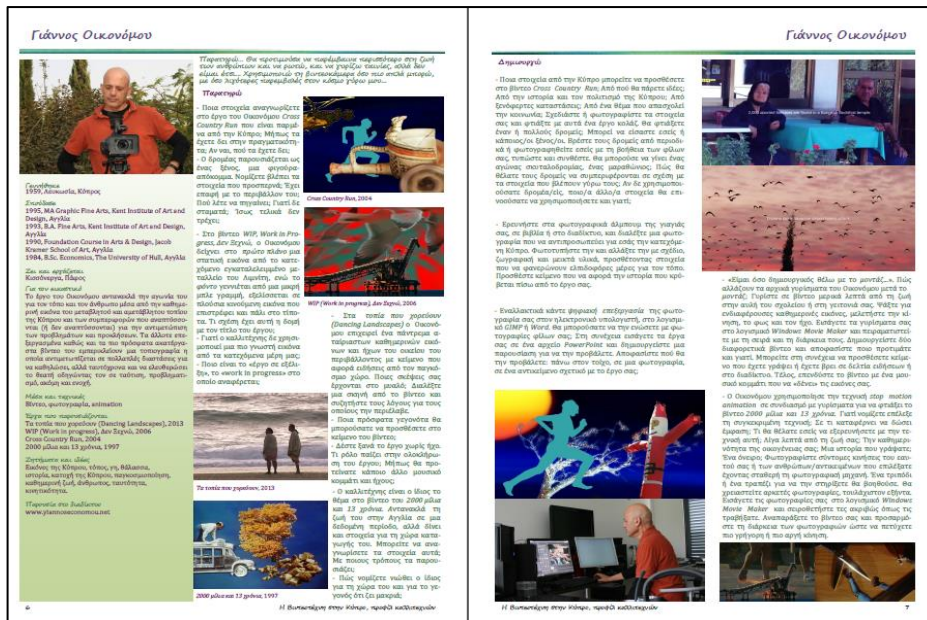


Figure 4.32 Photograph of the printed version of sample educational material in Greek– one artist's pages.

The development of the related educational activities does not regard the students' viewing of the Artist Profiles as a requirement. On the contrary, the profiles were created as a resource that can offer educators valuable and rich understandings of the creative work of local video artists, and it will be their choice to use the profiles in their teaching practice concerning the variables that influence their choices, such as the aims and objectives of their art unit, students' age and level of comprehension, and their existing

knowledge, experiences and interests. The viewing of the artists' video works, by contrast, is considered imperative in this suggested approach.

After consideration it was decided not to answer the emerging Questions 1 and 2 at this stage. It was determined to deal with them after analysing the data that would be gathered during the focus groups, when educators and policy makers would be invited to react freely to the materials concerning Question 1 – the appropriateness of each video artwork regarding educational key stages, and Question 2 – the connection of each video artwork with suggested issues of the Curriculum. This tactic also aimed to receive the participants' ideas on exploiting such classifications for the final version of the educational materials.

This stage included a second incident of data triangulation, as a follow-up of the first incident mentioned. It included communication with the presented artist Yiannos Economou, and delivery of the textual material to him for examination and validation.

***(e) Presentation of the sample resources to two focus groups***

The two focus groups were scheduled to take place in the middle of November 2014, with a week between them. A room at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute was reserved for the two meetings, which were planned to take place in the afternoon and to last two hours each. The selection of the participants focused on gathering experienced art professionals from all three levels of education (pre-primary, primary and secondary) from various backgrounds: expert teachers with graduate university qualifications in visual arts education and/or in visual arts; teachers with basic education qualifications but with great visual arts teaching experience; artists-teachers who maintain an active art practice; and art education inspectors and advisors from the Ministry of Education. The educators were invited two weeks in advance, so I could find replacements if a one responded negatively to the invitation.

The first focus group consisted of nine educators (three of them also visual arts advisors) at schools in the districts of Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos, and two inspectors of visual arts education who work in Nicosia and Limassol, respectively, and are responsible for all primary schools in the country. This second group comprised ten educators (one also a visual arts advisor) at schools in the districts of Nicosia, Limassol and Larnaca, and one inspector of visual arts education in Nicosia and responsible for all secondary schools of the country.

Participants were informed in advance about their tasks, which involved previewing and discussing sample educational materials I presented. They were asked to give their permission for the audio recording of the discussion. The meetings were structured so as not to reveal much information about the educational materials during the introductory sections. Yiannos Economou's video profile (DVD 1) was presented at the beginning, and participants were asked for their initial reactions concerning the video and its possible use in educational settings. The next step included their studying the sample text (Appendix 12); they were asked to comment on the introductory text as well as that on the artist's works and profile. They also previewed one artist's video artwork.

As discussion unfolded, more information was presented to the participants about the research content, often in answer to their own questions. Topics presented included sampling, pedagogical approaches used for the design of the activities and educational proposals for structuring a visual arts unit that includes or evolves around an artist's profile. Participants were given time to engage in discussion and brainstorming, and to reflect on the resources. They were also asked to offer ideas on using Economou's profile in the classroom and to consider the profile in terms of its level of difficulty and duration for students of different ages. Through discussion, new ideas were generated on the emerging Research Questions 1 and 2 – deliberately unanswered up to this point in order to be validated through focus groups. The comments and ideas derived from both groups were transcribed and gathered into a table, as presented in Appendix 13. The analysis is discussed in Chapter 5. This was particularly useful to accommodate final revisions during decision making on the educational materials, which was the next research phase.

The meetings with the visual arts professionals remained critical incidents in the research, as my creative work on the Artist Profiles were now presented for the first time in public. It was evident in the peer discussions that these served as a basis for further interpretation so key elements could broadly be categorised according to the emerging research questions and the needs of the educational part of the project. These categories are elaborated in Chapter 5.

***(f) Analysis of the focus group findings and design of the final educational resources (evidence of achievement)***

At this final stage of Phase 3 the qualitative data from the focus group meetings were interpreted on the basis of the aims of the research and used to develop the final

educational resources. The resources supplemented the Artist Profiles in text format as an Educational Guide. To achieve the final product, further analysis of data was necessary regarding emerging Questions 1 and 2, which resulted in designing a new table (Appendix 14), based on Appendix 7, which provided: i) the artists' names and details of the corresponding video artwork for use in educational contexts; ii) the connection of the works to the appropriate Key Stage (students' age); iii) the connection of the works to issues and ideas relevant to the context of the Curriculum; and iv) connections to other video artists presented in this research. Appendix 14 is also presented in the Educational Guide. Details of the data interpretation and the categories formed that resulted in the table in Appendix 14 are given in the following chapter, where the conclusions are presented.

## Chapter 5 Analysis and Findings

### 5.1 Chapter summary

In this chapter the findings from my three-phase research project are described, with relevance to the Evidence of Achievement that was produced as a creative piece of work during the research activity (presented after Chapter 7 and on accompanying DVDs). The findings are an enhancement of the uniqueness of each case study with regard to the research questions, as well as to the categorisation of key elements from the case studies and their connection to educational applications. The outcomes were generated from the study of personal art practice, of other artists' practice and from the process of designing the educational resources, which involved their presentation to focus groups, and their restructuring and completion. The findings are presented under the subheadings *Real-life experiences*, *Educational needs*, *Formed categories* and *Educational resources*.

### 5.2 Real-life experiences

Contemporary Cypriot video artists extend their practice in relation to real-life experiences with individuality. The findings from the artists' interviews reveal individual and multidimensional approaches to the idea of connecting experiences with the process of creating video art, and visual arts in general. Experiences of real life are considered a fundamental element that shapes, transforms and defines their thinking and art-making. Either past or current, experiences are regarded as influential forces that enhance the artists' creative processes and result in video artwork that may depict stories, denote meanings – personal, social, cultural, or political – communicate ideas, establish connections, criticise and concurrently invite viewers to connect to the video artwork at a personal level. It is to make associations with their own experiences and their own interpretations.

Throughout the interviews, some artists depicted experiences as direct and transformative, others describe them as indirect and possibly concealed, and others as diverse, multisensory, strong and intense, intended to be presented in an evident way, or hidden beneath ideas, art materials and techniques. Whatever is the case, experiences play a crucial role in idea generation, creative problem-finding and problem-solving. This was not an unforeseen outcome for this research, since real-life experiences are always considered fundamental to the life of artists, as widely referenced in literature and

analysed in Chapter 2. The unanticipated result from this research is a uniqueness hidden in each video artist's case study, as well as a richness in meaning-making associations and knowledge construction from their experiences. As critical events in one's life are often experienced as learning encounters, for artists these experiential events are the foundation of art creation. Between the learning encounters and the completed artwork, many processes take place that may involve observation, remembrance, visualisation, generation and handling of emotions, collection, analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving and reflection. These details of how artists handle their personal creative course, which is connected to real-life experiences, are described in the following analysis of the findings, which includes connections to the educational phase of this DProf project.

### ***Phase 1: My own art practice as research***

The analysis of my Reflective Diary data in Appendix 7 accumulated the highlights of my visual research activity, and combined and contrasted them with secondary data collected throughout the project. The results were recorded in the column *Analysis of significant outcomes* in the table in Appendix 8. A study of this column, as well as the totality of the table's content, verifies that all research action took place in the context of the researcher's three interconnected roles of artist/researcher/teacher.

Because this multifaceted approach was implemented, the research resulted in findings that might be of interest to the disciplines of both visual arts and education, and simultaneously illuminated their interconnection. For example, consider the diary outcomes from the column *Analysis of significant outcomes* such as the following:

(1) 'The low-cost and low-tech video productions are the usual practice of many video artists as well as the video practice utilised in educational settings. This is an important idea to consider during the design of the educational activities for my project. The idea is often more important than technology.'

This was regarded as an important finding to consider when designing the Educational Guide of this project, since it describes a common artists' practice that can be easily comprehended by the majority of people, and possibly everyday practice for many children and adults. It has great educational potential in actual school settings since it is difficult to find expensive high-tech technology for use in classrooms.



Additional diary outcomes focus on the decisions I took as a visual artist regarding planning, influences and thoughts on my art in progress:

(2) 'Critical decision about working with experimental videos that merge traditional and digital media explore aesthetic processes and depict social situations. I may not utilise hand-drawn animation after all because I need more time to experiment with it, but I am definitely affected by the scenery set-up of a traditional 3D animation and the technique of stop motion animation.'

(3) 'The handling of the musical piece in my video *Swipe Here to Paint* creates an obscure narrative that disturbs the 'happiness' of the whole sequence that is preliminary achieved. This situated reality that moves away from the ordinary and the superficial invites the viewer to search for the hidden meaning.'

(4) 'The visit I had to the occupied areas of Cyprus was an emotional experience that generated feelings of depression and anger, as well as ideas for a new video artwork. I avoided my involvement in this problematic issue for many years, but now that I am into it, I have to connect it with the wider context, see it from a distance... relate...'

Such diary entries expose the thinking behind personal artistic action, and reveal processes that are connected to: i) context; ii) media; materials and techniques; and iii) other art forms related to video-making. These codes were identified, among others, in my interview as well as in the participating artists' interviews, where commonalities were acknowledged. The importance of the identification of these codes, described in the remainder of this chapter, lies in their association with visual arts education practice; this was approached through the design of the Educational Guide. Employing private observations and thoughts extracted from my diary for the design of the suggested activities was a procedure I could engage with in a personal reflective way as my 'own' material and as the creation of a new piece of art, this time with a text format. The whole process essentially validated the importance of real-life experiences in my art-making, and simultaneously corroborated commonalities with other artists' practice. Corresponding activities from the Educational Guide that were designed according to the ideas derived from the above personal diary extracts, as well as other artists' practice, are as follows:

Diary extract (2):

'View *Once a Dress* and try to distinguish: i) images from reality; ii) constructed images that were created in the artists' studio; iii) imaginary images; and iv) images appropriated from other cultures and times' (Educational Guide, Kentonis and Papacharalambous, p.15).

'Collaborate with a group of friends and remake the video *An Egg*. Write down in your visual diary a list of the characters you will need, and decide which will be sculptural pieces and which will be paper collages or paintings. What new characters can you add? Will you be in the work as well? Create your sculptures and collages or paintings from reusable materials, and make decisions on the backgrounds as well' (Educational Guide, Kentonis and Papacharalambous, p.18).

'Photograph your art by taking consecutive digital photographs of your pieces and by moving them little by little in each photograph. It is better to place your camera on a table, a stool or a tripod, so it will not move. You will need many photographs to complete your video, so plan ahead to take photographs for at least three sessions. Import your photographs in a video editing software and place them on the timeline in the same sequence as you took them. Adjust the duration of the photographs to fractions of a second in order to show fast motion, and to 2–3 seconds if you want to show a slower and smoother motion. Playback the video and readjust the duration if necessary. Add new photographs if you wish, or experiment by showing empty backgrounds at some points. Audio record sounds that you wish to incorporate: nature or mechanical sounds, your friends' voices, your own voice, music that you can find from royalty-free Internet sites. Give your video a title. How did you change the story from the original?' (Educational Guide, Kentonis and Papacharalambous, p.18).

'In the work *Tin Box*, Sofokleous is experimenting with many elements such as old family movies, the shapes and colours of her mother's tin box, jazz music, popular children's Greek songs, her favourite doll, movement. How does she combine all these? View the video carefully and write down some notes or make sketches to help you distinguish the various elements. Present them on a bulletin board and compare with your classmates' notes' (Educational Guide, Sofokleous, p.39).

'Try to animate a favourite character that you will choose from your storyboard: draw your character on a piece of tracing paper this time, and alter its initial appearance as you like. Place a new piece of tracing paper on top of your first one, and draw your character again by using the first drawing as a reference and by changing its pose a little. Continue with a third and fourth drawing, or more if you want, always showing some change in the pose. Photograph your drawings and import them in a presentation software; place one drawing in each slide, trying to align the drawings with precision. Adjust the duration of the slide transition so as when you play the slides continually they are showing a movement. Create more slides by inserting appropriate text, either hand-written or digitally written through the presentation software' (Educational Guide, Sofokleous, p.42).

'Enrich your image collection with image transfers: photocopy your newly created images; add water with a brush on the photocopied image; reverse it while wet on a clean watercolour paper; rub the back of the wet image with a spoon; lift a corner of the wet image to check if it has been transferred on the watercolour paper; continue rubbing with the spoon if needed. How are the transferred images different from the photocopied ones? How many different versions can you transfer from the same image?'

'Utilise the Internet and various social media which are based on imagery, such as Pinterest and Instagram. Collect images that have the potential to further develop your image collection. Save them and print them out on paper, either in colour or in black and white' (Educational Guide, Avgousti, p.46).

Diary extract (3):

'Take this work further or create a new one and focus on its soundtrack. According to the issue you are exploring, what could you incorporate in regards to sound, music, or narration? How would you incorporate it? In her videos Avgousti frequently interrupts the music or the recorded narration from broadcast news, as a way to show that something is not going by plan, something is discontinued, or has obstacles and cannot be completed. How would you treat your soundtrack in your video or in an installation art piece?' (Educational Guide, Avgousti, p.46).

Diary extract (4):

'In the video *Sinikismoj*, Tselika aims to present social issues that are not usually considered or discussed. Can you spot these issues throughout the video? How did everyday reality in the refugees' settlements change since they were built? Who is presenting this reality? The artist? The people that live there? Both?' (Educational Guide, Tselika, p.23).

'The idea for the video *No Place Like Home* started from the pollution at the Limassol salt lake that disturbed Helene Black, but it was developed to a work that deals with many other issues, as well as a wider attitude of the citizens of Cyprus. Can you name these issues? Do you recognise this attitude? Do you agree that it is indeed a wider attitude of Cypriots towards social problems and everyday situations?'

'How do you react towards social problems? Do you deal with them or do you ignore them? Think about an everyday problem that disturbs you or the people around you (e.g. environmental, financial, and political). Can you create a piece of art with the purpose to raise awareness towards the problem? Can you involve other people in your art as well? How would their involvement make the artwork stronger?' (Educational Guide, Black and Colakides, p.27).

Throughout the personal diary and interview analysis, as well as the analysis of the other artists' interviews, common practices were identified in video art-making such as influences from animation techniques, photography and text, and the application of strategies like interviewing, and employing music and sound as well as silence. Connections with reality and life are of importance in my work as well as in all of interviewed artists' work; communicating experiences as metaphors of phenomena is also a choice. Regarding the educational relevancy of my work, it is my belief that direct experiences in education are the key to successful learning. Finally, I regard my video-making as a practice that expresses my ideas and serves my purposes, and as an independent art form that encourages collaboration with other artists. The issues and ideas derived from my video work deal with: i) the history of Cyprus, common also in the works of Yiannos Economou, Klitsa Antoniou and Evanthia Tselika; ii) economic crisis and consumerism; and iii) opportunism. These findings are discussed in the following part of this chapter and in conjunction with the findings regarding the participated artists.

## ***Phase 2: Video artists' practice***

The collection of video interviews analysed to extract the findings that follow included my own case study as an artist, which is discussed in a similar way to the others. The discussion is based on the table in Appendix 10 of the collection of transcriptions and their coding, against the interviews' semi-structured questions, as well as comments from the participant observation.

Half of the interviewees in this research developed their interest in making video during their formal education in higher institutions, while the other half participants identified their practice as part of their creative experimentation after the completion of their formal education. This demonstrates partially the marginalisation of the art form by many university level programmes; it also endorses the artists' willingness to experiment continually, to learn and to grow through their practice, and simultaneously identifies the explorative and research characteristics of artistic practice.

Most artists identified that knowing how to use technology helps them create independently regarding their video-making, but some also admitted that not knowing technology is no obstacle to their video art practice, since they can either seek help from others or can put into practice very basic skills and develop their ideas. Katia Savvidou's case is quite distinctive; she uses raw footage in her videos because she has no video editing skills, but this ignorance on her part contributes to an authentic character in her work that obviously relates to her real-life experiences.

Video elements employed from reality, such as video recording environmental and physical action, seemed to be an interest of most artists, even though some practice a second strategy as well, in creating their own video elements in the studio. These elements may refer to anything from animated drawings and collages to handmade objects. Economou's statement is vivid while he compares these two practices in the context of his own video art making by stating 'my strongest works are those that utilize elements from reality and not elements that I create in my studio'. Sofokleous is another example of an artist who experiments in a number of ways to create her videos, as she refers to past work executed with hand-drawn animation, and combinations of old super 8 movies and newly-designed motion graphics, but also mentions her plans to create a cut-out animation.

Regarding their influences, the artists noted a number of them in their interviews, such as objects, the technique of animation, photography, music, narratives and text. Influences from text seem to dominate most artists' practices, also pieces from literature, quotes from stories, text from world and local news, and facts and figures that are either visually appearing in their video art or that form the basis for its creation. Photography comes second, with strong connections evident in the video works of Economou and Savvidou, Black and Colakides, and Avgousti, who use elements of static photography with moving images. Influences from animation techniques are identified in the video works of a few artists, with the dominant technique that of stop-motion animation. A small number of artists indicate objects that are connected with their childhood as being central to their video-making and in evolving ideas and metaphors around them. These are Sofokleous' mother's tin box where she kept her sewing materials, and her childhood doll that was a gift from her godmother; and Antoniou's dress that she was wore during the war in Cyprus and kept for the right moment to incorporate into her art.

Only one artist mentioned music and narratives as sources of influence on his art; Economou admits that both elements define the way he approaches art. This is something that may not be accepted in the general approach to video art, yet it is his own perspective on video-making.

Music and sound creation are dominant creative strategies for most artists, and silence seems to be important for fewer. More than half of this study's artists use musical pieces that may be specifically written for their work, found by them and used with permission, or performed especially for the work. Sofokleous mentioned that she is dependent on music specially written for her work and unable to move on until it is delivered to her, and she stated that after she finalises her video piece where she coordinates her motion graphic design with musical patterns, her next work will probably be with no sound. Sound seems to be created exclusively by the majority of the cases in various ways, ranging from selecting interview parts to recording television news broadcasts, to collaging collections from motion picture sounds to recording family members. Silent video artwork appears in a few responses, but the selection of silence seems vital to these artists as they use it to focus on their image and communicate it in a powerful way.

Interviewing seems to be a strategy for some artists to generate the sound part for their work, like in Savvidou's and Avgousti's *I am Alone, Nobody is here* (2014), where some

patterns from an elderly lady's interview are presented in non-linear form, as well as Tselika's *Sinikismoi* (2010), where she presents an acoustic collage of parts from many interviews relating to her theme.

A minority of artists extend their video practice to the audience and consider interactivity as an important element in creating their video art. They employ strategies such as inviting to people to physically participate in the work, or presenting performances and recordings of their reactions. In Antoniou's work viewers are invited to investigate and discover hidden meanings, and to complete the work with their own performance, sometimes by walking through the video installation work, or around it. In Black and Colakides' *No Place like Home* (2007), everyday people were asked to come to the artists' studio and state their opinions or thoughts on any problem with which they were occupied. Other forms of interactivity that connect artists to their audience occur during an exhibition of video works, as in Savvidou's testimony:

the people that saw them wanted to make them theirs, the photographs, and this was unbelievable for me, or they wanted the tea sets which reminded them of their grandmother or they wanted the photograph with the table that had a cassette player on it because it was the same one they used to have in the village; it was amazing, I love it when this happens. (DVD 5, Artist Profile)

Directly connected with interactivity is the study of space; the viewer is often invited to explore the space provided by the artist, or engage with a work that considers space as a main element of the artwork. A few artists indicated the study of space as important in their video-related art, such as video installation or video dance performance. Isolated responses also indicated observation as a central strategy in art-making, applied as a way to connect and interact with reality, study it and collect video footage for further development and editing.

All participating artists described unique processes of art practice in relevance to the making of their artwork, as well as distinctive choices in their materials. These processes were identified as varying in each artwork, occasionally with minor commonalities recognised between an artist's own works, if anyone would wish to conduct such a comparison, but yet, because of the different final product, these commonalities could not be easily documented. The importance of examining the artists' visual artistic processes lies in their connection with materials, resources, techniques and ideas, and the linking of these to real-life experiences. For instance, Sofokleous' affection for animation since

childhood led her to study animation, and later to create video artwork based on various animation techniques. The content of her work is also derived from her childhood memories, as it is based on her favourite books, objects and children's songs. Antoniou's traumatic war memories as a child and the dress she saved have since to constructing the idea of taking the dress to fortune-tellers to identify its owner's past and future. This idea established the video-making technique of recording the event and using the footage to produce the edited final product.

Other solid examples are Kentonis and Papacharalambous' video recording of their own children's actions and voices in some of their video work, and the metaphorical connections they attach to the result. Economou's observations and video recordings of his impressions of landscapes in his surroundings motivate poetic combinations of image, sound, music and message that eventually consider the local and the global through his editing work, though in other instances photography has a vital role as it is manipulated and combined with animation elements. Avgousti's influences from childhood habits of cutting out and dressing up paper dolls, as well as from adult experiments with stop-motion animation, generated the idea of creating artificial sets for a video work, In addition she investigates the possibilities of combining audio segments from an interview she and her collaborator conducted, with asynchronous imagery of the interviewee.

Responding to the question that required them to reflect and position the role of real-life experiences in their working practice, the artists verified that the above findings were solely derived from their descriptions of making specific video artworks. Answers were classified into three categories: the first regards *artists' connections with reality and life*, where main ideas, examined issues, constructed interpretations as well as raw images and video footage are derived solely from the real world; the second involves regarding *experiences as metaphors of ideas or situations*; and the third considers the artists' *connections with the past*, where childhood and experiences connected with it play a dominant role. The majority of artists identified the role of real-life experiences in their work, as in the first category, some in the second and a few in the third.



i) Artists' connections with reality and life

Nikos Kouroussis' experiences are connected to creative experiments regarding ideas, concepts, materials and people. Childhood connections with natural environments and contrasted images and sounds are connected with grown-up habits through his video work. At other times, he uses his relations with people to investigate the possibilities of video as a medium and simultaneously experiments with how video can depict these relationships:

'And the relations with the water, sound, movement, and colour which I recorded in an area of Cyprus which has a unique relationship with me, because I used to camp, fish, swim there... the Governor's area is an area that I experienced vividly. And I liked the contrasts there, and so I recorded that area as a point of reference.'  
(DVD 9, Artist Profile)

Achilleas Kentonis and Maria Papacharalambous talked about visualising their experiences between real and imaginary worlds that are somehow part of their life. Their own artwork often offers ideas that are transformed to new experiences: their sculptures and paintings are employed in video art to depict new empirical situations. Elements from their family life, such as their children's sounds and images, depict metaphors of issues that trouble them at certain times. For every challenge and problem they have to solve, they search to acquire ideas from their immediate surroundings:

Ach: 'We don't distinguish everyday life from our goals or ideals, basically, something which Maria always says and always has... is that "life equals art, art equals life", meaning essentially that I don't know if our art is our life or if our life is our art, we don't distinguish this, this comes in all aspects of our lives, with all its good and its bad. Consequently our everyday life and personal experiences certainly are flammable materials which we put in our creative process in order for us to produce the flame.'  
(DVD 1, Artist Profile)

For Yiannos Economou, experiences are connected with issues and problems that take into consideration his immediate environment: his village, his country, its people and history, and the world. He constructs images and portrays issues that people can relate to in their own individual way. Economou is interested in his own reality and identity as well as worldwide events, which he presents occasionally realistically and at times using surrealistic elements, sometimes hiding much of the detail and at other times revealing them:

'Video can instantly capture reproductions of reality with excellence – this is the strongest element of video as an art form.'

'An image can be as creative and poetic as you can make it but simultaneously it has a connection to reality, it will never be a creation that comes 100% from the mind of the artist.'

'Video will always have roots to reality and I regard that it's a misfortune not to take advantage of it.' (DVD 10, Artist Profile)

Anna Fotiadou's moving images take into consideration what we are experiencing in real life and time, and how this changes through the viewers' perceptions when transmitted through other channels: theatre; video dance performance; or video. In her collaborative video work with dancers and musicians, the participating artists' experiences are all considered as influential ideas that correlate to the development of concepts and aesthetics:

'According to the subject matter, there are the personal experiences, there are the matters which as a society, as a culture, you have internalised, you have seen, and so on many occasions they change or they are embedded, how they are embedded, this is the procedure that is followed. If you are on your own, you'll clearly follow this on your own.' (DVD 2, Artist Profile)

Konstania Sophokleous' personal experiences are evident in her videos through representations of memories, family events and childhood objects that are reconstructed into non-linear animated symbolic playful stories:

'The video... started with objects, the *Tin Box*, a box which my mother had for years and I loved it and found it, and a doll which my godmother bought me and I had lost, and on the way, a little before I started the making of the video, the animation, I found it and it was very nice that I found it and put it in the video.' (DVD 7, Artist Profile)

Helen Black and Yiannis Colakides use issues, facts and images in their video art that disturb them in their everyday reality: environmental pollution in the area where they live; the life and happenings in their neighbourhood; and verbatim everyday expressions that may evoke diverse things in the reality of each person. Their video images are connected to reality, attempting to establish strong connections and associations with their viewer:

H: 'For me, my real life experiences are the basis of generating my ideas, that's absolutely crucial to my video making and art making generally, and interacting with other human beings, you can't avoid that.' (DVD 4, Artist Profile)

For Katia Savvidou, the actual video recording moment entails her relationship with her brother, as they both nostalgically gaze at old photographs. They are not shown in the video apart from Savvidou's hands, but their connection is present as they video-record their memories that connect their personal story. The authentic moment of video capture is a significant experience full of meanings and personal excitement for both of them:

'There was my family, my brother, my sister-in-law who live in Sweden, and I told him "Panayioti please take my camera, please stand behind me and take photos of me doing this, please!". And it was the first and only take, and it was so simply done, with sounds of my mother washing dishes, the water, the fridge in the kitchen, the TV in the background, the radio, it was truly that moment, but such a valuable moment, I was experiencing exactly what I wanted regarding my sea, that it was an amazing weekend that we experienced and many told me, at the exhibition, and it was moving, "Katia, this was on the beach of Ammochostos?" But it's not the beach of Ammochostos, we were in Dhekelia as a family, and even for three minutes, I relived and I travelled, I relived, I almost smelt the sea the sand we played with, the salty water and everything.' (DVD 5, Artist Profile)

Evanthia Tselika looks at video as a medium that helps her to notice and document social issues, as well as to interact with people so as to study various phenomena and construct environments. Video is a medium to record her own thoughts on experiences, which have a huge role in her work because they transform the way she sees things. Everyday moments generate ideas; it can be something that she often sees, but it may offer her something important and different each time she sees it. The experience of viewing a landscape helps her reach ideas, and she often visits certain landscapes repeatedly so as to achieve this:

'[Video] is the most accessible means, essentially, that we have, up to today to record reality.... For me video gave me the potential to come in contact with people, for them to give their opinion, for me to speak with them, for me to understand their interactivity with the city, and through it, for me to transcend some thoughts, some of my observations in an easier manner, in a more accessible way, in my opinion.' (DVD 3, Artist Profile)

Avgousti shows her disturbance at the economic crisis with a seemingly cheerful artificial video set-up that employs a woman's stereotype to depict a situation and a sudden event,

to which many people can relate. A personal incident seemed crucial in generating the initial idea for the work:

'The idea started when, in March 2013, specifically on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, everyone was shocked in Cyprus regarding the events of the Eurogroup and how they affect our everyday life, all Cypriots, and after a couple of days, after four or five days, the usual letter arrived from the bank with the financial statement of my credit card account, as well as its advertorial material, which stated "double privileges", "money in your hands", a weighing scale that showed the spending power of the Cypriot consumer, and so I rationalized it and it instantly came as a paradox in relation to what had happened four or five days beforehand.'(DVD 8, Artist Profile)

## ii) Experiences as metaphors of ideas or situations

Klitsa Antoniou's experiences are not quite evident in her work. They reside there, they influence the work's concepts and character, and they speak to viewer as they are invited to investigate and discover hidden meanings. Viewers may also be asked to complete her work with their own performance, sometimes by walking through the video installation work, or around it. Antoniou leaves a space for the viewer to have an active part, to communicate with the work and complete it with their own active involvement. The artist indicates:

'My work deals clearly with personal experiences, from the first up until my most recent work. But I keep in mind that my work mustn't solely be autobiographical. It has to be open towards others too and above all it has to be communicative.'

'My aim is not to represent everyday life and experiences, because I consider that representation often doesn't really express what you want to say, I believe that we have to look deeper into events, situations, our feelings, and find metaphorical means to refer to our experiences without them necessarily having to be represented.' (DVD 6, Artist Profile)

Kentonis and Papacharalambous handle their everyday experiences with their children as ideas for depiction in *Fragility* (2007), playing with a balloon as a metaphor for the meaning of relationships, and 'how the exchange of energies takes place within relationships – the fragility of relationships...'. Avgousti, similarly, finds metaphorical meaning in her aquarium fishes as she links their existence with a boat-sinking event that aimed to form an artificial reef creation in *Little Fish, Alone, Searching* (2014). This relation metaphorically denotes any living creature that searches for a home or a better life, and the in-between opportunistic plans of others that manipulate its route. In *Cross-country Run* (2004),

Economou presents his runner as an alien in his country's cultural and physical elements, which pass by without signifying anything for the protagonist, who continues his course uninterrupted. The runner is a metaphor for the people who take a passive stance towards the environment they live in, who do not communicate with their surroundings and live an empty life with no actual goals.

### iii) Connections with the past

For Konstantia Sophokleous, experiences are connected to beloved objects of the past that were lost and found, and children's stories and songs that have a special place in her childhood memories. In her video animations these are transformed into new entities that depict either enigmatic or symbolic narratives of the artist's past life. She explains:

'I remember playing "Round and round, Manolis is in the middle" as a child and I have vivid childhood memories of this song, as well as "How I like candies so much, I am not telling you my friends as a joke, I would like to have a candy store"... Because we had a candy store, my father had a candy store, so it was always a favourite song, and as a child, when I used to go to the nursery school, I always used to sing these songs... and this is why I'm in the video in the beginning...' (DVD 7, Artist Profile)

Relatively similarly, Avgousti's playful paper figures in *Swipe Here to Paint* (2014) go back to childhood habits where she used to dress paper dolls by attaching paper clothes and quickly change their appearance with mix and match games:

'Recalling childhood memories, this game may have its roots embedded in paper dolls that I used to like to cut out and dress up and make dresses for, paper dresses which we used to place on paper dolls at the time, with a tiny paper piece that used to secure the dress on the doll' (DVD 8, Artist Profile)

In Kouroussis' video installation *Offering to Archimedes* (1996), the artist's experiences of his birthplace's lake in Mitsero village are relived as they influence the creation of moving images in nine monitors that lie on the floor to resemble the place of the lake, as well as the elements of nature reflected in its water. The combination of other tangible materials from the lake such as soil and rocks complete the mental images that the installation attempts to achieve.

### ***Approaches of video art***

As a final finding from the artists' interviews, connections of video art as an art form were identified that seemed imperative in establishing ideas and relationships about video art's place and role in artists' creative practice. The local artists' video art-making seem to revolve around the following relationships, also considered in the design of the educational suggestions included in the Educational Guide. The relationships are presented below in order of frequency:

- video practice to serve ideas – video as an autonomous art form: for the majority of the artists, creating a video artwork is an independent and imperative act that befalls because it entirely satisfies ideas and concepts
- video art as a collaborative practice: many artists utilise the medium of video in collective creative acts either by cooperating with other artists and other professionals, or by inviting everyday people to participate, or by working with students in educational settings to produce a video art result
- video practice to attend the needs of an artwork: some artists find that video as a medium enriches and complements ideas in their art projects, but video itself does not have an independent role in their art making
- video as socially engaged art: some artists utilise video as a means to investigate people's attitudes and beliefs on social issues, and involve them in the final video work with means such as interviewing and video recording
- video art in relation to live physical action: a small number of artists combine video recording with body movement, dance, performance and theatre in multiple ways for a final result that may take a number of forms
- video art as a multimodal art form: isolated responses indicate that video art as a final artistic product is an arrangement of elements that come from a wealth of disciplines such as music, literature/text, body movement, performance, stage arts.

### ***Participant observation***

My own observations during the procedure of interviewing played a crucial role in determining the focus of the semi-structured interview questions, with relevance to the artists' strongest practices and interests that were considered of value to focus on. For instance, one interview concentrated on the various art genres the artist uses in video-making, another interview was dedicated to the performative aspects of video art and the role of the viewer, and a third placed emphasis on artists' collaborative work. These

approaches influenced the turn of the suggested educational activities that were designed at the next research phase.

### **5.3 Educational needs**

The findings that consider educational needs are interpreted regarding the structure and content of the Educational Guide and the Artist Profiles, which together form the educational resources produced as Evidence of Achievement (presented after Chapter 6 and on the accompanied DVDs). The findings also discuss the topic of teachers' professional development that emerged during the data analysis from the focus group meetings.

#### ***The structure and content of the educational resources***

By contrasting the comments from Focus Groups 1 and 2 (Appendix 13), one can observe similarities and agreements on a number of ideas regarding the structure and content of the Educational Guide and the Artist Profiles. For example, all educators who participated, from all levels of education (pre-primary, primary and secondary) and from both groups, agree that the Artist's Profile they viewed is quite demanding for young students (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1-1, FG2-3, FG2-5). The language and descriptions used by the artist are challenging, and the duration of the video – 13 minutes – would require a great deal of effort from students to stay focused. Educators agree, however, that segments from the Profile can be chosen to be screened and approached in the classroom in multiple ways, according to the Key Stage and the maturity of their students, as well as other variables (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1-5, FG2-3).

Furthermore, educators agree that the Artist Profiles would be excellent resources for educators to study local artists and their video artwork (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1-2, FG2-1, FG2-5). The resources would provide valuable materials for preparing visual arts units and approaching video artwork and related creative processes. Educators suggested the production of a shorter version of the Artist Profiles that is simpler and more appealing to students, as well as convenient to use in the classroom (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1-3, FG2-3). This suggestion was considered an excellent idea for the improvement of the produced educational resources, however the time-consuming task of video editing, in conjunction with the time constraints of this project, prevented its realisation. In the case of

publication to disseminate the resources, in future a shorter version will be prepared accordingly.

A few primary educators expressed in discussion a need for the design of indexed tools for choosing artists at the stage of planning their art units. These could refer to the content of the Artist Profiles and could include key words or phrases to guide educators to make their choice (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1–8). This recommendation was employed with reference to the categories that were formed later, as described in the following section 5.4. They include associations of artists' video works with issues and ideas, connections of artists that work with similar or identical issues, and the Key Stages for which the works may be appropriate.

Educators were encouraged through these meetings freely to express their ideas about the design of art units and how they perceive the presented materials to be part of such units of lessons. They discussed multiple ways and combinations of video artwork, Artist Profiles and activities, taking into consideration the Key Stage they teach and the capabilities and attitudes of their students (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1–4, FG1–5, FG1–6, FG1–15, FG2–3, FG2–4, FG2–7, FG2–8, FG2–11, FG2–12).

During the focus groups' dialogue it became evident that some educators' comments were connected to personal preference or need, and to the context and particularities of their work environment as well as their personal experiences, interests and educational background, and their practice with their students. For instance, typically secondary educators (who are mostly also practising visual artists) enquired about a detailed portrayal of video artists' creative processes and techniques, as well as the technological equipment they use (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1–11, FG1–12). Pre-primary and primary educators needed basic information on video art and suggested playful activities to involve younger students successfully (Appendix 13, Comments: FG1–7, FG1–10, FG1–14, FG2–9). This second group also revealed an absence of existing experience with video art as an art form or as a medium. This result was expected, since the three levels of education have shown in the past, through the various work tasks I have been involved with as an advisor and an educator, differences in needs as well as in knowledge base and personal competence. These findings resulted in reviewing the introductory texts of the Educational Guide according to the needs of all three educational levels. A range of information and general activities were included to apply to the various background levels



concerning students' introductory experiences in video art (Educational Guide, pp.7–8) and explanations of key terms (Educational Guide, p.55).

The aforementioned findings were the result of purposeful selection of participants so that they demonstrated their needs and suggestions in accordance with their range of experiences, backgrounds and needs. It is my belief that this focused selection was an influential decision that achieved an authentic notion of the requirements of the final product should include, to correspond to the various levels of the vast majority of local visual arts educators.

The conversations during the focus groups validated most of the outcomes and rejected part of others, at the same time as offering valuable advice and ideas for improvements to the educational outcome. The meetings with colleagues served as triangulation for: verifying the necessity for such resources about local video art; confirming the resources' usage in the near future, after implementing the suggested improvements; and validating the broad and multiple interpretive processes that educators can become involved with when evaluating a resource and also when designing an art unit to teach.

### ***Teachers' professional development***

Video art may still be regarded as a form that 'frightens' mostly pre-primary and primary educators, despite the efforts made in the past through offering small-scale training activity (as described in Chapter 2). During the analysis of data from the focus group meetings, the topic of teachers' professional development emerged. In order for visual arts educators to approach video art as autonomous curriculum designers, it is evident, as observed in Appendix 13 (FG1–7, FG2–10), that they need training as well as resources on video art as an art form and video as a medium. Teachers' training as well as appropriate resources are essential so they first deeply understand and relate to the unconventional nature of video art, and second, approach its technological aspects with ease as artists themselves and as educators. The development of the educational resources through this research meets a portion of this identified need.

### **5.4 Formed categories**

During the interpretation of the collected data, formed categories were developed concerning the key elements of the artists' interviews. There was a focus on their real-life experiences through video making, in connection with the educational needs as analysed

through the focus groups' data analysis (Appendix 13). The categories were also designed in accordance with the Visual Arts Curriculum content. Figure 5.1 shows the connections studied for the development of three categories, namely: *Issues and ideas*; *Key stages*; and *Connections with other artists*.

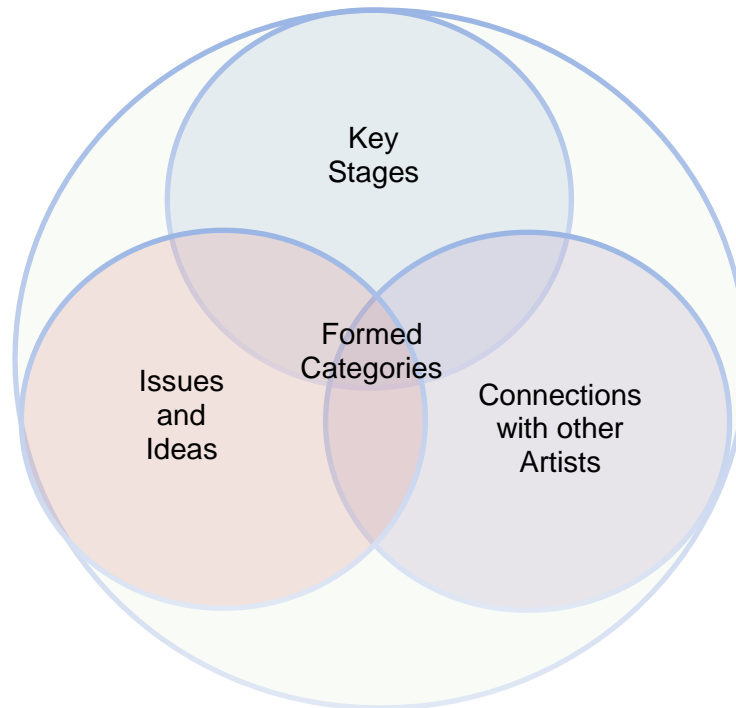


Figure 5.1 Connections studied for the development of categories.

**Formed category: *Issues and ideas***

The idea to form this category arose from the related Question 2 that emerged after the study of the interview content, and later from the focus groups' finding about 'helpful structures for the design of art units' (Appendix 13: FG1–8). The idea was connected to the Curriculum, which includes suggestions for the content of an art unit, such as globalisation, consumerism, identity, local myths and popular stories, the fantasy world and so on (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2012). *Issues and Ideas* concerns the video artwork studied for this research and is connected to the artists' experiences of personal, social, economic, political and cultural issues. This connection is presented in Appendix 14 as well as 15. Both Appendices are included in the Educators' Guide (pp.11–12, 56–58) and elements are further developed in the Guide as suggestions of visual arts activities.

The *Issues and Ideas* connection was identified through a hermeneutic analysis of the artists' interviews and video artwork, which were revisited and studied multiple times. They were marked as codes throughout the transcribed interviews in Appendix 10, and they read as follows: identity; family; memory; everyday life; children's habits; stories; body movement; space; place; journey; fantasy; time; human rights; migration; refugee's settlements; history of Cyprus; images of Cyprus; cultural heritage; public art; world events and images; citizenship; opportunism; consumerism; financial crisis; urbanization; environmental pollution; documentation; and objects. More issues and ideas may be derived by educators and any other readers, since this study's outcomes remain open to multiple interpretations and reinterpretations.

***Formed category: Key Stages***

It was necessary to develop this category after the study of the interview content and related emerging Question 1, as well as the focus groups' finding of 'proposed key stages that each video artwork may refer to' (Appendix 13: FG2–6). *Key Stages* refers to appropriate ages of students at which they may be able to relate their interests, abilities and level of understanding to the artists' video artwork. The category follows the four determined Key Stages as stated in the Curriculum, and was developed empirically after the analysis of all collected data. *Key Stages* are presented in Appendix 14 as well as in 16, and form part of the Educators' Guide (p.10).

***Formed category: Connections with other artists***

The idea to form this category came exclusively from the focus groups' finding of showing 'video artworks of various artists that approach the same issue' (Appendix 13: FG2–12). *Connections with other artists* was formed after constructing the *Issues and Ideas* category and spotting similarities in the video artworks' identified issues. The results are presented in Appendix 14 as well as in Appendix 15, and in each artist's section in the Educational Guide.

**5.5 Educational resources**

The tangible educational outcome of the research consists of the Evidence of Achievement that is presented after Chapter 6 and on the accompanying DVDs. Its form and content were developed as the final stage of the preceding activity, and it considered all the findings above. The educational resources produced comprise the Artist Profiles –

the edited video interviews compiled on 10 DVDs – and the Educational Guide in the form of a booklet to accompany them.

The final version of the Guide's introductory text, as well as the proposed activities relating to the Artist Profiles were amended after the first sample was presented to the two focus groups according to the findings and associations formed, as described in this chapter. The Educational Guide considered the aforementioned *educational needs* and *formed categories* (*Issues and Ideas, Key stages, Connections with other artists*); the *categories* were included in the Guide in the form of keywords (pp.11–12, *Issues and Ideas*), lists (p.10, *Key Stages*) and text in the artists' pages (for example in p.15, bottom left), forming tools that could help educators to organise their art units better.

Additionally, it is worth considering some of the participating artists' attitudes towards educational issues for the development of the Guide, as derived from the interviews. Not all artists were asked to respond to an education-related question, as explained in Chapter 3, but the majority were asked, and most thought that some of their work or their personal artistic practices are quite relevant to children and education. As mentioned, these opinions were not included in the videos in the Artist Profiles as their purpose was to inform and illuminate this particular research phase. More specifically, Tselika mentioned:

'Because I also curate exhibitions, I find that video, for me, is a medium which, as is photography, is quite democratic, because every child, every person will not feel stressed out to take a mobile phone to take a photo or a video, but on many occasions someone might feel scared of drawing because they're not so good, so I felt that I liked this democracy of the medium, which is democratic now because it's everywhere, whoever has a mobile phone has it, or at least people have access to it now; the image may not be that good of course, but it may encourage one to use it.' (Appendix 10)

Sofokleous and Savvidou offered specific ideas that could be incorporated in educational settings. Sofokleous stated:

'I completely moved away from the Disney illustrations as well as Deniers' illustrations which were the initial ones. I wanted to play...I played games with my mind and I told myself, here she's crying [Alice], here she's saying something... and I played a little with the feelings as well... children could do this as well.' (Appendix 10)

Savvidou pointed out:

'I told my special education group of students to bring photographs from their family albums and they were so excited to do this. They brought many photographs which they rearranged and created new collage works using them.' (Appendix 10)

Economou described his approach in showing his own works to students:

'I wanted to show them my own works so I would make them feel comfortable that they could produce videos as well, especially three/four years ago. Now with iPads and iPhones it's much easier, they feel more comfortable. When I was first experimenting, I was showing students *Cross-country Run* and *2000 Miles*, they also liked it, it has those elements that impress them. I don't show them videos that are from my latest work of the last four/five years, where I consciously try to be simpler and against the trend of using effects and other things... I try to show them what I was creating before, so as to encourage them... so as not to make them feel that they cannot produce imaginative works.' (Appendix 10)

Avgousti indicated the importance of direct experiences in education:

'Especially in young children there is such a strong connection with their everyday reality and self that comes natural when it is to make art and talk about art. And because the digital image and video are so into their everyday experiences, it is ordinary for them to have it in their school life. Video's potential is limitless, as long as time and minimum facilities are allocated in the school settings. Many times educators need to develop their own simple tools and practices so as to offer opportunities for video making to every child.' (Appendix 10)

Kouroussis invited students to incorporate his work in their artistic practice:

'I had suggested a performance with students, based on a work of mine which I called *Labyrinth*; it's a structure, a sculpture with many cubes, with coloured strings in them, and I remember at the time, the students who were interested in working with me, went to the Metropolitan Museum of New York with me, and I had shown them the primitive masks which were part of Rockefeller's collection... those masks were the starting point for the idea for the costumes they would use during this performance.' (Appendix 10)

Antoniou referred to a specific work of hers:

'*Experiential Storytelling* is a work which children relate to because it has to do with a dress, with childhood memory, the story of our country and in the end I show a photograph of myself in a refugee camp in which I'm wearing that dress, it's a black and white photo and gradually the black and white photo reveals the dress as it is today.' (Appendix 10)

Considering the aforementioned artists' words, it is tempting to state that most video artwork might be connected to educational activities without much difficulty; however, caution needs to be taken regarding the consideration of its content's relevance to students' age, since some ideas were regarded as inappropriate for certain Key Stages. An example is Antoniou's *Experiential Storytelling*, where the work, as described in Chapter 4, at a first glance may show important relevance education, but after studying the totality of the work's ideas they would be considered controversial by most educators.

### ***The Educational Guide***

The proposed activities, featured in each artist's section of the Guide, were developed in a hermeneutic approach to the works and the artists' interviews based on the available evidence. Important findings from the focus group meetings were considered and included, such as the insertion of introductory playful activities on the concepts of video art (Educational Guide, pp.7–8). Additionally, the developed activities considered the *formed categories*, as well as the collected data of the semiotics analysis tool (Appendix 10) that were interpreted creatively so as to transform ideas from artists' video work into educational resources. The classification of data in Appendix 10 under the labels *Viewing* and *Creating* served the purpose of directly associating them with the two main areas of *Explore* and *Create* on the artists' pages. For example, in the pages of the Guide dedicated to the artist Anna Fotiadou (pp.19–22), the activity below was designed with Fotiadou's data, that is found in the artists' row, third artwork row, according to Appendix 10, with a focus on columns: *effects and overlaying*; and *time/speed*. These entries refer to the continuous split screen technique used by the artist, as well as the slow motion technique with fast photographic intervals and static imagery. The activity in the Guide reads:

'Plan your autobiographical video; decide on one aspect of your life that you want to focus on, and find existing or shoot new photographs and video that represent what you want to say about yourself. You may need help from a friend to take photographs and videos of you, and you can also help your friend with the same task. Import your material in the timeline of a video editing software and experiment with Fotiadou's techniques: show slow motion video and alternate with fast photographic intervals, display static images, split the video screen in two parts and present one video in each part (split screen technique). How can you combine your finished video with text? Choose text that has a meaning for you; maybe from your own writings or from literature. Type the text in the video editing software and

experiment with various fonts and sizes. Finally, connect the text with your moving image' (Educational Guide, p.22).

The Educational Guide is aligned to the rationale and content of the Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum since it focuses on three of the Curriculum goals: (a) the construction of personal or social meanings in students' visual works through associations with real-life experiences; (b) the incorporation of local contemporary art in the visual arts classroom; and (c) the integration of new technologies as part of students' art experience (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010, 2011). This association of the Guide with the Curriculum is presented in Appendix 17.

### ***Designing visual arts units***

The Educational Guide offers multiple ideas and suggestions for the design of visual arts units. There are suggestions on approaching the video artwork and/or Artist Profiles at various stages of a unit: at the beginning as a surprise element and a stimulus on the works' and/or artists' issues and ideas; after a few lessons so as to enrich students' works in progress and 'meet' the artists and artwork; or at the end of the unit in order to study artists' works that refer to similar issues and techniques previously examined by students, or to offer a completely new perspective regarding the same elements. All three ways are important, acceptable and offer emphasis on different elements and areas, and serve a range of goals. Educators decide on which route to follow according to their aims, settings, students' interests and experiences, Key Stage, connections with previous learning and with other subject areas. They may become creative and combine more than one of the above suggestions, designing a series of interrelated units and involving new ways of implementing the resources.

As indicated in the Guide's introductory text (p.6), the content of the interviews and the artists' pages remain open to personal interpretations and reinterpretations, and multiple meaningful constructions. Educators and students are invited to extract their own meanings and construct associations. Educators are also encouraged to use the proposed activities in their own individual manner, or use them as starting points to develop new activities that better suit their students' needs and interests, as well as the aims of each designed art unit. It is advisable to view the related video artwork first, however, and as a second step to study the Artist Profiles; this is important in order to react to the works in a personal manner, and to enable viewers to form their own meanings before listening to the artist's version of the story.

The activities presented in the Guide are primarily closely related to the video artwork featured and not the artists' interviews/Artist Profile. This offers the flexibility to educators to employ in an art unit only artworks and their corresponded activities if they wish, and study the interviews as a resource for their own learning. Simultaneously, however, the proposed activities are indirectly connected to the interviews, allowing educators to use both the works and the artist's interview in an art unit, if they choose.

As a concluding stage of this part of the research and with the aim to offer educational examples of approaching local video art in actual school settings, two art units were designed and implemented in two different school settings. The first unit involved cooperation with a colleague, and the second unit involved one of the video artists who took part in this research, Konstantia Sofokleous.

The first art unit was initiated by introducing my 7-year-old students to the video artwork *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Sofokleous 2005). After developing a series of related experiential activities and involving students in creating three-dimensional artwork and a collective video work (Figures 5.2 and 5.3), the art unit evolved into a collaborative project with another school. The three-dimensional artwork created by my students was sent to another school where unknown students of the age of 6 years received them, reacted to them and created textual pieces in drama and creative writing activities. The project concluded with the actual meeting of both students' groups and their involvement in a joint exhibition of their art and text, as well as playful activities (Figure 5.4). This study was eventually published in the *International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal* (Avgousti, Chrysostomou and Psaltis 2014). Some of the ideas and activities designed for this study were adapted and included in the Educational Guide.





Figure 5.2 Student working on his 3-D artwork (Avgousti, Chrysostomou and Psaltis 2014)



Figure 5.3 Students being involved in a video-related activity: building an imaginative timeline (Avgousti, Chrysostomou and Psaltis 2014)

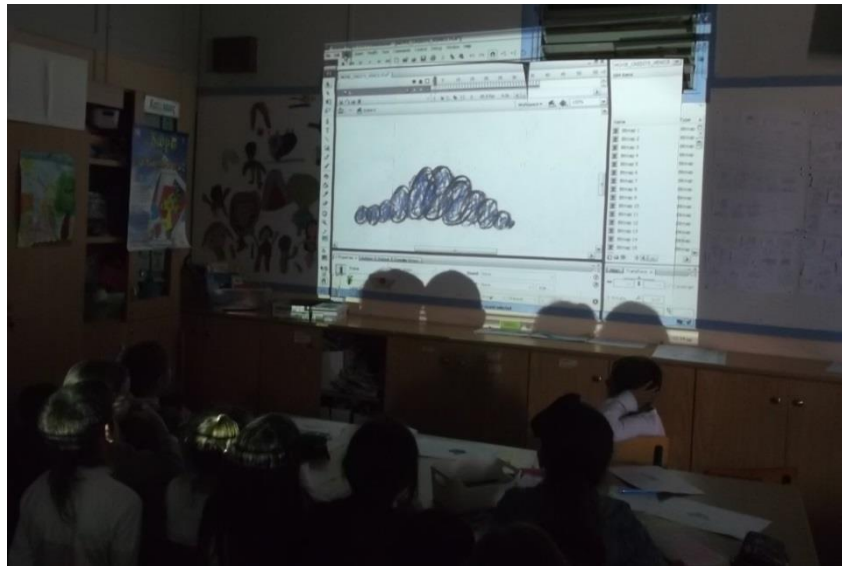


*Figure 5.4 The meeting of the students from both schools (Avgousti, Chrysostomou and Psaltis 2014)*

The second art unit was designed and conducted with the collaboration of Konstantia Sofokleous herself, at a different school setting and city. A four-lesson art unit was designed for one of my visual art classes (Key Stage 2, age 8) and Sofokleous taught the lessons herself. The art unit revolved around her work *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2005) by involving students in designing their own collaborative hand-drawn animation based on the well-known children's story, without revealing her own creative processes, concepts and actual video artwork until students had finalized their own short animation (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). In 2014 this implementation was presented to colleagues during a local short seminar on professional development.



*Figure 5.5 Sofokleous approaching hand-drawn animation with the researcher's 8-year-old students.*



*Figure 5.6 Showing Sofokleous' hand-drawn animation to the researcher's 8-year-old students.*

# Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

## 6.1 Chapter summary

This chapter presents the answers to the research questions as the project's conclusions. Additionally it illustrates the project's significance and makes recommendations to the intended audience in the fields of visual arts and visual arts education.

## 6.2 Conclusions

**The first main question** that was explored in the project activity asked how the investigation of personal video art-making can shed light into connections with real-life experiences. Researching my artistic process of video-making revealed that connections with reality and life are of prior importance; these are achieved through using photography, animation techniques, text, interviews, music, sound as well as silence, derived both from reality and constructed in the studio. Communicating real-life experiences through metaphors of phenomena is also a strategy in my work. Images may function as 'metaphors of culture' for artists (Smith 2009, p.277) that trace personal thinking and how one regards authentic life.

**The second question** of the research regarded the ways contemporary Cypriot video artists extend their practice in relation to real-life experience. The investigation of this query revealed the multiple routes and choices that video as a medium and as an art form offers to creative professionals, in conjunction with real-life experiences that are considered important for the transformation of thinking and of the visual artwork. Results sometimes reveal personal stories and meanings, and other times portray social, political and cultural issues. Through their artistic research in video-making, artists communicate ideas, establish connections, criticise, and invite viewers to participate, to relate with their own experiences and to construct their own meanings. They achieve this through creative strategies such as the study of space, employing interactivity among viewers, interviewing and observation, engaging with music, sound and silence. They demonstrate influences from narratives, text, objects, animation, photography, music, and their video elements originate both in reality and in their studio. Positioning the role of real-life experiences in their working practice, artists purely derive their examined issues, constructed interpretations as well as raw images and video footage from the real world. They also

regard experiences as metaphors of ideas or situations, and they construct connections with the past, where experiences connected with childhood have a dominant role.

Participating artists demonstrated, with relevance to the findings of the project, that they act as researchers: they conduct critical creative processes through their art; and they investigate the unknown so as to inform and develop their practice. Sullivan's (2014) system of visual arts research that continually engages with the reality of actions and concerns is of particular relevance to the findings derived from the investigated artists. Their practice denotes strong and unique links to their real-life experiences, revealed by similar as well as disparate routes of personal reflection.

The unanticipated result that the second question found is this uniqueness that is hidden in each video artist's case study, as well as the richness in meaning-making associations and knowledge construction regarding their routes to experience. Studying the findings, we can regard Cypriot video art as an art form that is vibrant and flexible, adaptable to the country's history, socioeconomic status and cultural environment in which it is created and viewed. We can also look at it as an art form that has an international subsistence since it has mostly evolved around universal issues that every person can relate to, as well as it being created using imagery codes that are widely familiar to every person who has experienced the media environment.

**The third question** that was investigated throughout the project looked for the kinds of potential that arises from personal and other local artists' video art practice for educational application in the visual arts classroom. Some general approaches by the participating artists to video art served as a basis for extracting the educational potential, but the uniqueness of each artist's case study also offered several ideas based on a hermeneutical and semiotic approach. The general approaches to video art that were generated involved: i) video practice to serve ideas /video as an autonomous art form; ii) video art as a collaborative practice; iii) video practice to attend the needs of an artwork; iv) video as socially engaged art; v) video art in relation to live physical action; and vi) video art as a multimodal art form. These approaches signify Sullivan's (2010, 2014) explanation of visual arts practice one more time, where this practice embraces creative and critical abilities that, through analysis and meaning-making constructions, intend to promote new, non-linear and multiple perceptions.

**The fourth and final question** of the research regarded ways in which local contemporary video art practice – including personal practice – and their educational relevancies could be addressed in the art classroom in response to the new Cyprus Visual Arts Curriculum framework. This question was answered through the design of the Evidence of Achievement, consisting of educational resources including a printed Educator’s Guide and a collection of 10 accompanying DVDs, one for each participating artist.

The educational suggestions that are included in the Guide were based on the findings of the project that refer to the artists’ ways of researching and practicing their video art in relation to real-life experiences and the general context. The Educational Guide suggests ways of emphasizing the multiple directions that the artistic practice can take by presenting the vast plethora of practice and by providing hermeneutical and open artists’ case studies, accompanied by the actual video artworks, so they could be approached in the classroom to promote educators’ and students’ access to a polyphony of interpretations.

The educational suggestions of the Guide additionally regard the multidimensional consideration of the term ‘video art’ as a media-specific (Spielmann 2008, p.2) experimental and expressive art form. Throughout the proposed educational resources, video art is presented as a hybrid art form inviting any digital and analogue medium and technique, as well as other art genres. In conclusion, this is the way that is evidently approached by artists through their creative research practice. The artists’ case studies and the self-study illustrate that the art form of video is indeed multimodal, multidimensional, experimental and open to other art forms. Bill Viola’s description of video art, in the phrases ‘No beginning/No end/No direction/No duration – Video as mind’ (Martin 2006, p.6) obviously refers to the nature of the medium and the art form, but it could just as well refer to its wider approach in visual arts education.

The design of the Evidence of Achievement and the interwoven proposed educational activities with the artists’ research practices apply Sullivan’s (2010, 2014) idea that viewing and making contemporary art, whether in an art studio or in a school classroom, involve researching the connections of the artists’ processes with the concepts involved. This is probably the key for the two disciplines of visual arts and visual arts education first to approach one another better and eliminate the disassociation witnessed in the past (Efland 1990) and, secondly, for young students and adults to really begin to understand the way

artists are immersed in their creative work. For this to succeed, it is necessary for educators deeply to engage in the work processes of contemporary artists, and offer their students authentic examples of everyday art practice that happen near them, in the same place where they live. Gude (2004) stimulated educators a decade ago to 'study the art of our times' (p.8), but her encouragement needs to be reinforced today, where art perhaps reflects real world issues and their complexities in a more attractive way, and this is through the digital moving image.

### **6.3 The contribution of the project outcome**

The collection presented as the Evidence of Achievement of this project establishes video art of Cyprus as an accessible art genre that has a past and a future; in most cases it presents videos not widely shown in the past, considering the limited number of video art events a decade ago. The project's significance lies in offering to audiences, local and international, the chance to listen, probably for the first time, to Cypriot video art creators reflecting on their processes and artistic research concerning their practice. The interviews are educative and hopefully offer the audience a brief but deep understanding of the various and multiple processes involved in video art creation.

The research outcome could be of interest to researchers, curators, gallery and museum professionals and art historians who wish to study video art in Cyprus through an audiovisual presentation. It would possibly interest visual artists as well, which could encourage study of the presented artists' cases with the purpose of enriching their own art practice, as well as encountering similar approaches to their own. Some of the artists participating in the research commented that they had found the produced Artist Profiles representational of their own work, and asked permission to access it so they could use it as a video CV on the Internet. Access was not, however, granted, as a dissemination plan had been designed for the produced collection, as explained to the artists and mentioned in the text below. This incident was considered a valuable research outcome since it demonstrated the value of the produced resources to the participating artists themselves.

Additionally, the research outcome is of great importance to educators, local and international, at any level of education, who teach subjects relating not just to visual arts but to language, literature, history and social studies. They could use the collection of resources to enrich their personal knowledge on video art practice in Cyprus, and design

visual arts units as well as units in the aforementioned subjects so as to approach video art and its context in their school settings. The focus of the produced material remains the visual arts discipline, but this does not keep the material from having an interdisciplinary nature.

The project outcome contributes to the life span of the video artwork, as it could be extended with repeated screenings in school classrooms. This is especially important in an epoch where local museums and galleries, despite the increased number of festivals and online databases that consider video art to be an art form, continue to misrepresent media artwork in general (Grau 2012) and to deny visitors, including young students, access to such viewing experiences. Additionally, the produced collection contributes to the preservation of the video artworks. Nikos Kouroussis admitted that he lost his first video artwork of 1982, *Labyrinth*; and Evanthia Tselika had lost the high quality version of her video *Public Works* (2010); Helene Black had extreme difficulty in recovering from her archives the high quality versions of her first video works, *Loop* (2001) and *Rite of Revolution* (2003); and Klitsa Antoniou had only a VHS version of videos included in her installation *In the Horizon of the Game with the Other* (1999). These incidents verify Grau's statement on the rapid changes of technology that result in experiencing 'the total loss of an art form' (Grau 2012, p.990) in an era where, paradoxically, the digital image and video are dominant.

The project has already contributed to the development of educational support work regarding the Visual Arts Curriculum. As a member of the Visual Arts Curriculum design and support team, my work focuses mainly on the thematic area of visual culture, an area that involves new media arts and includes video art as an art form, and video as a medium. Most of the artists' names and artwork that were collected as part of this DProf research are utilised throughout Curriculum support documents in appropriate parts where it is critical to present the video art practice of local artists. These documents will be piloted among educators next academic year.

#### **6.4 Further research**

The research methodology of this project could be repeated by other artists/researchers/teachers with the aim of examining artistic practice and producing connected educational resources. Through the a/r/tography method, all aspects of the



artist/researcher/teacher's life are interrelated in one framework: personal creative practice; research; and educational connections. '[K]nowing, doing and making...' (Irwin 2004, p.29) merge in a 'living inquiry' that is situated within real-life actions of communities (Sullivan 2010), where the investigation of meaning-making connections with relevance to everyday experiences can be achieved. The research process is continuously connected with artistic processes and writing (Irwin et al. 2006). New research that may be undertaken by others should incorporate personal artistic practice, research of others' practice and writing in a continuous cycle, where each informs the other. Combining a/r/tography with a plurality of methods that informs and complements, such as the methods in this research, could result in an appropriate research model for producing educational resources that concern artistic practice and at the same time relate to the needs of art educators.

The outcome of this research consists of an archive that will be of interest to researchers who wish to develop the research further and take account of local artists who live and work in other countries, especially in the main art centres of the world. Potential researchers could focus on the analysis of Cypriot video art from an art historian perspective, a study that was evidently not accomplished through this research. Furthermore, scholars could concentrate on the construction of a historical timeline that would provide substantial information on the development of video art in Cyprus. Researchers involved in education could encourage an action research study into the implementation of the educational resources developed here in real school settings. Another notion that could be further developed is the inquiry into novel ways to promote the viewing of video art, besides educational contexts and traditional art venues. The answer could be searched for through the possibilities offered by the Internet and social media, through public art events, socially engaged art, and theatre and dance performances.

### **6.5 Recommendations and dissemination plan**

Recommendations regarding the results of the research are planned to be provided to the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as to the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and the Inspectors of Art Education of the Ministry of Education, with whom I collaborate. A dissemination plan that involves the publication of the material will be promoted through these institutions, since it could be used for in-service teachers'

professional development concerning the Visual Arts Curriculum. If these governmental institutions are not interested in proceeding with this task, the possibility of sponsorship from the private sector will be examined, to achieve publication of the Educational Guide and the accompanied DVDs. Other plans include the design of a website to make available information additional to the publication, as well as online interactive educational material appropriate for use in classroom settings.

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