

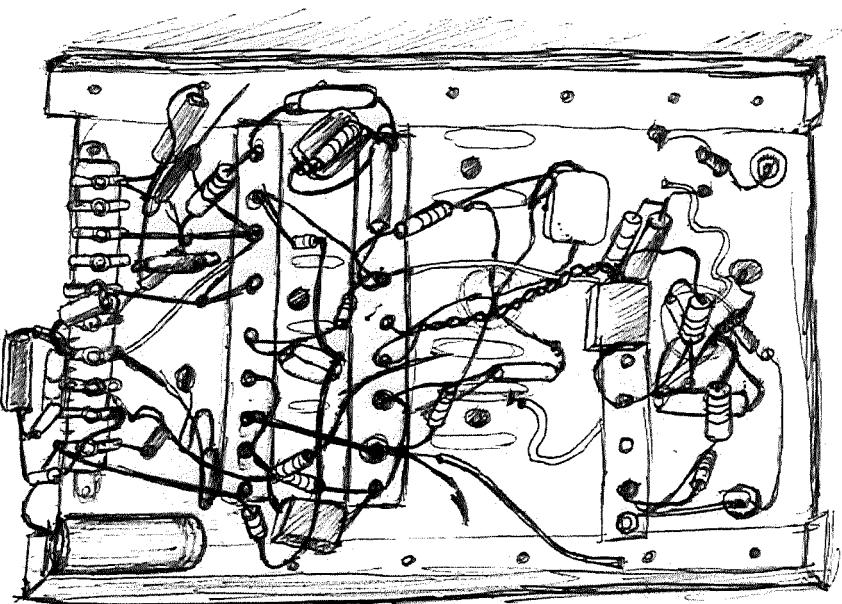
*'reunion of broken parts'*

(Arabic *a-jabr*)

A therapist's personal art practice and its relationship to an NHS outpatient  
art psychotherapy group: an exploration through visual arts and crafts practice

PhD THESIS  
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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Jacqueline Mahony  
September 2009

# A BSTRACT

'reunion of broken parts'

(Arabic *al-jabr*)

A therapist's personal art practice and its relationship to an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group:  
an exploration through visual arts and crafts practice

'Reunion of broken parts' explores the relationship between the therapist's personal art practice and the creative art experience of an art psychotherapy group for people with severe and complex mental health difficulties. These practices are usually kept apart. A process of artmaking is examined, including my own as therapist in and outside the studio-based group. The political implications of styles of research writing are discussed.

The significance of the investigation is in using art practice as a visual heuristic methodology to explore the junction between visual arts, art psychotherapy and studio practice. Exhibition practices of curating displays of archival material and exhibition visits to examine relevant artists' work were combined with illustrated, autobiographical narratives constructed for analysis. A visually-based case study examines photographs of the group's art. Exploring my own living archive, collected over 20 years, links my art history to the present.

The research shows how deep, complex and reciprocal exchanges were facilitated by the therapist's artmaking, even when unseen by the group, implying that the therapist's personal art practice is integral to clinical practice both in and outside clinical groups, and requires far greater consideration. Communication through unspoken metaphor is emphasised, especially in the containment and role modelling of the creative process by the therapist. It is suggested that the therapist's carefully considered artmaking in art psychotherapy groups can significantly enhance the clients' experiences. A non-verbal discourse appeared to take place giving visual form to the group matrix as described in group analysis, and refashioning personal histories in sustained, labour-intensive processes without necessarily being understood. An examination of craft practices is distinctive, showing they can materialise the culture and autobiography of individuals and a group, embodying complex ideas and offering visual interpretations. Genres of art are shown to offer a route for accessing issues of power and cultural meaning.

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The art psychotherapy group members who taught me so much.

The research is dedicated to the memory of my late parents

Eleanor Margaret Ephgrave (née Petrie)

Leslie ('Bay') Burrows Ephgrave

who both died during the research and were not able to see the final dissertation or  
hear about the depth of their influence on my art and life.

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# *'reunion of broken parts'*

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## INTRODUCTION (*UNPACKING*)

### Studio-based research in art psychotherapy

*'Reunion of broken parts'* explores the relationship between the creative art experience of an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group and the therapist's own art practice<sup>1</sup>. Visual arts practice as research was used in a series of nested studies to examine the issues. The visual heuristic strategy included exhibition practices, studio-based art practice, creating texts and their analysis, examining relevant artists' work, and a visually-based case study of an outpatient group I facilitated for people with severe and complex mental health difficulties. I will introduce the research and describe the structure of the thesis.

The questions I had for the research arose out of my experience of clinical practice in the National Health Service and a particular interest in groups, and were linked to my motivation to understand more about the creative experience related to an art psychotherapy group. I wondered what aspects of the creative art process were helpful in bringing about personal understanding and meaning for the group members, and what it was about the use of art media that contributed to such a process. I particularly wanted to explore the role of the therapist's art practice in relation to an art psychotherapy group.

The source of inspiration for my own artmaking is the passion I feel for the texture, detail and substance of raw materials in the natural landscape. The urge to make things for use with these materials (Dormer 1997:157) and love of the slow labour involved are major forces which drive my relationship with the world. As a result I came to train and work for a decade as a studio potter with my own workshops in several different

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<sup>1</sup> Sections of the writing have been published previously (see Mahony 2001, 2009, forthcoming a & b)

locations. My later decision to close my business, moving into the world of therapy to train as an art psychotherapist, was a huge shift but also enabled me to develop other strands of enduring psychological and sociological interests. I struggled as a new therapist nearly thirty years ago, to get to grips with both the new ideas and belief system I had been taught, and a radically different life style; working as an employee in the NHS with people undergoing serious mental health problems. While I eventually came to integrate much of what I had learnt at college I continued, until completing this research, to feel a gap between the emotional experience of my 'materials' practice (ceramics and textiles), and the more analytic approach of mainstream art psychotherapy in the UK<sup>2</sup>. The latter informed my work in adult psychiatry and mainly focused on images and painting. Several aspects of this work were problematic.

Usually the therapist's art practice is kept separate from her/his clinical practice. Given the emphasis on artistic qualifications and experience for professional training, to me this seemed curious. Additionally, art psychotherapists' personal art practice was rarely mentioned in the literature, with the notable exception of Gilroy's (1992b) singular, extensive study of the subject. I wanted to find out what role it had in clinical practice and how it might influence the therapy. I wondered why it was not considered in the art psychotherapy process. In the art psychotherapy literature clinical practice seemed mainly involved with painting, drawing and pictures, and also clay, though less so. I personally respond at a deeper level to materials and the process of making objects for use. How might my passion for raw materials relate to clinical work?

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing art psychotherapy, also known as art therapy, is one of three arts therapies in the UK regulated by the Health Professions Council. The other two are music therapy and dramatherapy. The professional organisation for art therapists in the UK is The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT). BAAT describes art psychotherapy as:

... a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication... the overall aim of its practitioners is to enable a client to effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and facilitating environment. The relationship between the therapist and the client is of central importance, but art therapy differs from other psychological therapies in that it is a three way process between the client, the therapist and the image or artefact. Thus it offers the opportunity for expression and communication... (BAAT 2007).

I will be using the term art psychotherapy except when citing authors who have used the term art therapy.

My first job after training was at the Henderson Hospital. The Henderson evolved out of a rehabilitation unit for veterans of WW11 under the leadership of Maxwell Jones who developed the concept of the therapeutic community (see Jones 1953). Internationally renowned as a model treatment approach for young adults diagnosed with severe personality disorder, a cornerstone of the rigorously researched therapeutic approach was an emphasis on equality (see for instance, Dolan et al 1997; Rapoport 1960; Whiteley 1980). Full of energy, inspiration and enthusiasm I was amazed and moved by the place, its approach and the impressive change I saw people undergo. My experience of the art psychotherapy groups I developed there (see Mahony 1992b) suggested to me that there was much to be gained therapeutically by maximising an engagement with art materials and by my artmaking alongside the residents, as the patients or clients<sup>3</sup> were called. At the Henderson, I was able to experience concurrently in one setting two models of art psychotherapy practice where I was the therapist: one where I made art in sessions and the other where I took a more analytic role, observing the artmaking.

My next post, nine years later was based in a community mental health team. I started very gradually to develop my ideas about artmaking in outpatient groups by clients and therapist alike. One particular group that I facilitated, for about eight years until I left the NHS, put all my ideas into practice. It is this group that I am going to describe in a case study.

Although the primary discipline of my research is art psychotherapy, where practice is seen as a generative and reflexive activity rather than as a stable body of knowledge, it is informed and challenged by practices and discourses that have their basis in the visual arts. There are issues that arise out of these connections.

The tensions I experienced have been a constant theme in the profession, and indeed have been considered dialectical (Skaife 2000). The title of this study, *Reunion of broken parts*, is the Arabic translation of 'algebra'. I intend it to act as a metaphor for the examination of these issues in the research where they are brought together in a relational field.

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<sup>3</sup> I have avoided using medical terminology in the study and 'client' is the preferred term I am using rather than 'patient'.

My own interests, developed in this research, have been in tracing underlying influences on art psychotherapy provision (Mahony 1992a, 1994) and its models (Mahony 1992b, 1999; Mahony and Waller 1992). Here I take them further by using a heuristic strategy that characterises the overall approach where a critical subjectivity is accentuated through the autobiographical lens that mirrors the art psychotherapy process. In the study I elaborate my reasons for using my art practice as research to provide the visual heuristic research methodology. A 'hub and spokes' design is the structure where different facets are explored in a set of semi-independent studies contributing to the elucidation of my central questions which are the intellectual focus. Meaning is assembled from the separate strands. When considering how to convey the research and the relationship that I seek with the reader, I became aware of the importance of thick description in the study for making the reader aware of the particularities of the world being revealed.

The thesis begins with a review of the literature that relates to the juncture of the therapeutic discipline with the visual arts, unfolding the issues outlined above. An absence of theory about the art in art psychotherapy that draws on making art is identified. Practitioners also find their art practice hard to keep up and there has been an inadvertent emphasis on words over image making. Additionally, very few practitioners focus on media other than painting and drawing, with analytic frames predominating. I suggest how focusing on art in art psychotherapy might differ from art activities used by other disciplines. I also examine the writing by therapists about their art and its implications for countertransference. In the second section of Part One, I describe the research setting and my research activities in relation to the work of others in the discipline who have examined clinical practice. I look at the methodological issues justifying my visual heuristic strategy, differences in methodologies and why I have used visual arts practice as the research method. Ethical issues are raised that will become an important thread running throughout. This leads into the final section of Part One - 'Voices' - which describes a philosophical motivation for my use of first person narratives and an autobiographical lens.

In Part Two I consider how meaning might be embodied in an image. In *Three Commentaries* three exhibition visits provide source information for examination. I form a narrative from notes made at the time and analyse the text. The exhibition *Live in Your Head* accesses my own early roots in the conceptual art of the period; *We all peel the onions* explores work by textile artists working collaboratively with users of a mental health setting, providing a comparison with my own clinical practice, including an elucidation of ethics; *Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth* looks at work inspiring my more recent material practices. A content analysis using Rose's (2001) approach to interpreting visual materials becomes an unexpected route for broadening critical thinking about images in clinical practice. The procedures I developed provided a framework for the whole research. The method illustrates how meaning and understanding can be embodied by the image in how it is produced, what it looks like and how it is seen. The same methods are used to examine the work of two relevant artists and indicate how artmaking might offer a transforming experience in art psychotherapy.

Tracey Emin and Grayson Perry's textile and ceramics practices are examined in the final section of Part Two. The use of craft practices, particularly textiles is largely unexplored in the art psychotherapy literature and was used by members of the NHS group I led and by me. The emotional distress that is materialised in these two artists' work provides a contemporary juxtaposition for the group's artmaking and the connective issues regarding art psychotherapy and visual arts. The analysis of the narrative text that describes viewing Emin and Perry's work reveals the potential of genres of art as a way of accessing the cultural significances of artwork, the artist and the viewer. The time needed to develop such visual constructions emerges as an important consideration.

In Part Three *My Art Practice* traces the history and sites of my art practice. The first section examines what I make, the sites of practice and my sources of inspiration, clarifying how the context clearly shapes what is made and that history is carried into the present, saturating the art I make. The section that follows examines my art practice during a particular period of the research. The personal archive that I unpacked in my studio unexpectedly uncovered layers of my past in a process akin to an 'archaeology of selves'. It was part of the raw material of the research, an interrogation

of the self. I explore the language of materials and form and provide a reading of the tapestries that I had made and which I suggest illustrates the potential and relevance of such media in clinical practice. Workmanship, slowness of construction and contemplative vision are found to be significant. The profound influence an art psychotherapist has on their group is articulated.

In Part Four the group and my studio-based clinical practice is examined directly, addressing the influence of the therapist's art practice on the therapeutic process. I introduce the context, setting and my perspective. I present the group and my approach; theoretical issues relating to working with severe problems and how other authors have addressed them and the importance of the idea of 'sealing over'. I locate my model in policy and theory relating to art psychotherapy groups and studio approaches. This leads into a visually-based case study examining photographic images of the groups' artmaking over a five year period. My immersion in the visual aspects of "*Co-creators*"<sup>4</sup> produces a narrative that illustrates the intricacy of a dream-like mutual discourse, rich in metaphor. It is suggested that the art gives form to the group matrix and is the vehicle for the group's operational base, embodying and transforming clients' autobiographies. The characteristics of my artmaking in the group suggests it has facilitative qualities. My choice of media and the form it takes appears to have little intrusive imagery but is often connective and rhythmic, almost like a visual form of music. This may be personal to me, and further research is needed to investigate other therapists' artwork in such circumstances.

In the third section of this part, the field related to the group's artmaking broadens to an outside/in perspective again, using visual methods, and investigates the junction between visual arts, art psychotherapy and studio practice. Varied but related frames of interpretation are set up (Geertz 1973:9) in *Artefacts related to an art psychotherapy group* - a private exhibition. An arrangement of archival material associated with the group and my art practice is curated and a narrative is constructed about the process of making and looking at it. The textual analysis that follows illustrates how the 'voice' I use contributes to the findings. By bringing visual methods to bear on the material, interior

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<sup>4</sup> Confidentiality and Anonymity All recognisable material including names, places, dates have been removed

processes of transformation are focused on, showing profound links between my art outside the group and members work within it. My role as container of disturbance is clarified and an aspect of visual arts practice, the exhibition, demonstrates that looking at the work as a whole makes it possible to process a huge amount of information.

In Part Five, there is an uncanny parallel between my final reflections and the repacking I did in my studio as I moved home to come back to the area where I started out as a studio potter. I discuss the implications of my findings in relation to the future development of the profession. I develop the concept of a participative art practice in which I suggest the therapist's art acts as a transducer or transmitter in a nonverbal exchange with the group members' art. This augments the idea that countertransference can be transmitted in the therapists' artwork whilst inferring a more equal level in the relationship and its interchanges. The importance of thoroughly examining what takes place is also confirmed. I would argue that the mutual and nonverbal discourse that is elucidated is enhanced by the concept of an expressive and exploratory artmaking by all concerned which, when sustained over a period of time, appears to be transformative. Repacking my archives brought a reordering; I would like to think there has been an integration of my clinical and art practices. In the examination of my personal art practice I realised there has not been the break in it that I had assumed. My analysis of the groups' art made it clear that my artmaking in the group is only a different form of my art practice with performative qualities which enter into an exchange with the group members' visual discourse.

The overriding implication is that the therapists' art practice, whether it takes place in or out of clinical practice, has a profound influence on her/his clients. It is recommended that this needs far greater consideration as part of the therapy process.

The approach gave me insight into the highly subjective nature of making art in art psychotherapy groups and the central position of personal, visual and material processes in both my clinical and art practices, confirming my belief in the need to focus more closely on the influence exerted by the therapist's personal art practice on their clients. A distinctive contribution to the field is the examination of craft practices and their relevance to art psychotherapy clinical practice in embodying the culture of an individual

or group, recognising that making things for use is a direct communication with the audience. The thesis concludes with the recommendation that far greater attention should be given to art psychotherapist's art whether taking place in or out of clinical practice.

# PART ONE - VISUAL HEURISTIC RESEARCH: P An autobiographical lens

I have introduced my key ideas about the importance I see of making art in a contained environment and how my studio based research explores this fundamental aspect of art psychotherapy. In this first part of my research I will present the framework for my approach to my research questions and the rationale for my autobiographical lens. In particular I will consider: what is happening in the creative art experience related to an art psychotherapy group and, as therapist, what is the relevance of my art practice? In Chapter 1.1 **Art psychotherapy and visual arts** I examine the literature relating to art psychotherapy being informed and challenged by its basis in visual arts. In Chapter 1.2 **Art practice as research: reflexive engagement and visible subjectivity** I discuss the visual heuristic methods, strategy and design of the research as well as describing my art based research activities and the ethical issues that emerged. In the third Chapter 1.3 '*Voices*', I present my argument for using the first person singular in how I convey the research. These three chapters position me as researcher in relation to the research (see Holliday 2002:48).

## 1.1 Art psychotherapy and visual arts

A motivating factor for undertaking the research was that as an experienced art psychotherapist in the NHS I felt in danger of losing touch with my roots in visual arts. I wanted to find a different approach to the language-based theoretical models that largely informed the literature in the UK (Mahony 2001:51). A number of practitioners have tried to address the tensions that have been experienced between the linked aspects in therapy of talking and making art (see for instance Quail and Peavy 1994; Thomson 1989), including the American Art Therapy Association conference (at Milwaukee, Winsconsin in 1997), '*Talk, Talk, Talk, When do we Draw?*' (Goodman et al 1998), although Skaife (2000) sees the relationship as a dialectic. In this literature review I will examine international authors who draw on visual arts to inform art psychotherapy. I will also comment on relevant literature

on the creative art process in art psychotherapy, and art as a therapeutic activity used by practitioners and related disciplines. Finally, I will look at the literature on therapists' art and the implications for countertransference.

The literature about the creative art process in art psychotherapy is small compared to other subjects, and it is intriguing that searches show it is relatively unresearched (see Anderson 1983; Gilroy 2006; Gilroy and Lee 1995 and Payne 1993), with no research in art psychotherapy examining the impact on practice of its origins in visual arts. In this country, to my knowledge, art practice as a research method is new to art psychotherapy although Sibbett's (2005) arts-based autoethnography used a method that, like mine, is visual heuristic research.

### **1.1.1 Thinking about the art in art psychotherapy**

Making art is at the heart of the art psychotherapy process and yet practitioners in this country have mainly borrowed ideas from psychotherapy disciplines for developing theory rather than from visual arts. Karkou and Sanderson's (2006) extensive research sheds light on this intriguing situation. They mapped the nationwide arts therapies field (art therapy, music therapy, drama therapy and dance movement therapy) using interviews, a survey and case studies. I was fascinated by their findings. With regard to the role of theory supporting, guiding and explaining practice, they describe the discipline of art psychotherapy having a 'relative preoccupation' with psychotherapy and psychoanalysis compared to the other arts therapies (2006:275). Art psychotherapy's history may have a role in this situation due to a long-standing alliance with such thinking that was a feature of practice in the 1980's and 1990's when the arts were used as an adjunct to psychoanalytic and psychodynamic work by psychiatrists (see Hogan 2001; Waller 1991). The development of frameworks informed by such theory predominate in art psychotherapy when working with clients with mental health issues (see, for instance Dalley et al, 1987; Schaverien 1991; Waller and Gilroy 1992) but more research is seen to be needed to establish what aspects are helpful to such clients (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:100; Gilroy 2006:50). Art psychotherapists have importantly been at the forefront of the arts therapies to develop a

clear psychotherapeutic rationale (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:275) which makes a vital contribution to safe and professional practice with vulnerable clients in mental health care. In this country, art psychotherapists work with some of the most severely disturbed people in mental health care (Parry and Richardson 1996:74); it is one of the few psychodynamic therapies for such clients (Deco 1998).

With regard to artistic and creative principles art psychotherapy is also different from the other arts therapies. Dramatherapists, for instance, place more of an emphasis on artistic and creative practices than the other arts therapies, and art psychotherapy in particular. I was surprised that Karkou's (1999) survey found that less than half the responding art psychotherapists give specific art traditions as an important theoretical influence, and none report it to be the most or even a very important influence. The inference drawn was that arts therapists should not neglect the artistic components of their work and should rely less upon other fields:

...it is important for arts therapies to strengthen theoretical and practical development that stems from within the arts therapies field itself... discipline specific developments offer sufficient theoretical justifications of practice ... without the need to borrow ideas from other fields (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:276).

Alongside this, another worrying aspect is that our practice as artists has been in danger of being neglected, although an increased awareness of this has become apparent. In the United States, for instance, Lachman-Chapin et al (1998), urge art psychotherapists to expand their role beyond the clinical world and enter the art world more actively as artists. In the UK, one of the findings of Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife's (2000) research on experiential art psychotherapy groups concluded that the professional socialisation of art psychotherapists during training can contribute to a model of professional practice that finds personal art practice difficult to maintain and which inadvertently places more value on words than artmaking. One of the implications for this is a finding from Gilroy's previous research (1989, 1992b) that when art therapists stop making art, they consider their practice becomes more verbally oriented, indicating that it threatens our identity and the

basis of our clinical practice. Gilroy's (1989, 1992b) and Dudley et al's (2000) research informed developments in training and now more emphasis is placed upon the trainee's art practice<sup>1</sup>. It seems essential to develop models using our own specialist knowledge and background. Approaches based on the visual arts are more congruent and fundamental to our practice than those taking a primarily language-based route (Mahony 2001:51). Not only does utilising artistic and creative frameworks from visual arts differentiate the discipline, it is our discipline-specific (Gilroy 1989:8; Karkou and Sanderson 2006:276) contribution to helping those most in need.

### Theorising the art in art psychotherapy

Despite the lack of endorsement and exploitation of art principles found by Karkou and Sanderson (2006) some art psychotherapists have drawn on art to develop theory (for example, Byrne 1979, 1982, 1983, 1995, 1996b; Case 1990; Gilroy 2008; Henzell 1994, 2005; MacLagan 2001a, 2001b; Mahony 2001; Simon 1985, 1992; Schaverien 1992, 1993, 1995; Tipple 1992, 2003). Art history, in particular, has been a major source in the literature that does draw on visual arts to think about theoretical underpinnings. For instance, in the United States mark making is reflected on, and the idea of the special image made in art therapy (Steinhardt 1995); the meaning of images is explored by research into containers in art and the author's own art (Kaufman 1996); doors in 20th century painting is examined (Junge 1994); and the meaning of abstract imagery is explored (Hanes 1998). In this country, narrative art is explored to shed light on narrative in clinical practice (Bates Wilding 2005). Interestingly, it is indicated that a creative and therapeutic focus is limited when subject matter becomes privileged over any formal concerns. The art of drawing is investigated and connections are made between theories from art psychotherapy, art history, psychoanalysis and neuroscience, concluding that the drawn line has a close relationship with the roots of consciousness (Ramm 2005). Gilroy (2008) draws on art historical discourses using a heuristic method to consider consumption and production of art in art therapy. Tipple (2003) also uses art historical theory to explore the idea of 'troc' to describe the shifting

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<sup>1</sup>See Goldsmiths, Department of Professional and Community Education (PACE), *Definitive Document, MA Art Psychotherapy, 2006*, page 11.

relationship of the painter to their culture and relates this to what the art psychotherapy client makes in assessment.

Art Brut and Outsider Art have been explored by MacLagan (1982, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1999) including links with art psychotherapy, debating the therapeutic effects of art. Henley (1992) also considers the aesthetics of Art Brut (Dubuffet 1989; Cardinal 1972; MacGregor 1989) and uses it to inform a model for his own art therapy practice where Kramer's (1971) criteria of 'evocative' power; 'inner consistency' and 'economy of means' is related to the values of Art Brut. The antecedents of art therapy have been investigated by Henzell (1978) including the influences of radical psychiatry and the cultural contexts of the 1960's and 1970's (Henzell 1997).

In the United States the introduction of art history into the clinical situation itself has shown promising results. Individual and group case studies explored the role of art history when it was used as a tool in art therapy treatment plans, including gallery visits and slide shows of modern art. Increased self-esteem, self-acceptance, social awareness and enhanced creativity was observed (Alter-Muri 1996). Miller's (1993) research also shows positive results and in this case used an art educative approach with mini art history lectures.

Given Karkou and Sanderson's (2006) findings' regarding the restricted theoretical focus suggested by the British art psychotherapy literature, an important strand for the profession is that a broadening of ideology is urged by a few practitioners regarding postmodern thinking and attitudes (Alter-Muri 1998; Burt 1996; Byrne 1995, 1996b). Including influences from contemporary art and popular culture is also encouraged in relation to clinical practice (Wood 1999, 2000a). Critically, with this kind of thinking different cultural views can be better incorporated and addressed by avoiding a fixed view on one therapeutic framework; and by understanding that identity and problems are socially constructed, not just the result of genes or preverbal experience.

Byrne's work has considered art and art psychotherapy, art and psychopathology, aesthetics, and social/political parameters over several decades. Aesthetic approaches were also considered as a practical consideration given to teaching for the art psychotherapy training course at Birmingham (Byrne 1982). He provides a postmodern rationale for his practice (1995, 2001); usefully critiques modernist influences in art psychotherapy and discusses the theories relating to meaning, language and discursive practices that characterise art psychotherapy's development. Significantly, he argues there is a need to locate art psychotherapy's current position within current cultural debates related to recent art histories. The combination of specific personalities in its history and 'its unique structural features' is seen to make the process of art psychotherapy a 'new art form' (1996b:17). Byrne's concept integrates the two practices.

Joy Schaverien (1982, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005) has contributed significantly to art psychotherapy's theoretical base with her consideration of the process of artmaking in the therapeutic arena. Using a single case study she discusses applications of pictures as data in research (1993). Her extensive analysis (1992, 1993) of this case uses art historical method and, as a Jungian analyst, psychoanalytic theory to systematically examine the work. In thinking about the 'artist's relation to the picture' Schaverien identifies five stages in the processes of making and looking at the image that take place at the client's own pace (1992:106). An initial, unconscious *identification* is followed by *familiarisation* as the unconscious begins to become conscious, leading on to *acknowledgement* where it might be spoken about, and moving towards *assimilation* where various aspects are integrated. Finally *disposal/takes place* which Schaverien sees as significant regarding resolution of the transference relationship with the therapist (1997:25). Because of the emphasis here on the client/therapist relationship, Karkou and Sanderson (2006) have pointed out the similarities of this process with verbal psychotherapy. Another significant concept that Schaverien has introduced is the idea of the 'diagrammatic' and 'embodied' image. She conceives of the diagrammatic image as describing relationship and inviting comment, and the embodied image as bringing about a change in state in the artist. She describes it as a picture 'to which spoken words could not be added without diminishing the image' (1997:32). She has also drawn attention to the

retrospective review of artwork that features in some art psychotherapy practice and how this is similar to the artist's retrospective exhibition (Schaverien 1992). Schaverien's position is of interest here because she ascribes life to the image (1992) where artmaking becomes a means of action.

MacLagan's extensive work on aesthetics (1983a and b, 1994, 1989a, 1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2005) has also contributed greatly to art psychotherapy's theoretical base. Like Schaverien his work focuses on drawing and painting. He argues that the aesthetic qualities of pictures carry complex subliminal psychological resonances which play a crucial role in art psychotherapy (2001b). Seen as an inevitable result of any mark-making, our response, he argues, is bodily and on various levels as we identify with or recreate the gestures (2001a). Also involved are fantasies and associations, metaphoric resonances present in the facture (2001b:104) and indeed a poetic way of elaborating on the picture (1994:51). MacLagan (2001b) suggests there is a danger that the special context of art psychotherapy can narrow the psychological focus into that which fits most readily with psychotherapeutic concepts (2001b:93). Taking a different view from Byrne, he (MacLagan 2001b:93) refers to Thomson describing paintings made in art psychotherapy as a communicating relationship, as lacking a 'core', making them clearly therapeutic art (Thomson 1989:36). I would suggest this implies something is missing, inferring poor quality. Is this art in the service of talking? Like Thomson (1989), he discusses the language of art in art psychotherapy and calls for it to be more than a mere adjunct to the therapy (MacLagan 1989a:10) by exploring new connections between aesthetic and psychological qualities (MacLagan 1999).

The role of the art in the art psychotherapy process seems to be a pivotal aspect. Is it a verbal tool, an adjunct in the therapy process as reflected in its history (Champernowne 1971), or can it be conceptualised as having its own life that can produce an effect?

Skaife's (2008) recent paper explores her thinking in relation to two papers by art psychotherapy theorists MacLagan (2005) and Mann (2006). Her research shows a similar interest in materiality and art to my project and therefore offers useful parallels. A major difference between our approaches is that she has used philosophy as a method to explore

these issues. Skaife has explored the tensions between art and talk in art psychotherapy (2001) and in this more recent paper suggests that an inferior position of the body, materiality and art is to be found in MacLagan (2005) and Mann's (2006) work. She argues that both MacLagan, who argues for the importance of imagination in art psychotherapy and Mann, who takes a Freudian view, focus on cerebral aspects in the papers resulting in a repression of materiality leading to a neglect of context and the making process. Skaife uses Irigaray's (2004) writings to think about art and talk in art psychotherapy and the importance of sensory experience that Skaife translates to the art psychotherapy setting using the example of viscous materials.

The clinical vignette Skaife uses as an example focuses on the materiality of the artwork rather than the autobiography of the artist. Skaife describes one artefact made by a member of an art psychotherapy group in a supervisee's casework. The two aspects that made the work very powerful to Skaife were that the art was unusual in the group as it was the only work made over time and worked on every week, and that the use of materials was minimal. Skaife describes the artwork as an A3 sheet of paper folded into 16 squares, one for each week that are dated and worked on with pencil or crayon with a line or dot repetitive decoration. She likens this to artists in the 1960s and 1970s and presumes that Mann would see this as defensive and blocked creativity. She describes the materiality of its deteriorating and fragile condition as being like skin. However, it makes Skaife think of knitting and handwriting exercises from school. She uses her own associations to draw these inferences about the genres that the client is drawing on and from this Skaife takes the step of assuming they are showing up a particular working class women's position in society and that it may have autobiographical links. This may have been useful if Skaife was associating to her own personal art work, but the client's cultural associations are not known. For instance, Skaife's associations that traditionally knitting might be associated with women and handwriting with children are generalisations with little historical basis except as her own cultural associations that she has made seeing the work out of its context and at one remove as the therapist's supervisor. The art is not knitting or handwriting. An existential slant is inferred as the paper becomes worn and the relevance to the group could be a political statement and a dynamic of change.

As Skaife says, by focusing on the materiality of the artwork its own separate life is revealed that is also part of the group. However, her approach does not access the detail of how working on the image over time might be transforming for the client. Association as the way of accessing cultural forms relates to only one aspect of negotiating meaning. What is very positive is that the meanings that are negotiated relate to the way the image is made, what it looks like and social issues but the limitations are that this is in relation to Skaife's associations, rather than relevant art historical and visual arts literature or the other contexts of the group's artmaking such as what media was available.

Skaife importantly demonstrates how focusing on the materiality avoids locating meaning as solely originating in the artist's autobiography and shows how elements of the making process of an image can critique the inherent social relations.

Simon's (1985, 1992) work gives agency to artmaking, suggesting there is life in the image in a similar way to Schaverien (1992). Her work on therapeutic change and graphic style is also significant in that it draws on styles from art history. Again, there is a focus on pictures. Her thinking about pictorial styles was influenced by Jungian theory (Hogan 2001:208). Simon proposes that a painting develops as a visual dialogue and suggests that each of the four basic styles she identifies reflects a fundamental attitude to life. Two of the styles are described as Archaic and are seen to have the appearance of primitive or prehistoric art. The other two styles are called Traditional and seen to be in the post-Renaissance tradition. She conceptualised these styles creating a circular system as if located at four points of a compass. Spontaneous artwork was seen by Simon to develop mostly clockwise around the compass moving from one style to another and the artwork could contain features of two adjoining styles. For instance, 'Archaic Linear' reflects a sensuous orientation, and the work may be abstract and with scale and dramatic impact that is more than pattern. Byzantine art or Cycladic figures for example, are brought to mind (1992:58) and it can have a containing and ordering effect (1992:69). By contrast, 'Traditional Massive' is intuitive and perceptual in nature, and spatial relations and light are important with, for instance, chiaroscuro effects, landscapes and seascapes. Rembrandt and sculptors such as

Giacometti come to mind (1992:128) and the style draws attention to the outer world, suggesting a relatedness to others. Her discussion of the artwork using this framework opens up intricacies held within the work and she proposes that it is the change in the 'look' of the work (in a series) that echoes a change in attitude by the maker. She says that focusing in this way on the graphic elements rather than on the content for meaning, allows the therapist to see creative potential beyond the limitations of circumstance.

Focusing on the content is seen by Henzell (1994) to be part of art psychotherapy borrowing from psychotherapy, and as such to be significantly limiting. Like Simon, Henzell takes the view that the meaning of an image is not necessarily presented in the content. He examines underlying assumptions in art psychotherapy and psychotherapy and distinguishes between 'art' and the 'pictorial image' (1994:76). The 'pictorial image' is seen as shaped by psychodynamics in psychotherapy and consequently blunted compared to the life of an image in art. The distinctions relate to his view of the central position of language in psychoanalytic hermeneutics and the problems inherent in applying linguistic, interpretative procedures to images. He sees severe problems when such interpretive procedures are applied to a particular kind of image-making where the purpose is the presentation of meaning and is revelatory, conceiving a meaning as it were, in itself. He argues that psychoanalysis fundamentally consists of 'interpretations applied to conversation and reports as if they were texts' (1994:79). Importantly, he proposes that some images are their own interpretation, very often surpassing the referential functions of language. Such a view intimates a therapeutic value in making art without words. He describes how images can 'convey their sense in the matter that actually forms them' . . . directly presenting 'their meaning as a form, rather than as a *content* to be deciphered' (Henzell 1995:186, author's emphasis).

Henzell's idea that an artwork can be conceiving a meaning in itself, being its own interpretation, seems to be a key concept regarding the role of therapeutic artmaking.

Although psychoanalytic thinking has predominated in British art psychotherapy theoretical frameworks, methods from art history have also been an important influence. Art is there,

albeit minimally. The role of the image has emerged as a key aspect of the creative art process. Historical influences placed it as an adjunct in a psychotherapeutic process providing content to be deciphered. Conceiving of the image as having agency itself suggests meaning can be embedded in its form.

It has been suggested that art psychotherapy practice needs to broaden its ideology to incorporate current cultural debates and postmodern theories. This would offer a rationale for practice that is more inclusive of different cultures and avoid the confines of relying on borrowed concepts that may have practical limitations. It has also been emphasised that the theoretical base would be strengthened by extending explorations within visual arts and the other arts therapies with enriching and beneficial effects for the discipline including the proposal that art psychotherapy can be understood as a new art form.

I will go on to look at the literature on art used as a therapeutic activity including the arts in mental health movement.

### **Art and therapeutic art activities or art used as therapy**

What differentiates our practice from that of other professions who use art? A number of disciplines use art for therapeutic purposes which can confuse trainees and new therapists. It is a key issue regarding the model of art psychotherapy group practice that I developed, and also for art psychotherapy in its development as a discipline. Goodall (1990), for instance, reflects on his confusion about his roles as art teacher and art psychotherapist in a psychiatric adolescent unit. The different backgrounds and varied approaches in the profession are thought to have contributed to this confusion (Rubin 1982:57), also reflected in previous debates about whether the professional title should be 'Art Therapist' or 'Art Psychotherapist' (see Dudley 2004).

My research examining perceptions of art psychotherapy (Mahony 1992a, 1994, 1999) in alcohol services highlights the importance of the art psychotherapist being clear when describing the discipline to other professionals. Rubin distinguishes between art used as

therapy and art activities with some therapeutic component and sees the distinctions being invisible to an uninformed outsider as the difference is inside the art psychotherapist's mind, in their knowledge and understanding about art, therapy, the therapeutic relationship and underlying mechanisms of change (Rubin 1982:58).

I surveyed the use of art and art activities in alcohol services (Mahony 1992a, 1994, 1999) and identified three different ways of viewing the use of art as a therapeutic medium. I defined these views by drawing on Waller's (1991, 1992) work investigating the influences on the development of art psychotherapy as a profession. I found practically no art psychotherapy in the responding projects but widespread use of art activities by other staff and much confusion about the term 'art therapy' (Mahony 1992a, 1994). Analysis of the descriptive material in the responses to the survey suggested that perceptions of art therapy as being 'art as psychotherapy' could be linked to its absence in these services. What seems important now about my MA research, is that the staff in the alcohol services valued the therapeutic use of art with their client group for qualities that appeared to be 'educational' and 'healing' rather than psychotherapeutic (Mahony 1992a, 1994, 1999).

The theme of approaches with educational components being used for therapeutic effect is also found in my paper about the sociotherapy in the Henderson Hospital, a therapeutic community for young people diagnosed with severe personality disorder. As Art Psychotherapist I saw the development of art psychotherapy at the Henderson influenced by the institution's history which had an unbroken connection with training for work and industry. I perceived a conflict of value systems and a 'strain towards utility' (Mahony 1992b:60) with an ideology of rehabilitation effecting art psychotherapy which was well established as a so-called 'Work Group'. This group was a relaxed, unstructured studio-like situation where I made art along with everyone else and in the last half hour there was tea and task-focused discussion rather than focusing on the content or meaning of the artwork (Mahony 1992b:64). When I introduced an analytic art psychotherapy group it struggled as a peripheral part of the programme and was problematic with high anxiety (Mahony 1992b:62). I later began to consider that the relaxed approach with sustained artmaking and intense engagement with art media seemed to enable integrative work at a deeper level than the

more analytic approach which, for this client group may have been more threatening and stressful as well as verbally and content focused. My thinking about artmaking in studio groups has developed from this experience. A particular kind of studio model evolved where I made art alongside members, including textile art. Artmaking was the central focus. My approach was informed by group analysis (see McNeilly 1984, 2006) but modified (see Waller 1993:19) for working with people with severe mental health problems in the community.

My work at the Henderson relates to that of Goodall's in an educational setting, who found 'the more relaxed atmosphere of the relatively unstructured 'art lessons' . . . often produced 'work of intense meaning and relevance to the pupil'. He says the children sometimes allowed him to talk with them about their work but sometimes 'just want to be left alone to get on with it'. He goes on: 'the group and individual psychotherapeutic sessions do allow for more intense interchanges of mood, thought and feeling, the very ceremony or ritual transmitting a sense of gravity or occasion to the participants' (1990:18). His experience in this setting with children was that the two approaches complemented each other.

Authors from other disciplines advocate using art for therapeutic purposes including psychiatry (Birchnell 1986), nursing (Baldwin 1975), and for a variety of professionals (Warren 1993). Movements such as 'arts for all' and 'arts in health' have developed almost in parallel to art psychotherapy with their own distinctive practices but with a rather 'ill-defined' theoretical base (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:15). Since 1997 arts provision has been extended to promote social inclusion and the increased funding for artists and art projects in the community and in hospitals has proved quite a challenge to art psychotherapists, with a rather competitive edge developing between the two factions (see Learmonth 2002 and Offord 2002). The community artists claim a fundamentally different approach seeing themselves as emphasising mental health and wellbeing and being opposed to (in their view) a focus on mental illness (Cowling 2004; Offord 2002). White states: 'Community-based arts in mental health projects are attempting to provide services that are outside statutory mental health provision so as to avoid the potential stigma for participants

of being 'clients' in receipt of treatment and therapy' (2004:88). Art psychotherapy is not seen as art<sup>2</sup> 'as it probably includes both artistic activity and psychodynamic theory' (Geddes 2004:70).

However, as Karkou and Sanderson point out:

... those practising therapeutic arts may work with vulnerable clients without necessarily possessing any therapeutic training, without having any professional obligations and without monitoring procedures in place. Artistic ability and experience is often the only requirement (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:32).

(See for example, *Performing Medicine* website, Clod Ensemble 2006). Supervision for practitioners working in mental health settings as found in art psychotherapy practice is suggested to combat the emotional challenges and stress of the work (Watt 2001):

Art therapy's code of practice obliges each therapist to spend regular amounts of time reflecting on practice with other practitioners. Art for health workers could benefit from using this model as one of the safety features of a project. It may be important to include this procedure in training and evaluation (Health Development Agency 2000:15).

The need for training and shared practice is acknowledged (White 2004), as well as harnessing insider knowledge (Pawson and Tilley 1997). However, more 'formal connections for strategic development and training are yet to be forged' (White 2004:83):

Art therapy works in a medical context with individual clients or patients and so seems to be doing something different from community-based art for health. However, there is clearly some overlap between the two areas. Art therapy may be able to provide a useful contribution to the delivery and practice of art for health (Health Development Agency 2000:15).

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<sup>2</sup> This is based on the definition: 'The application of skill to the arts of imitation and design, painting, engraving, sculpture, architecture; the cultivation of these in its principles, practice and results; the skilful production of the beautiful in visible forms' (Oxford English Dictionary 2004).

Particular arts in health concepts are emphasised for their benefits to clients and for their social impact, for example: user-led rather than therapist interventions are seen as important developments (White 2004:80); creative engagement with the public, described as 'collective action', is what is seen to distinguish arts in health from art psychotherapy (see White 2004:77 and Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech: Brown 2002); and art as a social as well as a personal activity is emphasised and above all the idea of social inclusion, referring to problems of social exclusion (see Watt 2001; Huxley and Thornicroft 2003).

In the following sections of the literature review I will examine art psychotherapists who have written about their art, consider transference and related papers. I will then move on to writings from the fields of textiles and ceramics that are particularly pertinent to my project.

## Therapists' Art

There is an increased questioning about the relationship of art to art psychotherapy by practitioners. This is reflected in the literature and American art psychotherapists clearly have similar concerns (see for instance, Ault 1976; Swan-Foster et al, 2001; Feen-Calligan and Sands-Goldstein 1996), but there is surprisingly little by practitioners exploring their own art.

Gilroy's (1989, 1992b) work about art psychotherapists' relationship to their art is distinctive in this area, and gives a poignant edge to this initially puzzling absence. Raising awareness of the importance of the art psychotherapist's own art practice for upholding the uniqueness of the profession and the individual, her research shows how art psychotherapists struggle to keep in touch with their art following their experience of training and the process and practice of art psychotherapy. She describes receiving letters and thanks in response to her questionnaire surveying the profession, giving an indication of the level of feeling involved (Gilroy 1989:6). The findings are fascinating. Although almost everyone managed some sort of involvement with art, however small, only 30% still

considered themselves to be practising as artists. Most are uncertain or no longer think of themselves as an artist, or have never thought of themselves as artists anyway. The implications are important as many considered their art practice enabled them to stay closely in touch with their clients' creative process. It seems very positive that most people managed to do some art, however little.

A key aspect to art psychotherapists' artmaking in relation to this research is whether it takes place in or outside the therapeutic relationship. For the purpose of this review, I structured artmaking by art psychotherapists into three categories. Firstly, personal artmaking *outside clinical practice*; secondly artmaking that was *part of clinical practice*; and finally artmaking *in clinical sessions*. I will start by looking at those who describe their own art made outside of a therapeutic relationship.

### **1. The therapist's personal artmaking *outside clinical practice***

Examples of art psychotherapists' art can be seen on the website of the Journal of the American Art Therapy Association<sup>3</sup> and at times on the cover of the International Journal of Art Therapy: Inscape. However, very few art psychotherapists (see particularly Gilroy 1989; Rawcliffe 1987; Rogers 2002) describe or explore their personal art practice. Gilroy's (1989) research finds art psychotherapists engaged in three types of art activity: those that see themselves as artists with a deep involvement in their art; those where their art is inseparable from therapy; and those on the fringes of art. The second group frequently work in an 'exclusively therapeutic, insight oriented manner' with some not even equating their activity with 'art' (1989:6). This is borne out in the literature.

For example, at times, the therapist's own art appears like therapy or is described as therapy (Fenner 1996; Politsky 1995; Halliday 1988; Sibbett 2005c). Three of these self-studies are research led (Fenner 1996; Politsky 1995 and Sibbett 2005c). For instance, one is an heuristic study of a brief (five minute) drawing experience over a two month period (Fenner 1996). Audiotapes, transcripts, and word essences were used to create another

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<sup>3</sup> [www.arttherapyjournal.org/cover](http://www.arttherapyjournal.org/cover).

image in a cycle, recording a daily 'state of being'. Themes were extracted and described, producing new self-knowledge with an enhanced sense of well-being. In Politsky's (1995) exploration pastel drawings were made during a three week period at a time of anguish followed by three years of investigation. Spontaneous painting as self-healing is described following a near-death experience (Halliday 1988). Sibbett (2005b) gives a profoundly moving account of 'liminality', which is the sense of limbo, powerlessness and of being out of time when facing the heightened life/death awareness of her own story of cancer.

Artmaking is used for self exploration and growth, where active imagination (Allen 1995b), or an intimate dialogue with the artwork (Lanham 1998; McNiff 1992) is part of an exploratory process related to art psychotherapy. Lanham (2002) finds photography enhances the process of considering of how the images arose.

Milner (1971) has been an important role model for the profession in terms of therapists' art (see for example, Edwards 2001; Rawcliffe 1987; Thomson 1998; Gilroy 1989; Lachman-Chapin 1983; Rogers 2002). She was Honorary President of the British Association of Art Therapists from the 1970's until her death in 1998. In her popular book *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1971) she describes her use of 'free drawings' to explore her own obstacles to artistic expression. Gilroy (1989) describes her process of integrating her 'art' and her 'art therapy' art, charting the initial fear and inhibition through to a greater understanding and acceptance. Gilroy ruefully refers to Milner with the title of her article: 'On Occasionally Being Able to Paint' (1989).

Adams (2001) delivered a challenging paper at the conference Mental Health and Art, Hall Place, Bexley in July 2001. She examined underlying assumptions contained in Milner's theory of creativity and questioned the appropriateness of its use on art psychotherapy trainings. Significantly, she questioned Milner's division of practice of art as an artist and as a therapist. Adams asked: What is curative art expression? And why is this split off from personal art practice? She pointed out the assumption that the inner world can be expressed, proposing that works produced in a therapeutic context are prescribed through an informal cultural consensus inscribed by psychoanalytic thinking. Milner claims that the

omnipotence of the infant and its bodily products are directly linked to art expression - to give life to dead matter, and creativity is aligned with psychological stability. Adams considers these theories are limiting and that there are other debates to consider, such as the work of Lacan and Kellogg. The questions raised speak directly about underlying assumptions that are only touched on by some authors.

## **2. The therapist's artmaking as part of clinical practice**

Rogers (2002) and Case (1994) describe their artmaking outside clinical sessions as a way of informing a therapy. Rogers sees artmaking and its relationship to the art psychotherapist's experience as illuminating the art psychotherapy process through an 'inter-psychic resonance' (2002:70). She also describes making images jointly with a client intending to 'mirror, contain and amplify' or 'sustain the rhythm of the session ... to support ... the uniqueness of his expression' (2002:62). However, surprisingly countertransference is not referred to. Current cultural influences are described, including the shared role of author, artist and audience in the creation of meaning. Art psychotherapy importantly, is seen as part of these developments with its particular kind of relationship between artist, viewer and context.

Case sees her own art work outside sessions as the 'transforming vessel' of a therapy (1994:8). She would not normally make art in sessions as she would be 'unavailable' to the client. Her artwork outside sessions is a 'kind of reflective countertransference' (1994:5). In her case example the room and the art psychotherapist are used by the child as an 'art object' as the therapist is tied up in a terrifying portrayal that is theorised with the psychoanalytic concept of projective identification. Fascinatingly, figures in her own work emerge which help come to terms with the child's experience.

Based on ideas that evolved in training art psychotherapy students, Brown et al (2003) propose a model for supervision that includes making images. The first thirty minutes of ninety minute groups were used for image making. Their experience of using 'the tools of our profession in the supervision of art therapy' seemed 'logical' and is described as 'powerful

and gratifying' (2003:77). Looking at all the images together brought alive the communications passing between the trainee therapists and their clients.

### **3. The therapist's artmaking in clinical sessions**

A critical question for clinical practice is: should art psychotherapists create artwork alongside their clients (Haeseler 1989)? Lachman-Chapin describes this practice as the artist as clinician (1983). As Gilroy's research shows that 'many art therapists do their own work in sessions' (1989:6) with clients, it is intriguing that comparatively few write about this (see for instance, Arguile 1990; Gilroy 1989; Kenworthy 1995; Mahony 1992b; Lachman-Chapin 1983; Morter 1997; Rogers 2002; Tipple 1994). Gilroy (1989) describes how, for those practitioners that do art with clients, some see it as part of their work as artists, and for others rather differently, it is part of the dynamic or dialogue of the session. The issues involved are complex particularly regarding countertransference and self disclosure by the therapist, so it seems surprising that there is not more discussion about such aspects by some authors.

There are conflicting views about this important topic (Haeseler 1989) including those of Lachman-Chapin (1979, 1983) with her 'art interaction' approach, and Wadeson (1980). Wadeson's reasons for not making art with clients are firstly to do with the therapist's role, as it is the client's time and their therapy. This is a different way of viewing making art compared to the more recent view of Rogers (2002) cited earlier. Secondly, clients may feel inadequate when seeing someone's work who is more experienced. This suggests the therapist may not be able to monitor their own work. And thirdly, the therapist may become absorbed and neglect the client, suggesting a powerful process that the therapist may not be able to resist.

Haeseler's argument is that it is possible to help the creative process by doing art in the service of clients when it seems appropriate (1989:70). Importantly, she makes the point that being with someone doing art allows access to their creative process. With regard to groups, she says it seems to put the clients at ease and gives them privacy; it demonstrates how to use and work with art materials; it demonstrates how art can help; it makes the

therapist's relationship to artwork clear and accessible; it makes clear the therapist's investment in the group; and allows clients to know the therapist more fully, hastening formation of therapeutic alliance whilst maintaining a professional distance.

Morter (1997) and Lachman-Chapin (1979, 1983) both explore the use of the therapist's art as part of 'empathetic mirroring' based on psychoanalytic theory. Morter describes a five-year therapeutic relationship with a psychotic adult. She likens her artmaking as therapist in the sessions to a play technique of Klein when working with very disturbed and young children, who incorporated her observations using toys through which the children could explore the therapeutic relationship. Morter discusses the dangers of such an intervention, which for instance, could be experienced by the client as intrusive or seductive. In the therapy envious feelings are aroused but justified as offering the possibility of exploring the damage that was already there.

The keystone to Lachman-Chapin's (1979, 1983) interactive technique referred to above, is empathy and mirroring. It is informed by the psychoanalytic ideas of Kohut (1971) who conceives of a 'narcissistic investment in an art product' which is seen as a self-object that helps to separate the person from more infantile stages of development by mirroring and confirming aspects of the self (Lachman-Chapin 1979:5). The art psychotherapist responds to the client through the artwork and makes art (see also Mahony 1992b) in some sessions which is shared and discussed with the client along with their work (see also McNiff 1997). She finds that using herself as an artist in this way enhances her abilities as a clinician and sees the concrete products that are made as an embodiment of what is going on. Recommendations are made by Lachman-Chapin to guard against the pitfalls of countertransference particularly through introducing the therapist's own material, which is not discussed by Morter (1997) and Rogers (2002). Lachman-Chapin warns this is not a technique for the novice or the inexperienced as it is possible to become extremely attuned on an unconscious level with the client that can be experienced as 'fusing' and be frightening for both parties. Her final point is that in this dialogue there is a mutuality that she believes is healing in itself. Lachman-Chapin's practical recommendations for recognising unconscious material are: firstly, the therapist has had intensive personal analysis; long

clinical experience; knowledgeable supervisors; and finally that the therapist should be an artist with a wide range of art experience and understanding of their own artistic vocabulary (1983:25).

Although therapists need to give careful consideration to their countertransference and to the clients response, making art in clinical sessions seems to offer potential advantages.

I will now go on to examine literature related to transference.

### **1.1.2 Transference**

With countertransference clearly now an essential consideration regarding therapists' artwork, I will first discuss authors in the art psychotherapy literature considering the closely linked concept of transference. Here again it is seen as a controversial subject with conflicting views (Allen 1988).

Transference as a psychodynamic or psychoanalytic concept, involves feelings directed at the therapist that were originally connected to a significant person from the client's early life. In art psychotherapy practitioners can understand the client's relationship with an art object or art materials as involving transference. For instance, Case (1996) explores aesthetic moments experienced by children in art psychotherapy in response to a picture on her wall; she considers this in relation to transference. She sees these moments as representing an ideal object or therapist and a point of change in inner experience. McMurray and Schwartz-Mirman (1998) in a similar sense to Case, see the focus of art therapy to be the translation of primary impulses and fantasies onto the work of art instead of the therapist. Constant interpretation of the transference is seen to free up the creative process which is thought to be blocked by repeated patterns from past experience, although they acknowledge that such methods may promote regression and not be appropriate for vulnerable clients.

Taking this further, Allen (1988) questions how useful the concept of transference is in relation to art psychotherapy when the concept was originally developed in relation to a specific set of psychoanalytical procedures designed for a particular setting (private practice) that had its own safeguards. In other settings such as art psychotherapy, encouraging transference, which develops dependency, for instance by interpreting events in relation to the client/therapist relationship, may be destructive or damaging because of the unequal power relations, and usually very different client group and context. She proposes that '... the promotion of transference in art therapy inhibits the therapeutic efficacy of the art process' (Allen 1988:113).

Instead, encouraging investment in the artwork as the primary relationship is advocated by Allen who understands that it is 'the client's investment of self in the art process and product' that is effective (1988:115), echoing the function of Kohut's (1971) self-object. Seen as providing 'a unique form of containment', complex artmaking (such as a series of drawings, sculpture or oil painting) '... in a studio environment evokes our earliest experiences' and offers the opportunity of working through intense transferential feelings (1988:116). Clients are advised to stay with the artwork rather than talk otherwise integrative processes are cut short:

The inherent qualities of art materials are such that the manipulation of them in the act of giving form constitutes a vehicle for working out intrapsychic conflicts, confronting limitations, and experiencing one's potential. It is the role of the art therapist to create an environment where such work can take place (Allen 1988:115).

An integrative process is described here that gives agency to the image making process in a therapeutic environment.

Schaverien's influential work (1982, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1997) focuses on pictures and she describes, when art psychotherapy is effective, how the picture becomes a 'talisman' in the imaginal world of the client which carries the feelings of transference. She elaborates what she calls the 'scapegoat transference' where the talisman carries the 'ills' away, in the first stage of recognition of feelings. She sees this as distinct to the other understanding of

scapegoat which has the negative connotations of disowned bad feeling that is projected onto another. Mann (1989) has argued that the processes involved, of feelings projected into a containing object, may be more usefully understood by the psychoanalytic concept of projective identification.

Schaverien (1990) draws on Jung's alchemical metaphor to explore the concept of transference in art psychotherapy. The transformation process in alchemy turned base metals into gold and is seen as a union of opposites based on affinity. The unconscious process draws the therapist and client into an intimate form of relationship, almost in spite of themselves (1990:15). She sees part of the process happening in the client's picture which needs to have the power to seduce the therapist and that if it does not, is unlikely to be an effective element in the therapy. Schaverien believes the image is as important as the process, deserving equal attention. She identifies the 'aesthetic countertransference' of the therapist as part of the 'life of the picture', which is seen as a vessel for transformation that is experienced by the therapist when viewing the work (Schaverien 1992). Here the aesthetic sensibilities of the therapist have been brought into play as part of the life of the image.

Countertransference, generally considered to involve the therapist's impulses, attitudes and values that are raised by the therapeutic relationship, is discussed by other art psychotherapists. It has unsuspected difficulties (Mahony 1992b), associated guilt and unsupervised countertransference is dangerous for clients (Horovitz-Darby 1992). Like the 'fusing' described by Lachman Chapin, Kenworthy (1995) suggests that a case of 'co-mingling' of the therapeutic relationship provides an example of countertransference in a trainee art therapist where boundaries become very blurred. However, on the other hand countertransference is also seen as holding the key to facilitating growth (Mann 1988) as suggested by Schaverien above, expanding the transformative possibilities of the transference (Lewis 1992).

Significantly for my research, the making of art by the art psychotherapist in sessions is seen to provide containment by holding countertransference feedback. Greenwood and

Layton (1987) says this reduces transference and increases equality. The therapist's artwork is also thought by Morter (1997) to serve as a useful mirror for client experience and also to make it easier for the client to be in the room with the therapist. It is essential that this kind of work is not undertaken in isolation as professional and personal support is vital (Greenwood 2000) (see also Horowitz Darby 1992; Lachman-Chapin 1979, 1983; Mahony 1992b).

In this section of the literature review the importance of the therapist's countertransference and its relationship to their own artmaking has been highlighted. What might be raised for the therapist and their own histories? If the client's art is affected by their transference, how is the therapist's personal art practice affected? The writing of Case, Kenworthy, Lachman-Chapin and Rogers all points to a deep connection. In the review it is clear that art history is a rich source that has been drawn on by numerous practitioners and theoreticians. Byrne, Alter-Muri, Gilroy and Wood have drawn attention to the importance of considering current paradigms and debates in art history and Karkou and Sanderson argue that the other arts therapies can be drawn on for theoretical frameworks.

It seems significant that there has been a lack of consideration given to what has been termed craft in any of the literature. Riches (1994), however, uses the word to describe a way of making art. Riches discusses craft and self expression in art and art education and art psychotherapy with long term prisoners. His research evaluated the contribution of the Art and Craft Centre in HMP Albany to the prisoners' welfare and to the prison regime. Technical virtuosity characterised the prisoners' artwork, and Riches understands this as demonstrating that the prisoner has assumed the attitudes and methods of the craftsman rather than the artist. He understands the art process as being primarily concerned with 'exploration, research and expression', seeing the craft process as prescriptive to make a particular end product 'which is all important'. He argues that the therapeutic benefit for the prisoners is in 'art as craft' (1994:83). Concern by the prisoners' is with getting the work to 'look right' rather than expressing perceptions or experiences of prison which in Riches view, would make it art. I would suggest that making it look right may be profoundly connected to the prisoners' experience of being imprisoned.

Perhaps considering craft practices has been avoided because of their association with occupational therapy, or because as a concept, craft has suffered from low esteem in the past (Harrod 1999:238). Because of its absence and because of my own obsession and practice with materials, I am going on to include a review of current debates that are relevant to my project from the field of modern studio ceramics and 20<sup>th</sup> century textiles, including their therapeutic use. I will describe the specific influences on my own personal art practice in the next part of the thesis (Part Two).

### 1.1.3 Art Practices

The utopian ideals of William Morris have influenced 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics and textiles. Morris's ideas and those of Ruskin informed the Arts and Crafts Movement. Challenging low quality, Victorian design and the effects of industrialisation at the time, Morris wanted aesthetically satisfying objects of fine craftsmanship available to ordinary people for use in everyday life. The new industrial centres that had burgeoned provided the means for cheap, mass produced goods which had led to a 'growing contempt for craftsmanship' (Greensted 1996:2). The history of modern ceramics and textiles is described by Harrod (1999) and, interestingly, shows links to the history of art psychotherapy and occupational therapy in the rehabilitative and therapeutic use of art and craft activities.

One and a half million men were left permanently wounded or weakened by the First World War. The Art Workers' Guild and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society published ideas for the training of these men which they submitted to the Ministries of Labour, Pensions and Reconstruction (Hogg 1919). A craft renaissance was envisaged and a whole range of workshops were suggested because of the handicrafts' recuperative, therapeutic and educational value. The workshop culture was envisaged to extend beyond the disabled and gradually to replace art school training and the division of labour.

The preference for direct processes and small workshops – and the consequent possibilities for self expression . . . went hand in hand with the popularisation of the crafts (Harrod 1999:18).

The crafts did not become the mass movement that was hoped for but Harrod considers that the work of the craftsmen and women that followed had a visual coherence that has to be taken into account in the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century visual arts in this country.

Importantly for my argument she sees the crafts as responding actively to visual events, appearing to 'embody ideas and current thought', for instance:

... to stand for 'Englishness' in both World Wars, to supply a multiplicity of meanings at the South Bank exhibition of the Festival of Britain, to stand for the counter-culture in the 1970s and for evidence of a corporate soul in the 1980's (Harrod 1999:465).

Harrod's view is that crafts embody or reify theory, 'commenting profoundly on the world of things and on consumption' including design, mass production, fine art and the nature of materials - 'visually rather than verbally' (1999:464). This has important implications for art psychotherapy and the use of craft in clinical practice. The idea that these practices can embody ideas supports Henzell's concept of an image being its own interpretation and revelatory (1995:186). Harrod describes the crafts having operated a series of experiments throughout the twentieth century 'giving as much pleasure to the maker as to the user' (1999:465) and very much in the socialist tradition of the arts and crafts movement. 'Craft' as a distinct critical concept, a protest against large scale industry and 'shoddy commercial goods and the division between fine and applied arts' is described by Hill (2002). She argues that it was when the social, artistic and linguistic hierarchies that developed in the nineteenth century the crafts found a self-reflexive character and particular relationship to the social landscape where they became their own criticism. Just by pursuing a craft was a critical gesture against 'the hierarchies of work and class and economics' that dominated at the time.

## Ceramics

In a different vein to Harrod, referring to the lack of critical literature about modern ceramics, Jones (2000) argues that form was overwhelmingly privileged over context in the case of studio ceramics and that this created a critical vacuum. Interestingly, this links to

the ideas above where ceramics may be commenting visually and critically through the form as suggested by Harrod. Jones says some of the historical records of British studio ceramics have been lost due to a lack of awareness of the importance of the context. Johnson (2001), however, addresses this gap in studio ceramics and also the larger crafts community by questioning why they were cut off from wider critical debate. Probably referring to the technical articles in potters' journals like *Ceramic Review*, she says arguments must be mobilised around 'why' as opposed to 'how' to make. In a challenging article with a pointed title (*Joined Up Thinking*) she shows up the 'conservative, protectionist' position that was taken up by Peter Fuller and Peter Dormer in the 1980's who dominated the analytical craft writing at the time. She proposes that, rather than homogenising the whole field of 'craft' as if it were a single activity, that discrete areas are identified. She says acutely 'the crafts signal a point of articulation within the broader field of visual culture, rather than a fixed entity, stuck behind an immovable boundary' (2001:32). She puts forward a structure to clarify the relationship to use-value and the different positions that practitioners take up: for, about and beyond use. Although such a critical structure might be useful, it suggests a rather fixed reading of an object. Harrod's concept of embodying an idea allows for a more fluid response which, as Henzell, Hill and Harrod suggest, the image or object can be its own meaning or interpretation that is embodied in the form.

Stair (2003) says that although it could be argued that studio pottery has a well documented history, he points out that more recently the accuracy of the early accounts have been questioned because of the lack of analysis. Stair's research traces the complex Modernist links with studio pottery in a thorough analysis. Art historians such as Roger Fry and Herbert Read laid the ground for Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew with concepts of abstraction and elevation of Chinese art. Leach promoted Sung ware as a central tenet in his ceramics, which is the ethos referred to of the 'still, small voice' to be found in a pot (Bell-Hughes 2000:17). Stair, like Harrod, convincingly argues that the 'vibrant ideas of early Modernism' were expressed by studio pottery 'through concepts of abstraction, expression and utility' making its history more substantial than previously thought (Stair 2003:42).

De Waal (2003) and Stair (2002) review Cardew's book *Pioneer Pottery* (reprinted, 2002). This book connects to my own history and has been highly significant to me. As such it is an important text in relation to the research also because it foregrounds the use of materials and form as the ceramic journals did, and as criticised by Johnson (2001) and Jones (2000). De Waal points out Cardew's view that pottery is one of the liberal arts, not a poor relation of painting or sculpture. He says his writing has a freshness, and none of the defensive tone of some writing about studio pottery. The central premise of the book is that raw materials are a source of inspiration linked to process and artefact - the agency for ideas. Even more specifically - technical problems are a potent source of inspiration. Interestingly, De Waal (2003) sees Cardew's grounding in place (the geology of the raw materials) as finding creativity through limitation. I see it more to do with a bodily response: a maker's engagement with materials. De Waal, in a sense illustrates this himself, by saying that an appendix in the book about building a brick clamp of 25,000 bricks is 'one of the most compelling descriptions of the book' (2003:45). But to transform clay into such an awesome construction is not a source of inspiration for De Waal. Cardew explains that a few thousand bricks are always 'useful' in a pioneering situation, but to De Waal this is an idea to 'chill the heart' of any would-be pioneer. However, he sees the book as a 'why' manual not just a 'how to' manual, no doubt referring to Johnson's (2001) criticism aimed at studio pottery writing that it is preoccupied with the latter. He does not refer to Stair's review who describes the book as seminal. Seeing the self-sufficiency needed at the time as 'unimaginable' today, he says the practical sections have limited appeal now, with the preparation of raw materials by hand as having little relevance to modern potters today. This point seems debatable, as the preparation itself may be a source of inspiration, which is my experience. But he points out the book encapsulates central issues shaping studio pottery and sees it portraying informed passion rare in writing on studio pottery, standing comparison with anything written since.

Possible dilemmas for ceramists now regarding making are widened with contemporary cultural concerns including for which audience and what context (Poncelat 2001). Importantly, ideas can be addressed within the form and on the surface, and the object can be, functional, decorative or an art object - as well as the possibility of being all three (2001:8). The question of ordinariness associated with a mug and possibility of

transformation from the 'mundane to the particular' (2001:9) can be developed to consider audience and context where the place invites a particular way of looking. With galleries and museums for example, space and time is given for contemplation with restraints on touch and ownership and curatorial strategies for engagement.

These aspects about making things for use seem particularly relevant to clinical practice. They were highlighted by Iwamoto (2009) when working on a ceramics project with partially sighted people. During this she discovered the user's enjoyment of touching tactile, functional pieces. She also found that making everyday things, such as vases, cups and lights offered a direct communication with her audience.

### **Therapeutic use of Ceramics**

Clay, unlike materials for textiles, is usually provided in art psychotherapy rooms. A number of practitioners describe the use of clay in art psychotherapy with different client groups and different aspects of its use (for example, Anderson 1995; Knight 1996; Shaw 1997; Waldman 1999; Lyddiatt 1971; Greenwood 1994; Foster 1990, 1997; Henley 1986a, 1986b, 1991, 2002; Herrmann 1995; Yaretzky et al 1996). Therapeutic qualities of working with clay are identified in a review of art psychotherapy and psychotherapy literature (Sholt and Gavron 2006). Major therapeutic features are defined: the experience of touch, movement and the three-dimensional aspect of clay-work; deconstruction and construction processes; and a regression process. The tactile qualities are thought to facilitate the expression of emotions, involving intense engagement and the potential for rich and deep expression. Unconscious material can be revealed, and verbal communication facilitated. The clay sculpting process is also found to embody thoughts, feelings and fantasies (2006:68).

With regard to the technological aspects of clay work, the potters wheel can provide a child or adolescent with a way of being in complete control (Knight 1996) or in contrast, it can 'take over' (Lyddiatt 1971). There is a rhythmic soothing of the repetitive movement of the treadle and the choice of speed, frenzy, chaos, slow rhythm and standstill provides safety as well as release of energy. The fluidity of the process and the sensual material mirrors internal and external physical and emotional experiences (Knight 1996). The clay can create

a bridge between deep psychic, personal and social experiences (Waldman 1999), with the sensory qualities lending themselves to 'robust manipulation and interaction' (Henley 1991:71). The description of *Sung* dynasty pots as expressing 'stability, self-composure and introspection' is a metaphorical analysis linking inner and outer states that seems relevant now (1991:71). Henley's ideas seem to focus on constructing complex qualities with the clay and he introduces art history as part of the experience. He sees the hand as a pivotal sensory centre and describes his approach as a potter and therapist working with children as aiming for a 'quality art experience that may be inherently therapeutic' (2002:17). Facilitating a sustained engagement with clay he starts his workshops with examples of art such as Goldsworthy's work. Discussion of the work includes conceptual aspects and values, for instance being in harmony and respectful of nature. Henley seems acutely attuned to the nuances of the genres he describes. For instance, Raku fired ware (2002:207); the pit firing of North American potters (2002:159); and the significance of coiling as a method in a case where there was severe abandonment anxiety. These qualities and characteristics that have been exploited for therapeutic use are echoed and developed in the literature on textiles.

I will be addressing these issues raised by Poncelat and Henley further in **Part Two** in my exploration of Grayson Perry's ceramic work.

## TEXTILES

As with studio pottery, practitioners of textiles have been seen as reluctant to develop theory (Johnson 1995). A number of strands of critical discussion inform contemporary textile practice which will be touched on here and explored in more depth later in my thesis. Because of the central place in our lives of cloth - a 'mediating surface' through which we encounter the world (Barnett 2003) - the richness of textile metaphors provides a diverse set of practices with potent resonances (Barnett 1999; and Johnson 1999 whose exhibition *Textures of Memory* is described in my Chapter 2.1, *Three Commentaries*). A wide variety of writing draws on a number of other disciplines, including literary and cultural theory (for example, Rowley 1999; Maharaj 2001), psychoanalysis (for example, Hamlyn 2003), post-modern and post-colonial debate (for example, Jefferies 1999, 2001).

Status and hierarchy is an issue so, like studio pottery, textile history has often failed to achieve due recognition because of its association with domesticity (Jefferies 2000, Parker 1984, Parker and Pollack 1981, Sorkin 2003) and its status that has been complex, ambiguous and contradictory (Harrod 1999:462). In the case of textile and material practices, in addition, there is also the association with 'women's work'. The new developments of textile art in the 1960s and 1970s are described by Johnson (1996, 2000) who refers to the harsh critical response of Fuller to the exhibition *Fabric and Form* curated by Brennand-Wood in 1982. She attributes the lack of success of these developments in Britain to his attack, saying it shook confidence and distorted debate. Challenging the hegemony of painting and sculpture, textiles inhabits a borderland between fine art and craft (Harris 1999). The process of making is a conscious and investigative act with the idea that there are conceptual possibilities in materials and form (Harris 1999, Johnson 2000), for after all, making and thinking - textiles and text, have a common root: *textere* to weave (Duffey (Harding) 1996).

Identity is a central theme (Leong 2001; Lawrence and Obermeyer 2001) with gender roles prominent for exploring these issues (Lewis 1991). Marincola sees many artists using cloth down-playing facture, preferring the use of material as metaphor. The 'lowly' connotations of common techniques of crochet or embroidery enhance the message (1995:37). But the deployment of political agendas is less radical than it seems as research has shown that textiles have long been sites for encoded resistance (Parker 1984; Lippard 1983).

The generic term Textiles as discussed by Jefferies (1995) commonly signifies ideas of female creativity and domesticity combined with perceptions of slow, painstaking labour which is ironically, at the same time, devalued as invisible, non-productive women's work. This echoes De Waal's response to the labour involved in Cardew's brick clamp. Alongside this, textile manufacture produces for consumption on a multinational level and 'sweatshops' are 'always ethnic, class and gender indexed' (1995:164). The many associations with textiles include representations as simple, honest, just a set of technical procedures, with references to bygone memories, Empire and leisurely feminine pastimes within a patriarchal order. These are repetitiously articulated across high and popular culture. I would add, that

perhaps this is why such practices have become devalued in the minds of past makers. Intrinsically, however, other chains of identities are signified which destabilise such values: the otherness of costume (the exotic, erotic) and associations of fabric with the body and its relationship to the unconscious. Jefferies suggests that during the 1970s and 1980s the genre of 'textile art' with its disruptive excesses of the overscaled, sensuous and exuberant, marks a transgressive shift from dainty stitches with 'hysterical' combinations of process and weave' releasing the 'feminine' from the margins of the unconscious (1995:166). The 'worn-out binary opposition of fine art versus craft' appeared to be renovated and enlivened (1995:170). But, she argues it is not so simple. The interdisciplinarity of textiles shifts understanding into continually changing combinations and contexts. She cites Maharaj (1991) who argues that avant-garde textile practice describes inside/outside space - 'edginess', and dislocates previous ideas of art practice, genres and gender.

These contradictory and complex levels inherent in such media and practices are probably why it is increasingly being taken up for radical, expressive and exploratory work today (for instance, the exhibition *Boys that Sew*).

This is also illustrated in reporting on the first Constance Howard lecture at Goldsmiths' College (Harper 2002). Jubelin uses delicate petit point to hold images that are staged to convey a narrative of discomfort relating to difference and misfit associated with the marginalisation of indigenous people. Her work started in Australia and uses the 'second class' materiality of textiles, and a 'lower rank', 'feminine' technique associated with the European 'lady' to subvert ideas and imagery of hierarchies of the heroic, the superior and the dominant.

In a later paper, Jefferies (1997) eloquently explores autobiography, female authorship and textiles. She examines exciting possibilities for fluid identities and subjectivities which disrupt and challenge ideas of the singular rational subject. These are qualities and ideas that are ideal for use as an exploratory vehicle in an art psychotherapy group. She highlights the plurality of critical textile practice combined with self and subjectivity, which

transgresses previous boundaries of certainty of knowledge. She points out how unsettling reflections on self in writing and textiles can be, seeing the 'I' as a 'subject-in-process' moving in relation to others (1997:9). Meanings can be 'staged, played off and multiplied' (1997:10) in practice that ruptures stereotyped patterns of femininity, masculinity and familiar territories of place such as the home. The multilayered complexity of metaphorical and tactile qualities and depth of resonances offered by textile art seems hugely rich for therapeutic practice.

### **Therapeutic Use of Textiles**

Despite such exciting potential, unlike ceramics, no art psychotherapist to my knowledge, has written about using textiles in clinical practice other than Lyddiatt (1971) who includes these materials for stocking an art psychotherapy room. However, the Aids Memorial Quilt has been discussed and its implications for art psychotherapists seeing the quilt as serving many of the functions of an expressive therapy and incorporating the associations described above in a deeply powerful and moving icon (Kerewsky 1997; Weiser 1989, 1990). We have to turn to psychology for investigations into the use of tapestry and needlecraft in the management of depression; chronic illness and disability; and unresolved grief (Reynolds 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002). Two qualitative studies analyse narratives of needlework practitioners who were self-selected through adverts in needlework magazines, and a case study describes brief counselling work with a client who decides to create a tapestry. Reynold's findings bear out the above authors and include a potent identity-enhancing function and reported deep immersion that probably accounts for increased feelings of self-mastery and control.

I will go on to discuss the issues raised by the literature review.

## **DISCUSSION**

From this literature review it can be seen that a number of prominent themes emerge. In the art psychotherapy literature the influence of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis has dominated the discourses from visual arts where art history is the main source drawn on by

practitioners. A psychotherapeutic rationale for practice has been important for formulating the serious and complicated practices needed for developing therapy, but there have been significant consequences. There is a worrying picture of art psychotherapists finding their art practice hard to keep up, an inadvertent emphasis on words over image-making and art traditions being unimportant as a theoretical influence. However, the tide seems to have turned and these aspects are the focus for concern by some authors. Practitioners are actively taking steps to consider the relationship of art to art psychotherapy, and to theorise the use of art in clinical practice drawing on art, and to consider what differentiates our practice from that of other disciplines. A few are using visual arts discourses for research into art psychotherapy. In my research I pull these discourses into the foreground in order to bring all the issues together for examination. What is largely absent in the literature is thinking about the art in art psychotherapy by making art.

How do we look at images (including pictures)? This is considered in the literature. Those who attempt to theorise the use of art in art psychotherapy drawing on art theory, mainly use art history to find meaning. This includes abstract imagery, their own art and art psychotherapy, as well as actually introducing it into sessions as part of treatment. On the other hand, facture is said to be experienced as a bodily way of engaging the viewer in responding to its actual physical manufacture, as well as fantasizing or poetically imagining. This raises the dominant position of painting and drawing in art psychotherapy, as very few practitioners focus on other media, although the research of a psychologist into the use of textiles with chronic illness shows promising results. Such hegemony refers back to earlier periods of art history and neglects a more recent critical postmodern positioning of ideology. The review importantly suggests making things for use can be seen to be directly communicating with the audience, and that working with textile materials can offer an experience of deep immersion and enhance self-esteem. Additionally, crafts are seen to visually express ideas and current thought, responding actively to visual events embodying theory and meaning in their form.

The picture created by the review is one where it seems the small amount written by art psychotherapists about their art probably may relate to the changes arising from their experience of training and the process and practice of art psychotherapy. If this is the case, there are implications for how it is experienced by the client and how art psychotherapy is practised, which is explored further in the research. The little written about personal art practice suggests that it is often used in a therapeutic manner. My own art practice is very different to this so I was intrigued to explore what influences I might be bringing with me into the clinical situation. Artmaking linked to clinical practice in the literature is either a type of reflective countertransference made outside sessions to inform the therapy, or actually made as part of therapeutic practice in the sessions. Many do the latter but few write about it and with countertransference as a key factor, more discussion and exploration is needed. Whilst the complexity of issues makes it a technique for very experienced, supervised practitioners, there are clearly many therapeutic benefits which are my reasons for investigating this important area in my research.

From the literature, it would seem that key areas are: relationship, communication; subjective and objective processes; internal emotional experience and external physical experience; metaphor, encoding and formal structures of artworks; conceptual possibilities in materials and form; clinical, visual arts and crafts practices and how to bring together these factors. Others that are significant that have a bearing on the creative art process include the context; therapeutic approach, technique and style of the therapist; the clients' creative art process and my creative art process both outside and inside the group.

The role of the image or artifact is an important area for exploration. Art has been used for verbal dialogue which seems to be a form underlying some models of practice. Complex issues are involved in the tensions emerging out of image-making processes and verbal interactions and given the serious disturbance that art psychotherapists often work with, this seems to be an important area for consideration because it is the focus on the artmaking and artwork that is often considered containing.

The idea of a split between what is art and what is art in therapy is raised. This is elaborated by placing it in a historical context, pointing out that the therapist's art practice can seem to be split off from their clinical practice. Assumptions underlying the basis of practice are also raised about expressing an inner world and how free association drawn from psychoanalytical thinking relates to the spontaneous production of images from the unconscious in much art psychotherapy practice in this country.

Another aspect is whether privacy is needed to make art of personal significance. There is a suggestion about making 'special' work and that it may not necessarily be talked about in the therapy. Further, it may even be unnecessary to talk about it with the therapist if an integrative process takes place in the artmaking that embodies meaning in the form. Could these be uncomfortable ideas for art psychotherapy if it is seen to be a communicating relationship as described by MacLagan? The consideration for privacy remarked on by Haesler is offered when an art therapist does their own work in a group. Is this also an uncomfortable idea due to the psychotherapeutic principle where the therapist does not bring in her own material? I will be examining my artmaking alongside clients and the impact that this may have on the therapy. I also examine my artmaking outside clinical practice and use an autobiographical lens to think about its significance.

These themes are the ones I shall be seeking to clarify in my project. In this literature review I have presented the context and influences on my thinking regarding the rationale for my research, as well as positioning it with regard to other work. In the next chapter 1.2 I will discuss the methodology, strategy and design of my visual heuristic research and its significance in using art practice as a method.

# PART ONE – VISUAL HEURISTIC RESEARCH an autobiographical lens

## 1.2 Art practice as research: reflexive engagement and visible subjectivity

In this chapter I will describe the strategy, design, activities and procedures I have carried out in my research project. I will describe the research literature that provides the context for my approach to the inquiry. A discussion of the methodological issues that underlie the strategy provides a 'dialogue with the setting' (Holliday 2002), followed by a description of the research activities themselves. I will then discuss the ethical issues that were initially raised by one of the first exhibitions I visited as part of the research (*We all peel the onions*, described in Chapter 2.1) and which were of far greater significance than I had first imagined.

### 1.2.1 Methodological issues justifying the strategy

The literature review in the previous chapter made the case that thinking about the art in art psychotherapy in ways that draw upon making art is largely absent. The research questions below are designed to fill this gap and to provide a concreteness and specificity that can guide what is being looked for (Foss and Waters 2003). As the backbone of the research design they need to be clearly formulated and intellectually worthwhile. However, a delicate balance needs to be maintained; in qualitative research the questions should also allow it to be exploratory and fluid (Mason 1996:16; McLeod 2003:25).

#### Research questions

1. What is happening in the creative art experience related to an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group?
2. As therapist, what is the relevance of my art practice to such a group?
3. What is helpful about the creative art process in bringing about personal understanding or meaning and how might this relate to an art psychotherapy group?

#### 4. How does the use of art media contribute to all this?

The characteristics of human science research questions aim to reveal the essences and meanings of human experience, to uncover qualitative rather than quantitative factors, to engage the total self and to sustain passionate involvement. The research aims to be illuminated with careful descriptions, vivid and accurate renderings of the experience, rather than measurement (Moustakis 1994:205).

My methodological aims for the research reflect the research questions' interrelated issues (see for example, McLeod 2001; Mason 1996; Gergen 1997; Bazerman 1988; Denscombe 1998; Phillips and Pugh 1994; Gilroy 1992a, 1996; Greenhill et al 2001):

1. To mirror the art psychotherapy experience (*following* the creative process like the therapist)
2. To avoid early closure of meaning (for instance, with distanced writing)
3. To situate the research, specifying my own perspective
4. To provide systematic and rigorous enquiry with critical reflection and to be able to check credibility with comparisons
5. To include my interests and assumptions
6. To maintain confidentiality (everything is anonymised)
7. To review literature other than contextual as areas emerge (to avoid influence as in no. 2.)

### **Heuristic research**

Gilroy (1992a, 1996), Junge and Linesch (1993), and McNiff (1998) urge adopting a congruent approach in art psychotherapy research. A heuristic strategy enables a wide open and deep investigation which is appropriate for a new area of research such as this. 'Layers of depth and meaning' are created to depict the experience by using personal documents including artwork, narrative descriptions, journals and poems (Moustakis 1994:19). The heuristic research question should offer a personal challenge to search and understand the self and the world in which one lives. The process is autobiographic and yet will have social and perhaps universal significance (Moustakis 1990:15). The approach emphasises deep

absorption in the topic, rather than focusing on one situation in which the investigated experience occurs:

The root meaning of *heuristic* comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or to find. It refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries (Moustakis 1990:9).

The original depictions can be complete in themselves with interpretation being seen as removing the aliveness. Complete narratives can be included in the text for this reason rather than excerpts. The data is constantly checked and returned to, for a constant verification of the material.

Six phases in the process guide investigations: 'the initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis' (Moustakis 1990:27).

Moustakis (1990) says the task of the initial engagement is to find an intense interest through self dialogue to form the question, entering fully into the process where life experiences will clarify and expand knowledge of the topic and illuminate the question and context. In the immersion process the question lives and grows intimately in the understanding of the researcher as they enter into all possible opportunities for exploring raw material for immersion (which could involve, for instance, people, places, nature, meetings). The sustained focus and concentration is maintained with self searching, intuition and hunches. There is then a retreat from the intense focus and a certain detachment in which the incubation process allows a development of the knowledge on another level outside of immediate awareness. Later, illumination occurs as a breakthrough of new awareness of the qualities of the themes which may include new dimensions, hidden meanings or a

modification of understanding. The experience is a fundamental, creative discovery. What has happened is then fully examined in the explication phase. Elucidation of the themes and descriptive qualities of the investigated experience focuses on feelings, thoughts and beliefs with intense and comprehensive detail. Explaining the various layers of meaning involves refinement and correction where eventually the essence of the dominant and core themes is developed and brought together. Now there is a familiarity with all the data, its qualities, details and meanings, a creative synthesis can be achieved with knowledge of the material that has allowed the question to unfold. Inspiration and intuition is needed so that a comprehensive expression of the essence is realised (Moustakis 1990:27).

Moustakis sees heuristics emphasising connectedness and relationship (1990:38) which is appropriate for an inquiry into creativity within a therapeutic relationship. For therapy practitioners, heuristic and discovery-orientated research is valuable for the ideas that are generated rather than findings that are based on verification of what is known (McLeod 2003:193).

By focusing on visual arts practice and heuristics, a combined strategy can be achieved:

### **Art practice as research: visual heuristic research**

The credibility of information obtained from visual forms is often undervalued (Mason 1996:72). This situation has been increasingly acknowledged and, fascinatingly, there is startling and extreme phraseology amongst authors, hinting at the feeling generated. Academia, for instance, is described as hyperliterate where linguistics is the model for most philosophical and social interpretation, leading to 'sensorial poverty' (De Waal 2005).

Morgan discusses the problems of the historical development of the PhD, and its 'Frankenstein-like transplantation into the body of fine art' (2001:6) with publishability being a paramount objective. She sees theory more recently coming from the new areas of visual and material culture supporting the idea of the 'visual or material text' (2001:7) whereas traditional scholarship saw artwork as the thing texts were written about, not a text in itself. The HEFCE's Research Assessment Exercise already recognises exhibiting as a recognised equivalent and there is a widening acceptance of art as a form of knowledge

production (Okon 2005) even though there are criticisms that these are still influenced by a 'tyranny of the word over the product of visual creativity' (Glinkowski 2004) and a reluctance to apply similar criteria to theoretical and studio research (Petelin 2005).

Sullivan (2005) subscribes to privileging imagination and intellect in a different but complementary way to the social sciences. He takes the view that art practice as research can be grounded in methods rigorous enough to satisfy institutional demands. His useful review of recent visual research methodologies suggests there are three strategies followed by the authors. Firstly authors drawing on disciplines with a tradition of visual means of collecting and interpreting data (for example, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies). Secondly, drawing on art history, art theory and criticism (traditions based on historical inquiry, literary-based interpretative strategies, and postmodern critical perspectives). Thirdly, a genre based on arts-based educational inquiry where the arts are used to expand and broaden the gathering and representing of information. Sullivan positions his thesis as closest to Eisner's (2002) arguments about sensory-based learning and the insights of artistic experience for broadening the base of educational research methodologies. Aiming to promote visual research strategies, he discusses different ways of theorising that range from 'instrumental means-ends approaches to practitioner-based approaches grounded in reflexive thought and action' (Sullivan 2005:xix). He emphasises the transformative potential of visual images and the interrelationship of circumstances that should be considered in such research. He argues for inventive methods and forms grounded in the visual arts yet adapted to wider systems of theory and practice:

The messy resistance of new understanding relies on the rationality of intuition and the imagination of the intellect, and these are the kind of mindful processes used in art practice as research (Sullivan 2005:226).

### **1.2.2 Design of the research related to key questions**

In order to clarify the design and strategy of the research, I have linked below the data sources and methods to the research questions as suggested by Mason. She believes such a process can help consider which methods are 'ontologically and epistemologically' (1996:20) appropriate and inappropriate. In other words, whether the strategy is coherent and the

methods complementary and based on similar assumptions and values. I found this a systematic way of checking the methods. A discussion of the issues follows. The three categories used to consider the methods in relation to the key questions are 'Justification', 'Practicalities' (for example, resources, access, skills), and 'Issues'. A number of research methodology authors have been used to consider the similarity and differences of the methods in relation to scientific ones, as suggested by Sullivan (2005).

**1. What is happening in the creative art experience related to an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group?**

My method used exhibition practices. I curated a private exhibition of the group members' and my work together (see Chapter 4.3 '*Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group*'). Notes I made at the time were the basis for a narrative description about the experience that I later examined to extract themes.

**2. As therapist, what is the relevance of my art practice to such a group?**

Multimethods were used in the approach to this question.

(a) As in the previous question, I used exhibition practices including curating to examine my art practice in and out of the group by constructing displays, arrangements and exhibitions (see Chapter 3.2 '*Reunion of broken parts*'; Chapter 4.3 '*Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group*'). Notes taken at the time were written up in narrative accounts and the texts were analysed.

(b) I also examined my artmaking and that of the group members in a visually-based clinical case study (see Chapter 4.2 *Co-creators*). This uses a different gaze from the usual genre of narrative case studies. It focuses on the artwork in a narrative that is art based although still a clinical case study. Interactions of members regarding the artwork, the making and the photographing are described.

(c) I explored my personal art practice, its histories, contexts, influences, sources and productions in a visual heuristic process and produced an illustrated, autobiographical account (see Chapter 3.1 '*A secret abundance*').

(d) My own art practice is examined in four accounts (Chapter 3.1 '*A secret abundance*', Chapter 3.2 *Reunion (of broken parts)*, Chapter 4.2 *Co-creators in combined practices*, and

*Chapter 4.3 Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group) and includes using extracts from my journals and analysis of my narrative texts.*

**3. What is helpful about the creative art process in bringing about personal understanding or meaning and how might this relate to an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group?**

As in the previous question, I used a multimethod approach.

- (a) I used exhibition practices and examined the experience of visiting five art exhibitions (see Part Two, Chapters 2.1; 2.2 and 2.3). Narrative accounts about my response to the art as a viewer were analysed and discussed in relation to associated texts.
- (b) I examined the creative art process of the group members and myself in a visually-based clinical case study (see Chapter 4.2 *Co-creators*).
- (c) As in the previous question, I explored my personal art practice in an illustrated, autobiographical account (see Chapter 3.1 '*A secret abundance*').

**4. How does the use of art materials contribute to all this?**

A multimethod approach used exhibitions, displays, available writings, accounts, including the clinical case study and my art history being available for analysis and comparison. The question was particularly focused on through an analysis of the work of artists Tracey Emin and Grayson Perry in two of the exhibition visits referred to above (see Chapter 2.2 *Tracey Emin*, and Chapter 2.3 *Grayson Perry*).

I will now discuss the justification for these methods and related practicalities and issues.

### **Art practice as research**

Generally, as a paradigm, visual arts practice as research is appropriate for my project. I developed exhibition practices as a particular approach in the research.

## **Exhibition practices as a research method**

### **Justification**

Exhibition practices use visual arts practices for data generation and analysis (Sullivan 2005:211) and are appropriate for a visual heuristic process as described by Moustakis (1990). An in-depth understanding of the situation is provided in terms of detailed observation, context and interconnection (Denscombe 1998:157).

Sullivan describes the use of exhibitions as places of visual arts inquiry as a clearly identified practice relating to the production and display of art (2005:207). As a site for visual arts research to examine particular issues, opportunities exist to reconfigure subjects and constituents (Sullivan 2005:208). Exhibition practices involve artistic, curatorial and related interpretative research practices that can be combined with different 'forms of data generation and analysis':

The potential exists with an exhibition research project to design and carry out a study that uses element of artistic experience that are central to what it is we do, and incorporates reliable methods that have credence in the research community. Such a study can be a discrete event that explores a particular research issue, or be seen as a nested study within a larger research project (Sullivan 2005:211).

I produced a series of nested studies. I developed my particular exhibition method when I wrote about the first exhibition (see Chapter 2.1, *Three Commentaries*). Each exhibition event followed the same heuristic process of immersion, writing notes, making a descriptive narrative followed by analysis (see also Chapter 2.2 *Tracey Emin*; Chapter 2.3 *Grayson Perry*; Chapter 3.2 *Reunion (of broken parts)*; Chapter 4.3 *Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group*). Naturalness is retained with this approach, and there is direct observation. I performed multiple roles as artist, curator, therapist and audience. I used artistic responses to examine the images and objects as a discrete source (Sullivan 2005:11). With such an ethnographic style and a case study strategy, theory can be developed and tested and intricate and subtle realities considered (Denscome 1998:75).

The narrative accounts use an appropriate model, and are looking outside-in. There are autobiographical connections in the narratives yet it is relevant to the setting (Moustakis 1990:15) and it belongs to the bounded research setting (Holliday 2002:39). Available documentation is used. There is subjective material; it is one version of events. The themes that were extracted from the text reconstructed the information presented by the material in a heuristic process where examining the narrative provides an interpretative procedure for the making of meaning. The personal accounts bring connections and a reconstruction. The approach acknowledges inherent reflexivity of social knowledge (Denscombe 1998). As a form of visual arts inquiry my exhibition method is context sensitive and offers holistic explanations including relationships between factors (Denscombe 1998).

### **Practicalities**

With regard to practicalities, the method allowed for an anonymised account so that regarding access, informed consent was not needed as there was a limited audience of my tutors. The method allowed insights not possible using other methods (Denscombe 1998). Triangulation is possible with other studies in the project, such as the clinical case study of the group. The approach then becomes a multimethod appropriate for studying controversial issues, or where complex phenomenon requires clarification, or subjective interpretation needs validation (Cohen and Manion 1980:276).

### **Issues**

It is difficult to generalise from the findings of the exhibition method I have used. The focal role of the researcher's self as an instrument makes it difficult to apply conventional criteria of reliability. However, it is not really appropriate to use standard criteria as the data is particularly context sensitive (Denscombe 1998:157). There is also sufficient detail to allow comparison with other similar cases as 'a single example of a broader class of things' (1998:36), such as other art psychotherapy research using similar methods. Because of the tension between the aspects of 'realism' and the influence of the self (Denscombe 1998), an open and explicit account of the role of the 'self' (Denscombe 1998:75; Hitchcock and Hughes 1989:202) is particularly important.

## **Case study methods**

### **Justification**

I will address the clinical case study (see Chapter 4.2 *Co-creators*) in this section although I have used case study strategies in all my nested studies (see particularly Chapter 4.3 *Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group*) where similar issues apply. Justifications for the case study method are that my therapist's notes made immediately after group sessions offer a first hand report. It is the least intrusive method I could find whilst still providing visual evidence of routine clinical practice. My perception and view of events are revealed and significant incidents and priorities of mine as therapist are provided. It is a retrospective account of data not available by other means and it belongs to the bounded research setting. There are also political reasons for this method regarding power relations (Ezzy 2002, McLeod 2001); a voice is given to the users of the service both in use of photographs of artwork and mediated through my account of their words taken from my therapist's notes. However, it should be borne in mind that power relations still exist as it is my version of their voices.

The rationale for choosing a single-case rather than multiple-case design is that it 'represents the critical test of a significant theory' (Yin 2003:41), that is, my argument that making art in a contained therapeutic setting has transformative potential that is facilitated by the art psychotherapist making art alongside the clients. The group's artmaking including my own, is studied over five years which provides information about how and when it changed over time (Yin 2003:42). Evidence is provided by several sources: photographs of the physical artefacts taken at the time, archival records including the therapist's notes, and participant observation (see Yin 2003:83).

### **Practicalities**

The photographs and therapist's notes are available, retrospective documentation and a source of data in their own right. The notes are representative of a typical account in a social field created in context (Denscombe 1998:167), even though the case study will be providing a different angle to that usually provided (Yin 2003:87). The photographs and therapist's notes as documentation are stable and can be reviewed; they are unobtrusive,

cost-effective and permanent. The photographs of the physical artefacts give insight into cultural features, technical aspects and a broad view over time (Yin 2003:86).

### Issues

The main issue regarding a case study is that it is one version of events which could be influenced by the countertransference and hopes of the therapist/researcher. Meaning needs to be studied carefully, in order to read between the lines (Denscombe 1998:167; Yin 2003:86). Credibility could be questioned as the notes are secondary data produced for other purposes (Yin 2003:87) but they were not created for research purposes so are relatively free of influence from researcher (McLeod 2001:140). A case study is a social construction (Denscombe 1998:170), however, it avoids the abstract distancing of the human research 'subject'.

I have discussed above my methods in relation to the key research questions in order to justify their use and to check for their 'fit' with existing values in the study (Mason 1996:20). I have also attempted to articulate critical argument for their use regarding similarities and differences with those used in the sciences (Sullivan 2005:224).

The key methodological issues that have emerged are as follows:

- Visual arts practices as research:
  - art practice
  - exhibitions
  - curating
  - other artists' work and related texts
- client involvement/ethics
- heuristic approach
- reflexivity/critical subjectivity
- 'voice'

I will move on to thinking about a particular aspect of this research that can pose problems in scientific paradigms.

## Critical subjectivity

The inherent structure of the research process reflects the therapeutic experience of the clients in my clinical practice as I pursued, documented and interrogated my own creative process both in art practice and the research. This experiential aspect is a familiar stance for art psychotherapists whose training embeds this attitude into the fledgling therapist and makes heuristic research a sympathetic approach with many familiar aspects. However, given that this research uses such new methods for art psychotherapy, lacking historical precedents, I have used harder textual analysis to extract themes for analysis and interpretation. The personal narratives in the text retain a softer fluidity associated with the creative process. Wood Conroy also examined her art practice as part of her research. She suggests theoretical and autobiographical documentation mediate between 'intellect and practice, between conscious knowledge and the unconscious shiftings of art practice' (1994:18).

I could have used a phenomenological approach but I did not want the detachment that this encourages. Similarly, phenomenology distils experience while heuristics retains the fullness. The analysis of texts is mindful of hermeneutic thinking. However, there meaning is elucidated from text whereas my analysis of the narrative is a means of finding relationships between different aspects of the phenomena being examined.

I have used art-based methods in a cyclic process. Because of the newness of the approach, I am paying particular attention to methodological issues emphasising critical subjectivity accentuated through the autobiographical lens of my emotional process. One of the issues is the autobiographic voice running throughout my research process. This particular aspect is addressed later in a debate about genres of research writing (see 1.3 'Voices'), providing a critique of orthodoxy (the currently accepted form of academic writing in art psychotherapy). At the heart of my methods is phenomenological immersion. I have used personal narratives in the text as a record of observations that can be reconsulted (Geertz 1973:19). I will briefly consider this here in relation to critical subjectivity. Letherby discusses the issue. She says many feminist researchers draw on their own autobiographies

when deciding what to study, in collecting the data and analysing and writing up (2003:96). She points out many want to acknowledge the 'self' as a resource for helping to make sense of others' lives (for example, Okley and Callaway 1992; Cotterill and Letherby 1993; Stanley 1993). Letherby (2003) acknowledges the tension between subjectivity and objectivity as an issue in feminist research theory that values the personal but recognises that biases need to be minimised. She emphasises the positioning of the researcher in relation to the research process, saying that it is now commonplace for the researcher to produce 'first' person accounts:

our personal biographies are also relevant to the research that we do in terms of choice of topic and method, relationship with respondents and analysis and presentation of the 'findings', and this needs to be acknowledged (Letherby 2003:9).

I have used 'Self' as the central tool and focus for the study in the way that Moustakis describes heuristic research involving self-discovery and going out to others. Whilst wanting to retain the wholeness of the experience, I hope to have minimised bias in a number of ways. The study is grounded with examples (Moustakis 1990:54). Comparing two or more perspectives, for instance exhibition accounts with literature of similar accounts and with interconnected factors such as therapist's notes (Allport 1942:120) provides credibility checks (Holliday 2002:38; Yin 2003:85). The use of my therapist's notes provides a 'triangulation' (Cohen and Manion 1989:269) as they were not written for research purposes (McLeod 2001:140) - or, in postmodern mixed genre terms - a 'crystallisation' (Richardson 1994:522). There is also a 'reflection of another's subjectivity' through expression of my own experience, thus avoiding abstract distancing of 'the subject' (see Gergen 1997:164; Letherby 2003). The art psychotherapy process provides an underlying structure to produce a meaningful explanation of the material (see for example, Ezzy 2002). Direct experience of procedures strengthens validity of the findings (Mason 1996:73).

Reflexivity suggests that the research can never be neutral and passive regarding the social world being examined (Denscombe 1998:73) and making sense of it is inextricably linked to our own culture and experiences and have to be to some degree a social construction or interpretation. In order to publicly include possible influences regarding the role of 'self' in

the research I include my account of this for the reader in the following ways (see Denscombe 1998:75):

- my personal interests in the area of investigation are described in the Introduction
- my personal beliefs and experience linked to the topic are described in my art history (Chapter 3.1)
- my personal expertise in relation to the topic is described in Chapter 4.1

I have presented methodological issues in this section discussing the different methods I used in my strategy. I will now describe the activities themselves, how I went about the research and what actually happened.

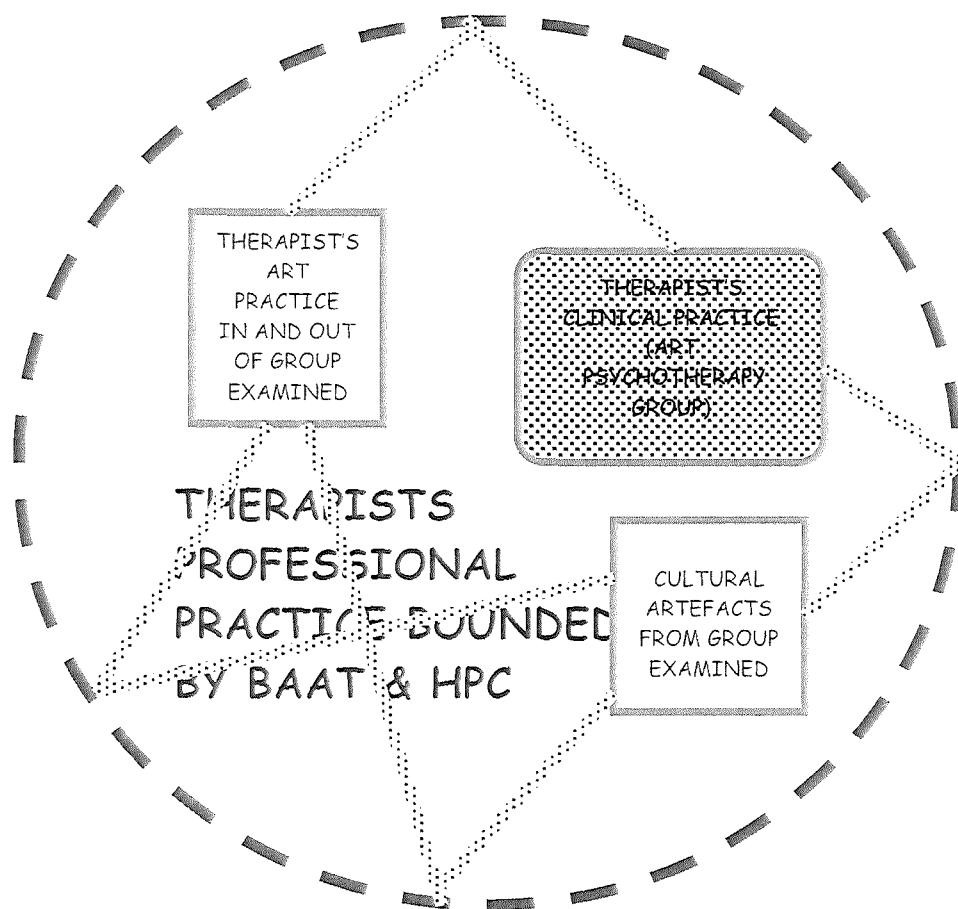
### **1.2.3 Research activities**

#### **Introduction to the research setting**

Holliday (2002) sees qualitative research as locating a study within a particular setting and exploring all possible social variables within a set of manageable boundaries. Themes and focuses will emerge from research procedures that fit the sensitivity of the situation and the vulnerable nature of the people in it. The strategy should suit the subject being studied, avoiding more intrusive methods. Qualitative research looks deeply into the quality of social life (Holliday 2002:6) and is particularly appropriate for research projects such as this.

Holliday says the setting must have a sense of boundedness in terms of time, place and culture, to give connectedness to the data being examined and to provide sufficient richness (2002:38). Using his idea of interconnectedness and his use of a diagram, a simplified version of the different, complex facets of the phenomena being investigated (2002:113) in my own research, can be represented as follows:

RESEARCH SETTING [Source for diagram: Holliday 2002:39]



My research examines my routine clinical practice - an art psychotherapy group - that took place in an NHS outpatient mental health setting in an outer London borough (to be described in Part Four). The inquiry focuses on the relevance of my personal art practice to that group that was set up for people who had severe and/or complex mental health problems.

Large parts of the visual arts practice as research can be broadly classified as a 'descriptive' methodology and ethnographic in style with autobiographical connections yet they are relevant to the setting (Moustakis 1990:15). There are also documentary aspects (Gilroy and Lee 1995:10). Other parts of the research involving participant observation (of

my own art practice) can be classified as 'experiential' research (McLeod 2001:140) within a visual heuristic strategy. Techniques for data analysis including visual and textual analysis, form patterns which constitute the findings (Gilroy and Lee 1995:11).

'Fieldwork' experiences (see Rees 1995:126; Cohen and Manion 1980:238) of my practice alongside my clients are documented in detail and narratives are produced from my notes and observations as a clinician and artist. The texts are examined systematically to produce themes that produce patterns and relationships that can be compared. The rigour of the research process, including how it has responded to the social setting (Holliday 2002:23), is established in the written study by showing the workings of the research and making transparent my subjectivity as researcher.

## **Art psychotherapy methodologies examining clinical practice**

I examine a process of artmaking including my own which I pursued in and out of the group I conducted. This process appeared enabling for members in bringing about positive change. As described in the previous chapter, there has been little research in this area and none examining the impact of art psychotherapy's origins in visual arts (see Anderson 1983; Gilroy 2006; Gilroy and Lee 1995; Payne 1993). My own interests are taken further in this research. These have been in tracing underlying influences on art psychotherapy provision (Mahony 1992a, 1994) and its models (Mahony 1992a and b, 1999; Mahony and Waller 1992).

In the United States McNiff (1998) advocates art based research. Malchiodi (1995) proposes identifying efficacy will come from deepening our understanding of the art process, the therapeutic space and connection to our own artmaking. In this country, a studio-based approach in art psychotherapy research is new (but see Sibbett 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). Methodologies examining clinical practice have included randomised controlled trials (Sheppard et al 1998 and Waller 2002; Richardson et al 2007 and Jones, forthcoming); interviews (for example Sibbett 2005a, 2005b); case study based research (see for instance, Schaverien 1992, 1993; Greenwood and Layton 1987, 1991; Dalley 1979, 1980; Killick 1991, 1993); phenomenological (for example, Skaife 1995, 2000, 2001), experimental

(for example, Dalley 1979, 1980; Luzatto 1987), collaborative (for example, McClelland 1992, 1993), evaluative (for example, Waller 1981), and comparative (Males 1986) approaches (see Gilroy 2006).

In the previous chapter I drew attention to practitioners increasingly drawing on visual arts discourses for research into art psychotherapy and the importance of developing art based methods for exploring and theorising our practice (see also Mahony 2001:51). In the United States McNiff proposes a model for art based research as a method of inquiry into practice, including artmaking by the researcher. This is the approach I am taking in my studio research practice. He suggests that such methods may have been given little attention in the past due to a lack of confidence in such methods by practitioners (1998:12), or a resistance (Gilroy 1992a) that may come from feelings of being marginalised (Allen 1992) in medical, educational and research establishments (Gilroy 1996; Linesch 1995; McNiff 1998), where now Evidence-based Practice paradigms dominate. In this country Gilroy (1992, 2006) argues that we can use rigorous and appropriate methodologies from traditions using visual and art based models that also satisfy the demands and criteria of EBP.

I examine the process of making art as therapy and using artmaking for gathering the raw material of personal process and group work. Sibbett (2005a, 2005c) also uses her artmaking to explore the experience of liminality as a rite of passage transition both as a therapist and patient in cancer care. Liminality is the sense of limbo and powerlessness that faces people with heightened life and death awareness. Her moving auto/biography and anthropological perspective examines in narratives the relevance of art psychotherapy, symbolic expression and experiences of 'flow'. Her personal artwork as well as being an important means of expression at this time of diagnosis and treatment, also powerfully shows a heightened death awareness and prodromal symbols as early indicators of the disease even before she was aware of her condition. Her research investigates the relationship between her experience and that of participating clients, highlighting the importance of art psychotherapy for helping express and manage unspeakable fear,

vulnerability and acute liminal states with embodied experience, and has important recommendations for professionals working in this area of cancer care.

I would position myself most closely with Sibbett as another practitioner examining her own artmaking to gather information about the artmaking process in clinical practice. She also has a multimethod approach and in her case uses interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, art reviews and concept mapping (2005a:13). Similarly, her narratives use the first person and she integrates 'biographical and personally reflective material and art work' (2005c:224). Her approach is autoethnographical. This emphasises reflexivity and focuses on the cultural and social aspects of a situation in its natural environment, which in her case, not only included the life threatening condition of her clients but also her own (2005a:13). Although the links with my clients were less profound and immediate, my own project has a heuristic strategy emphasising critical subjectivity where the experience of total immersion by the researcher contributes knowledge about the nature of human experience that can be connected to that of others. My nested studies use methods based in visual arts practices throughout the whole process.

My art practice ran in parallel to the theoretical investigations, including reviewing the literature, considering relevant artists' work, reflection and my own writings interspersed with exhibition visits and reading. These formed an interaction in a constantly developing process (see Appendix 1, Fig. 1.1). Visual displays staged the reciprocation at intervals (see Appendix 2, Fig. 1.2). For several years of the research, alongside art practice at home, ran artmaking by all in the clinical group until it closed which will be elaborated in Part Four. Interactions there acted on my research in a continual, simultaneous progression.

I will now present the sequence in which the research activities took place and describe what actually happened.

## A Chronology of the research activities

1. Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth
  2. Live in Your Head
  3. We all peel the onions
  4. Artefacts Relating to an Art Psychotherapy Group
  5. Reunion (of broken parts): Topology of an archive
  6. Tracey Emin: *This is Another Place*
  7. Co-creators
  8. 'A secret abundance'
  9. Grayson Perry at Victoria Miro 14
- } *Three Commentaries:*

### *Three Commentaries*

Three public art gallery visits are the basis of the first exhibition project:

#### **1. Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth, Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, London**

I prepared myself by considering the first visit an experiment almost like a pilot project which effected my state of mind and heightened my awareness and curiosity, similar to Moustakis' (1990) description of the first phase of the heuristic process, the initial engagement. I drove to the exhibition and considered this part of the event, observing the changing landscape and my state of mind. I went into the exhibition, listened to the talks about the work, viewed the art, observed my responses and mood, taking brief notes at intervals. I went to the panel discussion at the end. I reflected on my experience as I drove home. I then wrote up the notes, forming an autobiographical, narrative description of the event and included illustrations and a review of associated literature.

## **2. Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965-75,**

Whitechapel Gallery, London

## **3. We all peel the onions, Camden Arts Centre, London**

I repeated the procedures I used for *Textures of Memory* with these two exhibitions. I concentrated on the event, the journey there and my state of mind. I went into the exhibition, observed the environment, viewed all the art, took notes and observed my responses and mood. I reflected on the experience as I went home. I wrote up my notes and made an illustrated, autobiographical account that included a review of associated texts. *We all peel the onions* had a linked conference that I took part in a few weeks later and I included my observations and experiences there.

### **Analysis of the narratives**

I examined the narrative texts relating to all three exhibitions to extract themes. I first examined the texts for issues relating to the key questions. These points were numbered and then assigned to one of three categories of sites at which meanings of an image are made as suggested by Rose (2001). My discussion was then structured around these sites and related to relevant literature.

## **4. Artefacts Relating to an Art Psychotherapy Group**

I curated a private exhibition of archival material associated with my art psychotherapy group. The event took place in one of Goldsmiths' Visual Arts Studios. The material consisted of four years artwork made in the group by members and myself; photographs taken at the end of sessions; files and documents relating to the group; my artwork made outside of the group during the same period; my personal notebooks and journals, and files relating to my studio and the research. I spent one day making a display. On the following day I examined and photographed the installation which my tutors also came to view. We had a discussion about what had happened, our reactions and reflections. On the third day I took down the work. I took notes throughout and wrote an autobiographical, narrative description which I later analysed to examine the implications of the autobiographical voice that I had used in the text according the qualities attributed to the genre of writing by Gergen (1997).

I also examined the text for issues relating to key questions. The resulting points were numbered and discussed.

### **5. Reunion (of broken parts) - Algebra: a topology of an archive**

I used exhibition practices including curating to examine three periods of my art practice taking place during the research. I constructed a narrative account from the field notes that I made at the time. I described the process of unpacking an archive that developed a life of its own in my new studio, proposing that for the purposes of the research, the text offered similarities to the therapeutic artmaking situation of my group. Interlinked is an exploration of my use of materials in the group and their relationship and significance to the art psychotherapy process. A discussion related to relevant literature arrives at an interpretation.

### **6. Tracey Emin: *This is Another Place*, Modern Art Oxford**

I prepared myself as with previous exhibition visits by developing a heightened awareness of the experience through concentrating on the journey there and the event. I went into the exhibition, observed all that took place, viewed the art, observed my responses and mood, took notes and reflected on the event as I went home. I constructed an illustrated, autobiographical narrative from my notes, examined the text and extracted issues relating to key questions. These points were numbered and then assigned to categories suggested by Rose (2001). My discussion was then structured around these categories and related to relevant literature, considering how her use of materials might apply to art psychotherapy.

### **7. Co-creators: a visually-based case study**

I examined the creative art experience of an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group in visually driven case study. I made a sequential narrative description of the development of the art made in the group over a five year period during the research. Firstly, I made two files for each year, one of my therapist's notes and one of the photographs taken at the end

of sessions. I then examined the photographs<sup>1</sup> before looking at the notes and described what I saw in an ekphrasis. I added contextualising information from the notes. The clients' own words taken from the notes are included in the narrative. Some personal material of clients was added where relevant but details were anonymised. A discussion of the main themes is related to relevant literature. I briefly consider indicators regarding prognosis and limitations of the group.

### **8. 'A secret abundance'**

I described the histories, contexts, influences, sources and productions of my personal art practice in an illustrated, autobiographical account. I used archival images to drive and construct the narrative. I examined relationships between what I made in my art psychotherapy group with what I made outside. A discussion of the main themes is related to English literature and theory relating to the crafts.

### **9. Grayson Perry, Victoria Miro 14, London**

I prepared myself as with previous exhibition visits by concentrating on the event and journey there. I went into the gallery and was taken to a private space where I viewed three pieces of Perry's work. I observed the environment, my responses and mood, took notes and reflected on the event on the way home. Using my notes, I described what happened in an autobiographical narrative. I examined the text and extracted issues relating to my research questions. The points were numbered and assigned to Rose's (2001) suggested categories. A discussion of related literature considers the relevance to art psychotherapy of how Perry's use of ceramics materialises autobiography and interrogates social concerns.

The chronology illustrates that how I carried out the research activities mirrors the heuristic process described by Moustakis (1990:27). I used forms grounded in the visual arts that were adapted to the wider system of theories and practices (Sullivan 2005:226)

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<sup>1</sup> For reasons of confidentiality the photographs of clients' work that illustrate the case study in this dissertation were altered with Adobe Photoshop and included for examination purposes only. Once the examination process was over, the clients' work was removed from the photographs in the thesis as they cannot be available to the wider public.

relating to art psychotherapy and grounded in reflexive thought and action (Sullivan 2005:xix). The significance of my research approach is that visual arts practice not only illuminates procedures, but also is the research method itself. I will now move on to describe the ethical issues regarding involving clients in the research.

### 1.2.4 Ethical issues

#### Users' views in my project - ethics and access

The impact of visiting the exhibition *We all peel the onions* (see Chapter 2.3) raised my awareness of ethics regarding working with vulnerable people in situations where there are unequal relations, as in my group. It was an augury of a disturbing problem that I grappled with, running as a thread throughout the inquiry, which has broader ramifications.

In my original research proposal in 1999 I had planned to use a studio-based methodology that would develop as the study progressed. I also envisaged using other methods such as questionnaires, self-rating and depression scales, collecting 'data' from the group and myself as artist. I also had an idea of exploring cost effectiveness. I did note that I would be looking for the most congruent methods in terms of ethics, theory and practice. I also thought about using diaries, therapist's notes and the artwork - which I have used.

Once I started on the research process my vision expanded to an aim for entirely visual arts based methodologies. This seemed not only the most congruent, but also the richest approach. Out of this grew the idea of the heuristic process involving immersion in the topic. I had hoped to involve group members as I wanted to examine routine clinical practice but this was problematic from the start.

I considered whether to seek the views of members from the group using semi-structured interviews. However, I had felt reluctant to involve them right from the beginning mainly because the group was not set up as part of the research, being part of my everyday clinical practice. The clients were in the middle of their therapy.

The other concern I had regarded the ethics of seeking consent from vulnerable clients whose relationship to me was as their therapist. How could they say no? Ezzy outlines very positive aspects of involving clients in research. He describes a 'Political model of Rigour' (2002:56) which argues, as does McLeod (2001), that the power relations in much research is unbalanced and leaves out the voice and views of users of therapeutic services. For this reason, I very much wanted to include the views of members of my art psychotherapy group. I am therefore, going discuss the issues in order to show how I arrived at my final decisions and actions regarding their involvement.

I facilitated the group for over eight years when I was Professional Head of Art Psychotherapy for an NHS Trust. As therapist, my concerns put the clients' clinical welfare and therapeutic progress before the needs of the research. A series of events gave clinical justification for not approaching them as participants, including clients leaving and joining the group and moving premises twice during the research. This was actually very positive for the group in lots of ways as we eventually moved out of the hospital into the community. However, psychodynamic management took priority over research needs. After this particular major set of events, another arose in the form of my leaving my job.

My concerns about involving clients included a number of aspects regarding intrusion, exploitation, informed consent and confidentiality. Mason raises the ethics of gaining trust in research, for instance, is it right to make interviews enjoyable like a conversation (1996)? Furlong (1998) discusses this aspect of confidentiality when seeking permission to use clinical material in publication or presentations, sharing a deep uncertainty with Casement (1985) about what is the right thing to do. On the one hand, there maybe a forceful recognition by clients regarding some aspect of their treatment but this might be seductive or even appeal to an exhibitionist aspect. The reminder of the experience (in print) which they might want to forget is then always there and may evoke the clients' bitter regret. One implication is that future revisions of the client's self-understanding may be inhibited. This all points to an intrusive factor being introduced by asking the person to collaborate (Furlong 1998:732).

Informed consent is complex (Mason 1996). How much choice would clients really have in participating? They may want to please me, as their therapist. There is also the issue of private information concerning third parties, for instance regarding family members.

McLeod refers to collecting qualitative data from clients being intrusive and demanding and therefore ethically questionable, and like Mason, says it may compromise confidentiality (2001:15).

Leaving my job finalised my considerations for involving them. Ending the group therapeutically was the main task I had to do, including assessing their immediate needs. Once I had left and settled into my new job teaching at Goldsmiths, I started to think about the ethics of approaching clients who had finished their therapy in the group before I had left. Could I interview them?

After therapy there is no longer a professional relationship. It has the potential to be an abusive situation as there are no clinical responsibilities. Power relations are very unequal: the ex-therapist knows all about the clients, whereas they know little or nothing about the therapist/researcher. What is asked may distress or worry people, and it may reveal more than was intended. It may reactivate distress, they may suffer as a result, and it is likely to stir up memories that are painful and distressing. Follow-up sessions can no longer be offered. The clients are open to exploitation (Letherby 2003) as the ex-therapist no longer has commitment and responsibility.

I concluded that interviewing my ex-clients was inappropriate. The aspect that finally clarified this in my mind was the BPS guidelines outlining the concept of 'undue risk'.

### 'Undue risk'

In the introduction to the revised ethical principles for conducting research with human participants the BPS highlights important changes (The British Psychological Society, 1990). Their principles of Consent and Protection of Participants are particularly relevant to my considerations. With regard to consent, it is pointed out that investigators might not have sufficient knowledge of the implications of involvement in the study for participants. The

position of authority or influence over participants was emphasised, particularly if researchers' students, employees or clients are involved. 'This relationship must not be allowed to pressurise the participants to take part in, or remain in, an investigation' (1990:271). While acknowledging that every moment in life holds risks, there was concern to find a definition that protected participants without making research impossible. The idea of protection of participants from 'undue risk' in psychological research led to the principle that the investigation should not *increase* the probability of the participants from coming to any form of harm. This was based upon the risks the individuals normally run in their particular lifestyle. They should not be induced to take a greater risk than they would normally experience in their life outside the research. If harm, unusual discomfort and other negative occurrences might affect the individuals' future life, the researcher should seek approval from an independent advisor before attempting to gain real, informed consent from the participants.

I had thought of approaching people from my group but their lifestyles made meeting with me an 'undue risk'. Most of them, for instance, had only a small social network and sometimes very few friends; did not work and often had problems leaving their home. All these characteristics have been shown to increase risk in mental health. Meeting or hearing from me out of the blue, their therapist for several years, would have far greater impact than for people whose daily lives included higher risk.

Rather than interviewing members, a new method was needed to provide a focus on the group's creative art process. In discussion with one of my tutors, an obvious method emerged - one with a long history as an established approach in the therapeutic arena - the case study. For this study however, as I have mentioned previously, the gaze would be different. It would be visually based and focus on the artmaking. For this I decided to use photographs of work from the group, and I would write to them for permission. They did not know I might contact them, but they had already agreed to the photographs that were part of the art psychotherapeutic process. I was aware there were still ethical issues, although I felt these were unlikely to have a negative impact. However, I needed more advice.

I asked for a consultation with my previous colleague who had known the group and clients and was now a Director of the Trust. In my meeting with him he said that contacting them as their ex-therapist who was no longer employed at the Trust was high risk to them and me. Given the nature of their difficulties, it could stir up extreme disturbance if in a vulnerable state especially if I would be contacting them unexpectedly. The clients could complain, or it could effect the validity of the research. He advised seeking independent specialist advice and to do this before seeking ethical clearance. This is what he would do if it were him. He gave me the name of a foremost specialist in ethics in qualitative research at a training centre for clinical psychology. If she thought it was alright to go ahead, then the next step was to see if the clients were in contact with services. He remarked that things had changed so much in the last few years, and since I had started the research.

### **Independent specialist advice on ethics and qualitative research**

I contacted the consultant asking if she could advise me regarding an ethical problem before I sought ethical approval. I gave her an outline of the situation along with my concerns.

She was extremely helpful. She said basically I would just be writing to service users for their permission, which is a good thing. I felt very relieved. I needed to get ethical approval in the client's locality. She recommended being as clear as possible in my application to the relevant ethical committee who are not always familiar with qualitative research. I might have to do a presentation, which would be good as I could then talk the committee through it.

She explained that in order to approach the clients I needed to write first to their GP, or another person in contact with them if they were actively using services. I would ask the professional to say if, as far as they were aware, there would be any reason not to go ahead and write to the particular client. They could then say if it would be inappropriate. There needed to be a currently employed person from the Trust to facilitate contacting the clients so I needed to be in touch with the relevant mental health team.

I should prepare an information sheet for the clients saying exactly what I am doing and asking 'can I have your permission to do this?' I should be reassuring and use simple language. I also needed a consent form from the Trust.

### **The Trust and the Ethics Committee**

The Research and Development Department of the Trust was extremely helpful, generously offering to help me fill in the lengthy NHS Research Ethics Committee application form ('Corec') online, which would take two or three hours. The manager, I discovered had an MA in Ethics in Mental Health, and when I arrived to complete the form, explained that it was clear to him that I did not need ethical approval. He said that my project would not be considered 'research' in the NHS Research Governance sense of the word which referred to the evaluation of making an intervention, but was more about examining routine clinical practice. He said however, that I did need clearance in writing from the Chair of the local NHS Ethics Committee. He offered to contact her and discuss it. He composed an email with me and sent it off to the Ethics Committee's Administrator. He then phoned and spoke with the Administrator who agreed with his assessment. She emailed the Chair who confirmed the situation regarding my project and later emailed back the remaining requirements. The main points of this formal process were:

#### **The Trust's R & D Manager's query for the Chair's action:**

'Would it be sufficient for the therapist to gain informed consent (using a standard Trust consent form) from the clients? This would mean that the therapist would not have to apply for full ethical review as the existing photographs of artwork would only be used illustratively in the PhD and not involve any client contact.'

The clients' current clinician (if in contact with mental health services) or GP (if not in contact with mental health services) would be approached to see if there was any reason why the client could not be approached via a letter from the art psychotherapist asking for consent for photographs of their work to be used in her research. The therapist is in contact with the Trust's appropriate mental health team and Head of Art Psychotherapy for this purpose'.

#### **The Administrator's response:**

'The clients originally gave their permission for their art works to be photographed so ethical approval doesn't seem necessary given that she will be seeking their

consent and this is not NHS research as such'.

#### **The Chair's decision:**

'As long as she has the patients' consent she does not need ethical approval.'

#### **How I chose the clients**

I planned to approach clients who had finished their therapy, including some who had had long term follow up, and had decided they no longer needed services but knew how to seek help if required (a total of seven people). I anticipated they were likely to feel complimented by my request as they had felt very positively about their artwork at the end of the therapy. My clinical judgement was that it was unlikely to have a negative impact unless they were in crisis. I would not be meeting with them. Their relationship with me in some cases had changed since therapy by seeing me in follow up appointments at increased intervals which tends to reduce transference to the therapist.

#### **Diplomacy and protocols**

I went ahead and started this process but unfortunately, and very disappointingly, it proved too complicated and impractical. The Head of Art Psychotherapy had concerns about the situation. Having no research experience she asked me to contact our professional organisation BAAT and their expert on research ethics before doing anything further. The expert confirmed that BAAT does not have an ethics policy as it is the responsibility of local organisations to protect their patients. He was advising me from the position of BAAT protecting one of its members. The points were that in the worst case scenario it might upset someone to be reminded or contacted by their therapist. They could complain about this happening for the purposes of the research rather than for their benefit (duty of care). It was also necessary to have agreement for me contacting ex-patients as a non-staff member.

The key points were that the original consent covered me for a limited audience but not the public domain. I could show the photos to tutors/examiners without further consent but for publication I would need the clients' consent. However, I also needed to consider if the

clients may not want to be contacted. This reminded me that there should be a registration form in their files that had a tick box if they did NOT want to be contacted after their therapy. This would cover this issue and was a strong point in my favour. The Head of Art Psychotherapy was happy with this advice and agreed to my proceeding with contacting clients. However, this proved problematic. Recently, due to moving premises, clinical files of the department concerned had been integrated with another team's files: two clients' files could not be found. Two people had no registration form in their file. Two people had moved away out of the area. Only one person out of seven was eligible to be approached. I wrote to him but he did not reply, perhaps not wanting to, or perhaps he had also moved away.

As a result of this, I approached the Head of Goldsmiths' Graduate School for advice about using the photographs in the dissertation. He said it was important to show that everything possible had been done to protect group members. The photographs could be used in the text for the examiners, particularly if they were manipulated and not clearly recognisable as the original art work. However, the finished bound thesis would not have the photographs in it and there would be an explanatory note at the beginning explaining the position - that for reasons of confidentiality the photographs of the artwork that were seen by the examiners cannot be available to the wider public.

### **Reflective summary**

I felt great relief when I realised that I had achieved my aim to use visual arts practice to study art psychotherapy (see Appendix 1, Figs. 1 & 2). At the start I did not know what these methods were going to be or what would happen. I started on an unknown journey in a similar way to someone entering art psychotherapy. Having nearly arrived at the end I see that the activities are based in the visual arts and are adapted to the wider system being studied as emphasised by Sullivan (2005). Studying these aspects involved examining fragments of the associated processes in a visual heuristic process and with text. These were formed into what are in effect, case studies described in a series of first person narratives. The thematic analysis of the texts compares relationships, bringing them together in the thesis. The title *Reunion of broken parts* (the translation of the Arabic

'algebra') refers to these events and the creative experience within art psychotherapy that strategy and design echo, acting as a metaphor for the unearthing of the therapist's art practice as integral to clinical practice. Algebra is the use of symbols standing for unknown quantities in order to determine their value (Collins Dictionary of Mathematics, 2002) which seems to be an apt metaphor for the use of art in art psychotherapy and in my research.

In this section I have shown the workings of the research and discussed my subjectivity as researcher in order to establish the rigour of the visual arts practice as research including how it has responded to the social setting (see Holliday 2002:23; Sullivan 2005). In the final chapter of Part One, 1.3 '*Voices*', I will debate the particular issues regarding the genre of writing I have used that provides an autobiographical lens on the research process. It is a literature review that considers the style of research writing and reasons for my use of first person narratives that I have included in the main body of the text.

# PART ONE - VISUAL HEURISTIC RESEARCH

## an autobiographical lens

### 1.3 'Voices'

The last two chapters have shown how my project aims to address core issues in the art psychotherapy process using a different approach to the language based theoretical models that have largely informed the discipline's thinking so far in the UK - an art based route to developing an understanding of the role of art in the art psychotherapy process. This literature review addresses how I proceeded with regard to conveying these ideas. The idea of the Civil Voice as outlined below - an example of scientific ideology as a textual tradition - was crucial to the development of my thinking and why I proceeded so differently, including why exhibitions were part of the research process.

I have described the methodological issues relating to my project. Here I will go on to discuss an aspect of this which relates to the current state of the profession's development as I experience it, and which provides the social, cultural and political context for my research, the orthodoxy of which I am challenging in my practice and in this research.

Pressures on a profession will influence the way a discipline approaches building a body of knowledge, research approaches and the way ideas are presented. The setting for my art psychotherapy group was a National Health Service Trust. Medical and scientific ideologies dominate this organisation and have enormous influence upon its practitioners and consequently users' health and wellbeing. I have discovered already from my research that I have not escaped. McLeod's (2001) work has been valuable in clarifying some of these issues. I am arguing that aspects of the situation McLeod describes in counselling and psychotherapy also pertains to art psychotherapy. I hope the discussion will also clarify the contribution my research could make to the discipline of art psychotherapy.

McLeod draws attention to the striking lack of qualitative outcome studies in psychotherapy and to the huge resources allocated to quantitative/experimental outcome studies. He introduces the concept of 'voice' (2001:162) and the way social power hinges on who is heard, listened to and who is silenced. He argues that the power aspect of the politics of psychotherapy research is reproduced in the language and structure of articles published in journals. Referring to the context of the National Health Service's decision to adopt the policy of 'evidence-based' treatment, he discusses the consequences of the view that randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are 'the only valid ... source of evidence for the efficacy of psychological treatment' (Roth and Fonagy 1996:19). McLeod says that the consequences of using evidence from RCTs include: no voice of the service user, therapist or supervisor; a reinforcement of the medicalisation of therapy (the measures are consistent with the client being a passive recipient of treatment as an equivalent to administration of medication; the patient is 'ill'); some forms of therapy (those not well represented in academic establishments) are rarely focused on because of the expense and complexity of the procedures; the concepts and values drawn from experimental, laboratory science result in the context of the research being rarely considered; and there are ethical problems regarding the use of placebo and no-treatment control groups.

McLeod's concern is that the effect of constructing knowledge about therapy in this way reinforces the power of elite groups in psychotherapy and denies a voice to those with less institutional power. He goes on to describe the growing interest in the 'shaping of written knowledge' as explored by Bazerman (1988) who uses the style manual of the American Psychological Association to show how social science disciplines codify intrinsic values and philosophical assumptions in their writing. The APA style manual, representing the voice of behaviourism, established a style which came to be regarded as the 'only proper way to write science' (Bazerman 1988:268), and included the now familiar devices also adopted in art psychotherapy (for example, third-person viewpoint, standardised sub-headings and name and date referencing style). Instructions such as *Inscape*'s (the peer-reviewed journal of the British Association of Art Therapists) Notes for Authors are helpful, and adopting a standardised style obviously saves time and contributes to successful writing but, as Bazerman ominously points out, 'Only when a community decides there is one right way, can it

gain the confidence and narrowness of detailed prescriptions' (Bazerman 1988:271). This suggests that when everyone with shared interests tacitly agrees there is also the authority to exclude or suppress. I propose that the danger of such specific rules and directions for conveying knowledge can maintain inflexible hierarchies, suppress a more imaginative generation of ideas and that the current paradigm for research writing in art psychotherapy is not entirely appropriate.

Looking at the wider context of varying rhetorical and discursive traditions in the human sciences, McLeod draws upon Gergen's (1997) work. His subtle description of modes of transmission of voice in human science scholarship includes indications of the communicative limitations and author-reader relationship that is invited through their use of registers, dominant themes and images:

#### **Textual traditions in the human sciences**

**The mystical tradition.** This relates to early mysticism and was carried on in Jewish and Christian religions. There is use of metaphor, evaluative terminology and avoidance of the literal. There are also linguistic constructions of realities and mysteries beyond rationality, the senses and observation. Examples are Freud, Jung, Laing and Lacan. A status difference is established between writer and audience, like priest and disciple. The reader is unaware and ignorant but can receive knowledge and enlightenment. The reader is also special compared to those who have chosen not to listen.

**The prophetic tradition.** This relates to early Greek culture where prophets are emissaries from the gods. Apocalyptic warnings are offered in the service of moral ends. There is also a sense of doom with little escape. Examples are Marx, Lasch, Bellah, Baudrillard. A status difference exists between writer and reader with the reader being placed as unenlightened, but they are not privileged as in the mystical tradition.

**The mythic tradition.** This also relates to early religion and was continued in the Christian gospels, fairy-tales and fables. Moral stories are created with clear narrative properties. A sense of climax or drama develops. Freud, Piaget, Weber and Foucault all draw on elements of this tradition. A status difference exists between writer and reader. The writing in this and the previous traditions is impersonal and monologic.

Gergen proposes that these earlier traditions have religious origins and are weighted with moral implication and emotional expressiveness. He argues that in the past 50 years there is little left of this approach/voice. He sees the dominant models of discourse as characterised by the civil manner of speaking.

**The civil voice.** This involves the use of literal language, reason, and objective evidence. The civil manner conveys modesty, respect for the reader and their capacity for good judgement and avoids direct antagonism. However, there is an important subtextual claim to superiority. An implicit hierarchy of truth, prestige and power positions the reader as a competitor to the author.

Gergen argues that recent years have seen the emergence of a new range of rhetorical forms. He says that the autobiographical voice informs major movements in scholarship.

**The autobiographer.** Here the writer provides an 'experiential lens through which to understand the world' (Gergen 1997:163), giving the reader access to another's world that is probably of broad significance and often with an educative aspect. Autobiography is often used to reveal underlying assumptions and suppression of the civil world and borrows from mythic and fictive traditions. The reader is invited to identify and share subjectivity with the writer, thus subverting the writer-reader distance that typified earlier traditions.

**The fictionalist.** This includes experimental writing within the broadest of boundaries that serve to 'blur or destroy the fact/fiction binary' (Gergen 1997:165). This is a genre in which a work can be enriched and orchestrated with a number of differing voices, realities and values, becoming a multivocal text. There is a high degree of author-reader intimacy and identification, but also the possibility of ironic distance. The traditional privilege of authority given to the writer is undermined by these two more recent discursive genres (Gergen 1997).

The APA/RCT tradition can be seen to be part of the civil voice as characterised by Gergen:

Not only does the prevailing 'scientific style' strive for dispassionate and mundane clarity, but it manifests an unfailing concern for evidence, and serves as a model of careful restraint (Gergen 1997:160).

Gergen says that the civil voice was adopted as the dominant form of discourse amongst gentlemen-scholars developing natural sciences in seventeenth-century England and was demarcated by wealth, ancestry and education. He emphasises the hierarchy implicit in such discourse:

its claim to superiority ... positions ... the reader as a competitor - in a hierarchy of truth/prestige/power (Gergen 1997:161).

It is possible to see traces of the earlier traditions in the early issues of *Inscape*. For example Schaverien's (1985) comparison of two different methods of psychiatric treatment draws on elements of the mystical: for instance there is a use of metaphor and evaluative terminology:

... It could be argued this is because a hypodermic straight jacket is more effective (Schaverien 1985:3).

and there are linguistic constructions of realities and mysteries beyond rationality, for instance:

... by being overwhelmed by the unconscious in the form of psychosis  
(Schaverien 1985:3)

and

Changes come about through a certain amount of discomfort which can act as a 'spur to life' and creativity (Schaverien 1985:4).

At times the reader is positioned as unaware and ignorant but can receive knowledge and enlightenment, and is also special compared to those who have chosen not to listen:

This adjustment which is common among patients and staff in psychiatric institutions is death to creativity on any level (Schaverien 1985:4).

There are also elements of the mythic tradition, where for instance there is a moral story with clear narrative properties:

Given this framework the only way to be truly creative may be to subvert the system (Schaverien 1985:5).

and

Aiming in a direction which has as its goal no predetermined product, but a confidence that, if we go in this direction, something will manifest (Schaverien 1985:3).

McNeilly's (1984) account of directive and non-directive approaches in art therapy also draws on elements of the mystical tradition. For instance, the writing is impersonal and monologic:

We will consider two approaches that art therapists in Britain use . . . (McNeilly 1984:7).

There is the use of metaphor and evaluative terminology, and a status difference between the writer and audience is suggested, like priest and disciple:

The whole process of suggestion by the therapist is one of control and a need of structure by him/her. Within this, therapist spins a conscious web . . . (McNeilly 1984:7).

There are also mysteries beyond rationality:

With a non-directive approach the attacks can be intense. . . (McNeilly 1984:10).

and

. . . if the matrix in a verbal group is one where the group becomes the 'Great Mother'. . . (McNeilly 1984:10).

and

One central point holds the 'make or break' of a group analytic approach and that is how one tolerates uncertainty (McNeilly 1984:10).

Case studies have been notable as a form of discourse adhered to by writer-practitioners and are influenced by the autobiographical genre. However in recent years a textual tradition has developed which echoes the description of the civil voice. In view of Gergen and McLeod's discussion of the implications, such rhetoric seems incongruent, restricting and controlling. As McLeod puts it:

The way we write about therapy is a political act. . . the 'civil voice' or APA/RCT genre of writing operates to exclude many important and interesting aspects of the therapy research process by effectively silencing the voices of almost everyone concerned (McLeod 2001: 172).

The paradox is clear: he says there is a 'deep, deep irony in all of this' (McLeod 2001:172). The work of therapists is about encouraging expression and dialogue but therapy researchers find this difficult to achieve with most of the writing distanced and permeated with scientific ideology.

Gergen discusses the newer, postmodern forms of writing in the human sciences that have 'gained impetus from the intensive critique lodged against the presumptions of scientific discourse as truth bearing' (1997:162). He refers to increasing sensitisation to the potential for suppression and injustice to be 'subtly secreted in the interstices of expression' (1997:162). McLeod, using more measured tones, says that other disciplines including sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies have been trying to create new forms of social science writing such as autobiography and fiction in order to be more representative and inclusive.

I have certainly used the textual tradition of the civil voice in my writing, for instance in my MA (Mahony 1992a) and in parts of this research, such as the literature review earlier. At the time of my MA, I thought this was how research should be written, to be as neutral as possible and distanced and I did not look deeper into the subtleties of the relationship it was suggesting with the reader. Such writing reflects the political pressures on the profession both in healthcare and in education. The politics inherent in writing need to be more widely recognised and the implications considered for art psychotherapy research. For instance, use of cool distancing restricts thinking and communication about, for example, the therapeutic art experience. Hand and Velody (1997) point out that it seems curious to believe that leaving ourselves out of the pictures gives us the truth, when we have created the descriptions. Eventually, if we carry on using such a style unthinkingly, the central aspect of the art part of the therapy could become neutralised, giving it little chance of

becoming fully activated in what should be its pivotal role in the therapy process. In Chapter 4.3 *Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group* I analysed the text of the narrative account to illustrate how the genre of writing I used both invites a creative response and contributes to the findings.

The newer autobiographic and fictionalist voices described by Gergen hold creative possibilities for the development of art psychotherapy writing, although the former is sometimes present in the case study. For example, he describes how the use of common vernacular, such as is used in more intimate exchanges, enables the reader to resonate with the writing. With a narrative account of another a 'triple fusing' takes place between the narrator, the author and the reader 'within a common subjectivity' (Gergen 1997:165). This can be seen operating in McClean's (1999) case study referred to earlier. It also operates very effectively in Phillips' (2001) book *Houdini's Box: On the Arts of Escape*, whose approach to the case study draws on autobiographical and fictional genres. Function and audience are obviously critical as the questions being considered demand different vehicles for their consideration, but this does not preclude reworkings of relationships to produce more expressivity and innovative modes of communication. Other means of expressive presentation and performance, including the visual arts, are being turned to in the human sciences. Gergen concludes that success in existing genres depends on 'a sophisticated coterie of initiates' ... the move to art, theatre, poetry and film is 'more populist' (1997:171). It seems ironic for art psychotherapy to turn to science for a research writing style. My research relates to experiences of the creative art process in and out of clinical practice so the way the form of presentation conveys knowledge about this has been an important consideration, as I hope I have shown. I am however, aware that this literature review uses aspects of the civil voice to communicate the issues.

McLeod says there are many ways to write a study and that it is important to be creative in this process of assembling meaning (2001:129). I find Greenhill et al's research and book a creative example of this. In contrast to the civil voice, they tried to address the idea of the practice of art as a form of analysis in itself. They explored the making of art as research through a series of conversations (Greenhill, Love, Throp and Trangmar 2001). They refer to

the lack of research putting the making of art as research in the forefront and how the conventional approach in Fine Art is using critical analysis to '*place and fix* the work of art' (Greenhill et al 2001:1, authors' italics). It is this aspect that I have also resisted with the staging of my own inquiry in trying to avoid premature closure of ideas and processes. They aimed to 'interpret and utilise our conversations with a desire to allow them to retain the openness and fluidity that is typically associated with art practice' (2001:1). Their work and ideas is staged in their book as 'collaging', making further use of ideas from art practice. Using their own experience, their individual works are juxtaposed with images and edited extracts of their collective conversations, the text of which has been realigned to run along the bottom of the pages at right angles to the main text. Seen as a running thread, the extracts expand upon the ideas being addressed by each person. This device solves a number of problems referred to previously in a graphically simple way. They say it was important in trying to show 'the possible connections between the activity of making art and the knowledge which that activity necessarily produces' (Greenhill et al 2001:1). At the end of their extracts, they say:

Almost all of our conversations have been structured by a logic of fluidity and openness, a kind of thinking that just by definition never runs along lines towards fixity or holding or closure - but rather almost naturally runs wantonly, knowingly - towards risk and unknowing (Greenhill et al 2001:31).

This is a familiar process to art psychotherapists and one that I am trying to mirror with my research process. The form of my thesis and its discursive modes are now fixed. However, the structure, titles and procedures try to reflect my thinking so far about the issues I have described in this literature review.

In the first part of my study I have presented the context and theoretical framework for my research, providing a rationale for using visual arts practice as a methodology. I described my research activities and discussed the relationship I seek in conveying the research. In Chapter 2.1 I will apply the aspects discussed in Part One to narrative texts in order to demonstrate these principles. Part Two provides an outer frame for the research and explores the idea of art manifesting embodiments. I will start to draw out my argument

for the haptics<sup>1</sup> of sustained making suggesting that the verbal has been privileged previously along with analytic frames that are so transference based. I aim to show relationship differently.

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<sup>1</sup> **Haptic** Relating to the sense of touch in all its forms (Patterson 2007:ix).

# DART TWO - AN OUTER FRAME

## P Embodiments

### 2.1 Three Commentaries - experiences at three exhibitions

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

##### The research process, the 'experiment' and the text

My argument is that in a therapeutic setting, the creative art process itself can be an expressive transformer. In this part of the research I examine my response to public displays of art in a series of nested studies within the larger project as a way of exploring such aspects of my research questions (Sullivan 2005:211). In particular, I am interested in what might be helpful about the creative art process in bringing about personal understanding or meaning and how might this relate to an art psychotherapy group; and how the use of art media contributes to the creative art process in such a group.

Three exhibition visits form the basis for the first part of the investigation, marking the development of procedures that are later repeated. Early stages of the research focused on considering how to study the creative art process in a visual way rather than relying on text alone. I wanted to look at art and investigate my responses as an outside/in approach to exploring and analysing the relevance of the visual arts to the clinical situation. I wanted a new angle. By critically examining my observations I could provide a repeatable procedure, and information that could be referred to and compared with other parts of the research, for instance, Chapter 2.2 *Tracey Emin*. The process needed to remain fluid in order to be able to chart the wider field relating to my group. The heuristic process seemed particularly appropriate as it provides a method where discoveries are made through an 'examination of personal experience' (McNiff 1998:53) emphasising 'direct, personal encounter' with the objects of inquiry (Moustakas 1990:12). McNiff argues that it is very suited to art based research which can expand heuristic methods by introducing the 'materials of creative expression' and 'live experiment with the creative process' (1998:54). Considering

exhibitions as sites for visual arts research is 'grounded in practices that come from art itself' (Sullivan 2005:xvii).

I was excited to carry out this experiment. I tried to give priority to immediate experience over later reflection, although the text includes both, documenting my experiences, visual impressions and thoughts in response to the exhibition visits. The commentaries also act as a critique of the exhibitions themselves. They emerged as a narrative with three voices: personal, artist, clinician – moving in and out of the three, attempting to include and capture the autobiographical element (Moustakis 1990; Gergen 1997) (see chapter 1.3 'Voices'). In the text are examples of my notes scribbled at the time which aim to convey a sense of my 'personal encounter' (Moustakis 1990:12), illustrating some of the raw 'data'. Some were a response to a piece of art, or details about its manufacture. They were used as a prompt for writing afterwards. Favouring introspective and subjective material, the text is intended to appear episodic with fluid, poetic inferences. Like a visual work in or out of art psychotherapy, it can be looked back on as part of the larger body of work, to reveal more. Look back in art psychotherapy has important functions for analysis and integration. This chapter was the beginning of such a process in my project. The following narrative aims to retain divergent thinking - just as I avoid interpretation of artwork in therapy, allowing meaning to emerge for the client. It is advancing 'on a broad front keeping open many options' (Ehrenzweig 1967:36).

### Choice of exhibitions

The three exhibitions that I went to see were:

1. *Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth*, a travelling exhibition taking place from September 1999 to November 2000, seen at Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, Ealing.
2. *Live in Your Head: concept and experiment in Britain, 1965-75*, shown at Whitechapel Gallery, London from February-April 2000;
3. *We all peel the onions*, shown at Camden Arts Centre, London during February and March 2000. Also included is the interconnected account of a day conference Art, The Stuff and the Dream held on 20 May 2000 at the Austrian Cultural Institute as

part of '*dreamscapes*', a cultural season for the centenary of Freud's Interpretation of Dreams.

This study stages an investigation exploring the extent of my project's focus including boundaries and ethics and how an 'exhibition' can be a means of studying artefacts in order to think about their relationship to the clinical setting. By examining the outer frame, basic assumptions about aspects of the art psychotherapy process come to be questioned.

Discussions with my tutors Janis Jefferies and Andy Gilroy resulted in the choice of these three particular exhibitions for their particular relevance to this research and the ideas that I am exploring, namely:

1. **My clinical work:** the Hohenbüchler sisters' installation *We all peel the onions* seemed strikingly relevant to my art psychotherapy group. The material being shown was produced by members of a mental health day hospital in collaborative group workshops held in the art psychotherapy room and facilitated by the artists working in textiles. The special edition broadsheet *Victorya* curated by Grant Watson as part of the exhibition describes the participants' experience, documenting responses and concerns from different perspectives. He joined in the workshops, conducted interviews and gave disposable cameras to the group members. This exhibition offered a parallel or, as it turned out, a comparison for my own clinical practice.
2. **My art history ('there and then'):** *Live in Your Head* was a retrospective show of an art historical period. It accessed my early roots as a visual practitioner, unexpectedly bringing back my own history. I had gone to the exhibition to look at the installation of Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt and Mary Kelly's *Women and Work 1973-75* exposing the conditions of women working in factories. I found the staging of the material conveyed a dignity that highlighted the negative connotations of 'women's work' and acted as a comparison for *We all peel the onions*. I was however, surprised and captivated by the exhibition as a whole as it helped 'place' aspects of my art practice.
3. **My current art practice ('here and now'):** *Textures of Memory* was about contemporary textile practice and enabled me to situate my current art practice which,

during the research, was often textile based. As a major exhibition of fine art textiles, it was described as one of very few attempts in the UK to critically engage with the issues of ambiguity that surround the field (Hamlyn 2000).

It was extremely fortunate that these three shows were on at the time. I could have chosen other artist-led collaborative projects at Camden Arts Centre relating to my art psychotherapy group. However, the exhibitions I chose had a very particular resonance with the stage I was at in the research project, namely moving into my newly built studio and starting to work in it as I unpacked boxes from my past. The exhibitions are therefore presented below in the sequence in which they were visited, the first being a month before the other two.

### ***2.1.2 Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth***

Initiated and curated by Pennina Barnett and Pamela Johnson.

Artists:	Polly Binns	Maxine Bristow
	Caroline Broadhead	Alicia Felberbaum
	Marianne Ryan	Anne Wilson
		Verdi Yahooda

On the day I went the artists and installations were introduced and discussed by Pennina Barnett and Pamela Johnson. A panel discussion followed with Marianne Ryan.

It was an excellent opportunity to hear the speakers. It was also an important event personally, rather like an initiation or rite of passage marking a point of change and introducing a more reflective and critical approach to the practice and theory of textiles. Up until then my four years' experience had been largely mediated by the Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers. I had absorbed purist approaches to producing a fabric, involving myself in the physical process and in the social aspects of working with others, mostly women.

I found the exhibition evocative, inspiring and for several days afterwards, disturbing. I was left with strong images and *memories* of the different pieces.

The car journey took two hours including getting lost in Ealing and Southall where it was important to observe my reaction to my rising anxiety at being stuck in a traffic jam, heightening my sense of being the only white woman. However, it quickly subsided when I looked around and began to become more aware of my surroundings. The high street looked full of life and packed with people. I would have liked to have looked around at the shops, the food and fabrics. I was aware of poverty. Suddenly, as the traffic moved on, almost like crossing an invisible line, it was Ealing. A wrong turn took me past rows of wealthy, neat, Victorian houses. Eventually, I found the right road, parked and walked through Walpole Park. It was a bright, crisp early February day; people were sitting on the grass taking advantage of the sunny weather. It was pleasant, mellow and obviously being enjoyed. I was reminded of living in London, enjoying the parks, but also of my terrible yearning to return to the country. I forgot, taking my present surroundings for granted. Another point of change. I looked at my watch, I was late.

I missed the beginning by a few minutes. I was flustered, trying to assess the situation and walked right past Caroline Broadhead's installation without seeing it. Would I have seen it if I had not been late? I was disconcerted, I thought of myself as a visual person - how could I have missed it? An ephemeral piece, *There-and-Not-There*, literally. Made out of very fine elastic under tension, the almost invisible structure spanned the floor and ceiling, splitting the entrance way to the exhibition space in two (see Figs 2.1, 2.2). A barely imperceptible pillar leaving a visual memory, but one which could be touched. Breathtaking.

In retrospect, this experience seems a metaphor on several levels. Bombarded by stimuli we lose the facility to 'look', as I had done in the traffic jam: overloaded, we 'miss' things. Like a magic portal Broadhead's installation marked a transition threshold of leaving one zone to enter another (see Gennep 1960). Hardly surprising I was disconcerted to miss the symbolic boundary created by the almost invisible structure.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2

A group of about 20-30 people, mostly women were gathered close together listening intently to Pamela Johnson, some were taking notes. I too took notes, from which the following is written. They represent the interaction of my subjective experience with both the speakers' ideas and the works being presented.

Polly Binns had been a potter. Being a potter too, I felt I recognised something in the work I couldn't pinpoint. I realised later that there was something reminiscent of clay: the colour, the textures, the way light is reflected (for example, *Serial Shimmers and Shades*, 1996; see Fig 2.3) conveyed the quality of wet clay, particularly locally dug earthenware from the Greensand areas - a greeny-mustardy beigey colour. Impossible to capture once dry, I am reminded of how I continually attempted it myself with endless glaze tests. I wonder if she realises this clayness, or if it is unconscious.

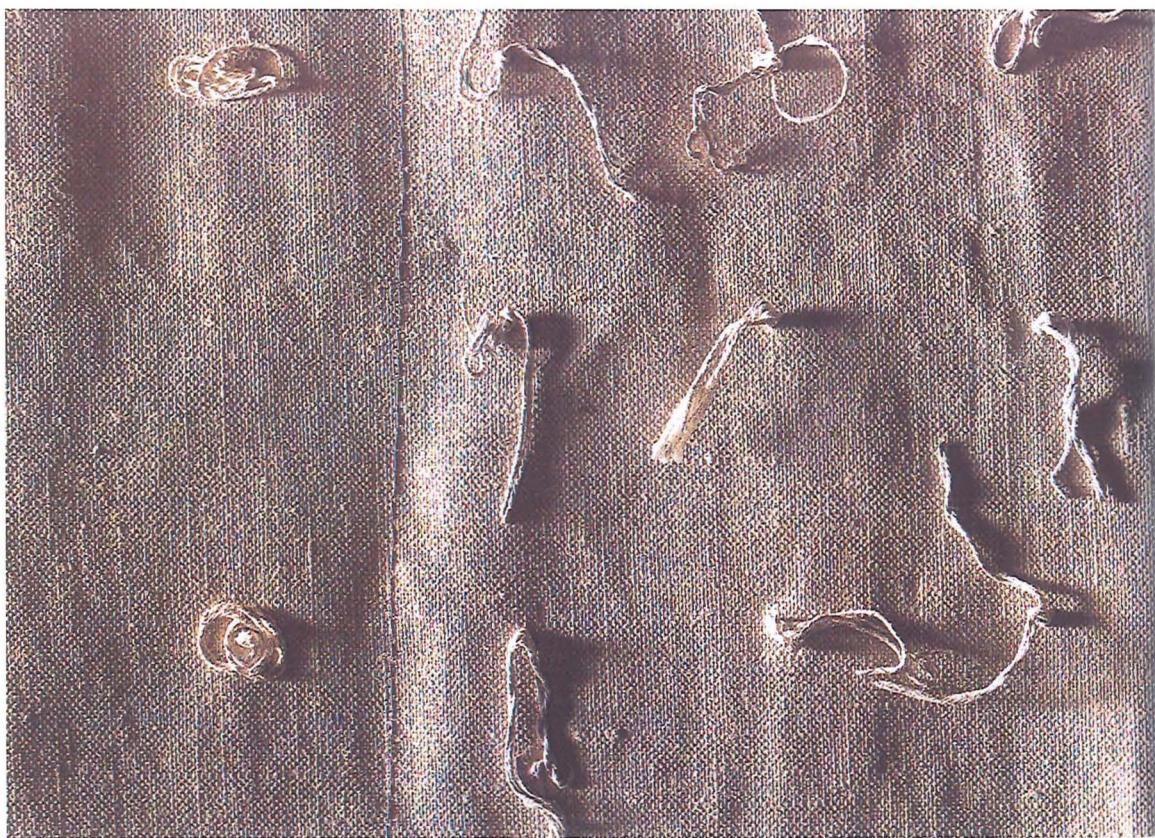


Figure 2.3

How ironic and remarkable that it has been achieved with cloth and thread. In her catalogue statement (see Binns 1999) she describes walking and 'dreaming' over marshland flats in Norfolk and it is these memories that her work relates to: the mud and sand, tidal landscapes with details and marks which will be soon washed away. She is involved with memory and recording of place, working directly with the cloth (1999:36). She has an obsession with landscape, 'the place', not literally. She is attached to the place. I realise I

also relate to the repetitious elements in her work. For me, it is an important aspect of the physical making that links my art in clay and fibres.

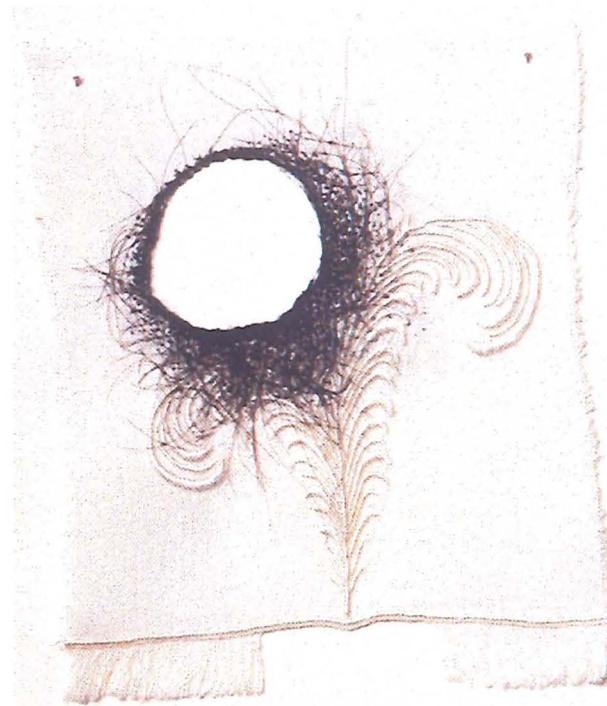


Figure 2.4

and disrepaired, exaggerating imperfection. She went on to talk about the Victorian tradition of using human hair in very fine work. However, parts of the body when disconnected from it become disgusting (body liquids, organs). She referred to layers of memory: who made it, who wore it, who worked on it. Display was referred to: the small pieces in individual boxes (see Fig 2.7). She talked about how we are always in relation to cloth throughout life. It can be seen as a

We moved on, Peninna Barnett spoke about Anne Wilson's work. What was being shown was a tiny part of a much bigger work, the main body of which is in Chicago. The individual pieces are mendings. They are not perfect (for example, *Mendings*, No. 7, 1995; *Mourning Cloth*, 1993, see Figs 2.4, 2.5).

Fragments, apparently disconnected, are very carefully worked on. Memory is fragmented, non-narrative/linear. The fragmentation is important, repairing

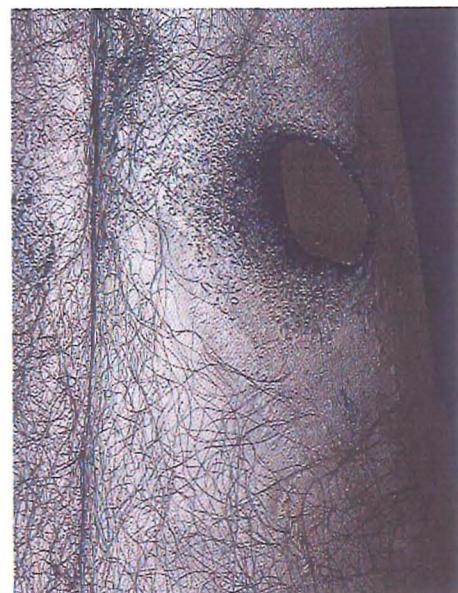


Figure 2.5

metaphor for skin, the medium through which we experience the world, through touch. Wilson's work involves torn pieces, in cotton and linen, and hair. I was moved by the detailed attention given to the imperfections. Lovingly executed, the work appears reparative. But there were disturbing aspects. Holes in the cloth emphasised with beautiful black stitched shading. The use of hair, the sense of pain and loss. I wrote in my notes:

The art of the Domestic

We moved on to Broadhead's installation. She was previously a jeweller. The straight lines of extremely fine elastic stretched perfectly from floor to ceiling. It was only possible to see the piece in certain lights. She is interested in traces of lives in buildings, the 'ghosts' of what went before. She used the 'minimum' to represent her idea. Using elastic, which springs back, under tension, it was 'barely made'. So cleverly conceived, Broadhead is carrying out investigations around the body.

Bristow was described as having an obsession with order. The work on display illustrated immaculate attention to detail (for example *3x19: Intersecting a Seam*, 1998, see Fig 2.6, 2.7). Large enough to crawl into, three sculptural objects hung on the wall in front of the viewer, but involved needlework usually associated with garments.

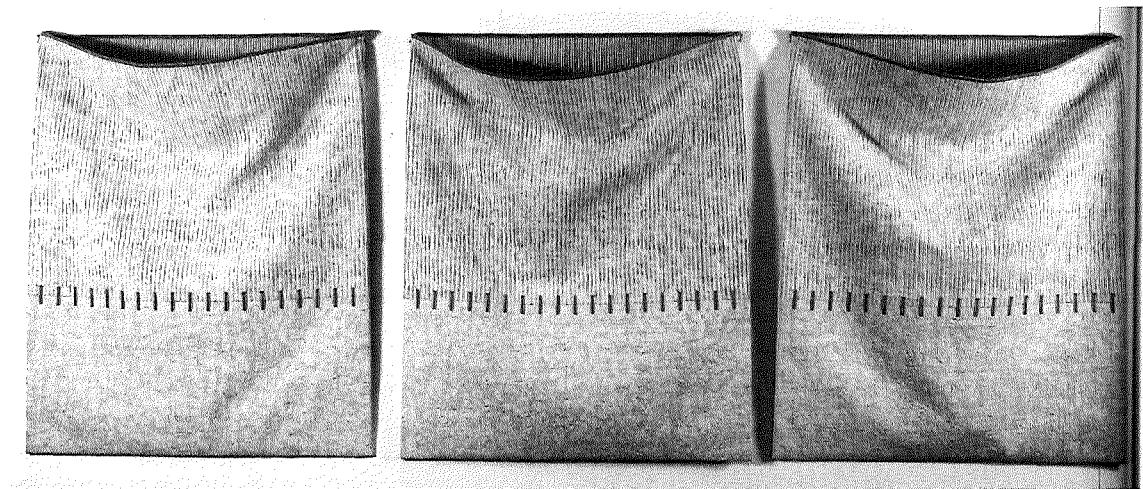


Figure 2.6

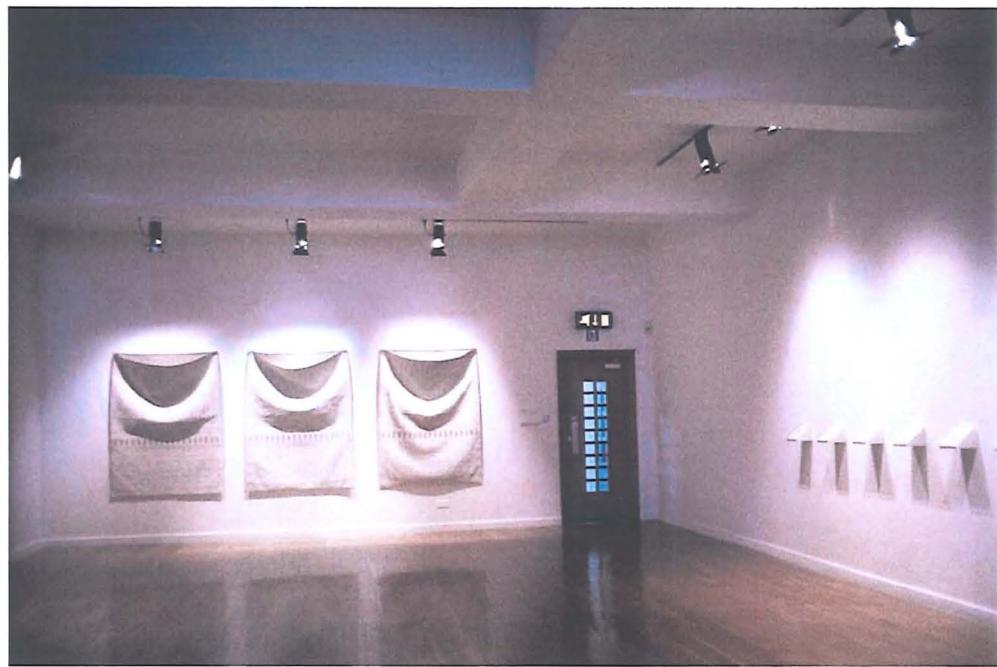


Figure 2.7

The linen and cotton used had been worked on with gesso. Painterly, yet very much of textiles. She has carried out detailed research that includes Victorian sewing manuals. Done meticulously, she sees her work as 'thinking time'. Fine making with attention to detail, it illustrates an ambivalence regarding the domestic and comfort.



Figure 2.8

Yahooodi's silver gelatin prints refer to 'tools' taking on a character of their own. Like dreams, quite threatening . . . working in the dark. For instance, a needle, scissors. They are about order and disorder, chaos. The prints involve the 'vocabulary' of cloth; the fold, the rip, and there are emotional resonances (for example *Lost Thread*, 1993, see Fig 2.8). One image has references to a story; a piece of material, a message on it, there are stains . . .

Ryan's paintings are about fabric on fabric (for example, *Painting No. 28*, 1996, see Fig 2.9). Like small boxes, eight or nine inches square and less deep, they were attached to the wall at eye level.

Three dimensional oil paintings of folds on canvas. They spoke less to me of textiles and memories than other exhibits. But they were highly coloured unlike the other work, which was mostly in muted, neutral and earth tones.



Figure 2.9

Unfortunately, Alicia Felberbaum's video pieces were not available to view. The technology had broken down. We moved upstairs for the panel discussion.

Pennina Barnett opened the discussion by referring to the exhibitions *Craft Matters* and *Subversive Stitch* (the latter based on Parker's book, 1984); femininity and textiles; and feminist ideas. Women's relationship to cloth was discussed. There was discussion amongst the audience and Pamela Johnson added comments. There were pauses, familiar to me: brief group silences. Other fields related to textiles were emphasised: 'academia'; 'texts', not only textiles but anthropology, psychology, philosophy. For instance, *The Fold* involves bodily sensation, touch, things that can't be put into words, that are before words, sensory (see Barnett 1999:27). With regard to language, there is a disruption of formal language, there is a bringing back of touch to formal academic work. For instance, Broadhead's piece problematises vision. There was discussion about the 'mark of the hand'. Where does digital/cyberspace technology come in? When talking about academia the interchange suddenly became heated, some textile artists actively choose not to be associated with it, for instance, a section of quilters.

Marianne Bristow talked about her paintings of textiles. Her work was about 'the fragment', and leaves space for the viewer to finish it. Related to the philosophy of the Fold, there is no front or back. Pleats, as an example, have their own character and are about crispness, authority. New mathematics was referred to, as not obeying the rules while still being mathematical, which could be seen as anarchic. Discussion went on to poetics and knowledge. Formal grammar and syntax, for example is cut across by poetry, like semiotics of the child before language. Rounding up the discussion, a hopeful air to the meeting concluded that there seemed to be a return to the object coming from conceptualism as in the *Loose Threads* exhibition (see Serpentine Gallery 1998) and Duchamp's use of cloth. The discussion was cut short, the gallery was closing.

It took a couple of months to digest the experience of this exhibition. I was left with a general impression of cool austerity, a sensation I enjoyed. Much of the work was wall hung. The only strong colour (including red) was in Ryan's paintings. Hoare (2000) criticises the installation, describing it as 'dour'; it did not echo the excitement conveyed in the catalogue. I would argue that she may be missing a whole level of experience conveyed by the exhibition. She refers briefly to the ghostly sense of forensic evidence in Yahooda's work, and the references in Wilson's work to the bodies of the dead. I wondered if she was picking up, but was not fully aware of, the 'sense of death' evoked by the show, described evocatively by Hamlyn (2000). Hamlyn sees two forms of memory: voluntary and involuntary. The voluntary tries to grasp the past in a way that makes sense but the latter form is where the past, death, reaches out to touch the present: the uncanny. She sees textiles as a powerful metaphor of 'a lived time into which death has been re-implicated' . . . the textile is always 'a surrogate skin, a body at one remove' (2000:42). She goes on to discuss the ambiguities inherent in textiles that the exhibition captured so well. Pointing out material's associations with nostalgia, memory and craft, she says they will inevitably seem 'deeply unfashionable' probably representing a 'devalued "feminine" in cultural and aesthetic hierarchies' (2000:43). She believes a curatorial decision played down a sense of feminist tradition which is sceptical of the aesthetic culture of the 'white cube'. However, I wondered if the evoked disturbance was deeply uncomfortable and difficult to face. As

Barnett points out in her essay in the catalogue, cloth has a special relationship to the body and has been marginalised by the dominant discourses (1999:28). Currah (2000)'s rather scathing review of the exhibition for *Time Out* seemed to illustrate Hamlyn's argument. He witheringly asserted that it was an 'average' show: a 'throwback' to a time when those making such work with 'women's' materials could claim radical status. Felderbaum and Wilson held his attention. He ended neatly with a psychoanalytical concept where (having noted the provoked revulsion) he claimed Wilson's precision in attaching each strand of hair turned the completed pieces into transitional objects for coming to terms with separation from the mother.

In a sense, such a show is bound to provoke varied and negative responses. Cloth and memory can evoke 'thoughts which might surface without warning, in a seemingly unbidden random manner' (Johnson 1999a:5), as referred to by Hamlyn. I have mentioned the disturbance it aroused in me. Although this was partly to do with the personal significance of the event, it mostly resulted from the impact of the objects themselves within the installation. Memories were evoked: conscious and unconscious, wanted and unwanted - as the curators intended. The unwelcome ones definitely left arcane traces, such as those that Hamlyn describes so clearly, for several days. Unlike Hoare, I was very excited by the work and the installation, the minimal nature of which seemed to me to give uncluttered space to my response and maximize my engagement. As time passed I knew that the exhibition had contributed greatly to my creative development. 'Folds, fragments and surfaces of infinite complexity' (Barnett 1999a: 31): memories of it still inspire me.

### **2.1.3 Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain, 1965-75**

For the many artists who contributed see the exhibition catalogue (Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 2000).

The whole exhibition made a big impact on me. It reflected the concerns of artists of the late 1960s and early 1970s who were finding different ways of looking at and presenting art.

Tarsia (2000) describes a 'dematerialisation' and aesthetic attack on the primacy of painting and sculpture, at times to the point of presenting literally 'nothing' (for instance Klein's *Void* in Paris in 1958). The exhibition was extremely relevant to my research, being described as 'the experience of an idea and the process by which ideas become visible' (Whitechapel 'Agenda', February-April 2000).

As I walked in I had a strong sense that it was all very familiar. There was a 'warm nostalgia', as described by one of the displayed reviews of the show. It captured the period for me: what I was doing and thinking at the time, how I was. Like the previous exhibition it brought back memories, but of a different quality, often warm and funny. Presentation methods particularly interested me. Selected elements were on display from *Women and Work* including black and white photographs and documents (see Fig 2.10, 2.11).



Figure 2.10

It was one of the first pieces to 'greet' you on entering the exhibition space, along with Louw's *Pyramid* of 6,000 oranges slowly being consumed by viewers (considerably less by the day we visited, one child was walking around with theirs). I noted:

framed photos of hands and pieces of equipment + no. of women and men eg  
Hopper Feeder  
1 woman No men

photos of women's faces, put together  
Framed acrylic, 128 portraits

list of their names  
pictures of people working + their 'grade' and no. of women and men doing that particular task

The documents also included chilling, stark, daily timetables of particular women with their names, age, children and their ages, their work activities in their full-time factory occupation and their full-time home occupation.

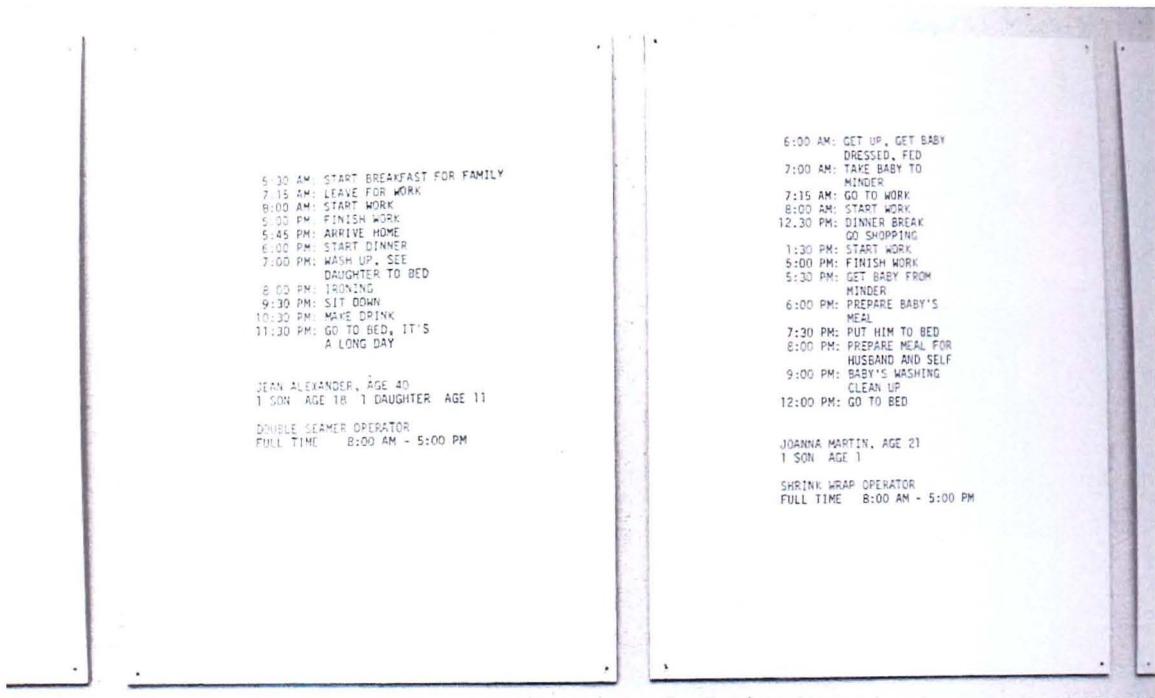


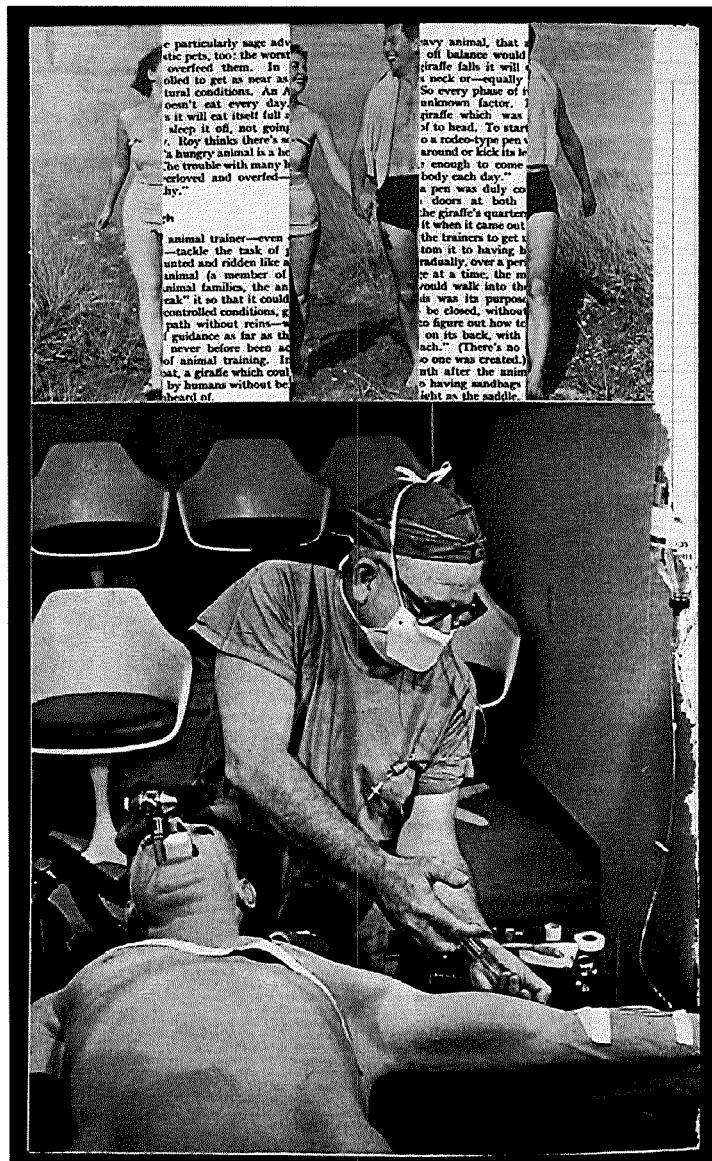
Figure 2.11

The most important aspect of this piece of art, in that it was political and social comment, was that it was very moving and gave dignity to the women. Each item was given due respect and its display had been considered in terms of generating strong responses and impact. Hunt (2000) describes the work as an opportunity to 'honour' her women relatives and past and present working class women and girls. Focused on one of the Metal Box Co factories in Bermondsey, 150 women took part. Here were only a few elements which originally included files, documents, photocopies, photographs, films, sound tapes and other wall panels. However, those presented made a strong impression, perhaps because of their simplicity.

I moved on. In my notes, I remarked:

So many words in the exhibition

objects aesthetic



**Figure 2.12**

Seemingly paradoxical, it refers to considering words and text in a visual way, as aesthetic objects. For example, Breakwell's diaries are a narrative: *Diary, 1969*. This is a collage and typed text on paper, about 40 images with different forms of words: writing, text and print (see Fig 2.12). Although described as being about ideas, these works were also driven by visual considerations.

Seemingly disparate objects were gathered together, mounted, displayed. For example, Plackman's *Hung, drawn and quartered*, 1975 (see Fig 2.13) consists of nine separate objects mounted together on wooden board: 3 drawings, 3 objects, 3 black and white photographic prints. I wrote:

I feel I understand this (objects/approach in the exhibition). I feel at home here

I recognised things in Plackman's piece: the apparently unconnected collection seemed familiar, like something I would make or put together, sensing mysterious links that were not conscious or verbal, perhaps visual.

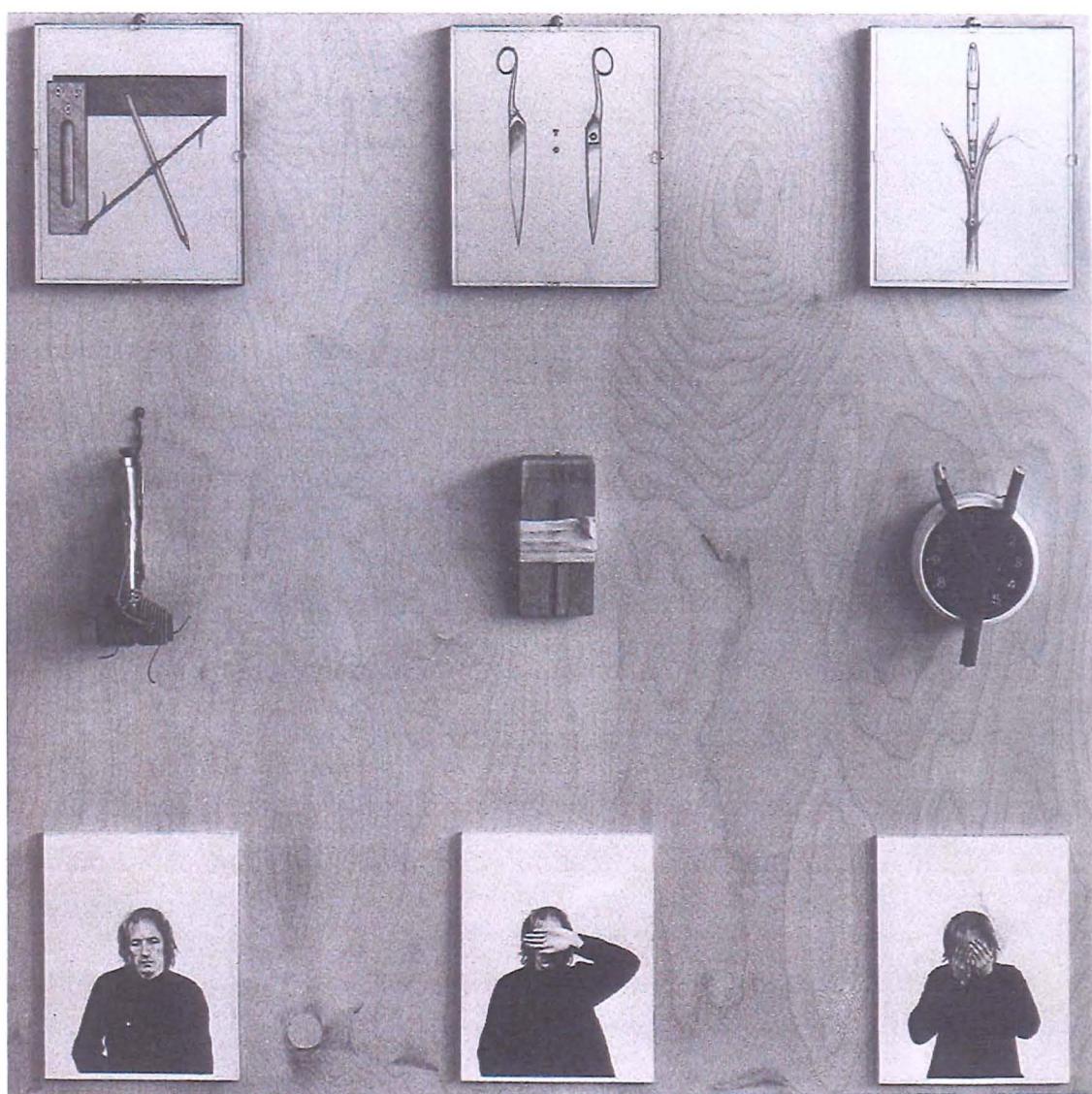


Figure 2.13

I was impressed by Hiller's *Dedicated to the Unknown Artists*, 1972-6 (see Fig 2.14). Her investigations into postcards of rough seas struck me with their elegant simplicity of analysis and meticulous detail.

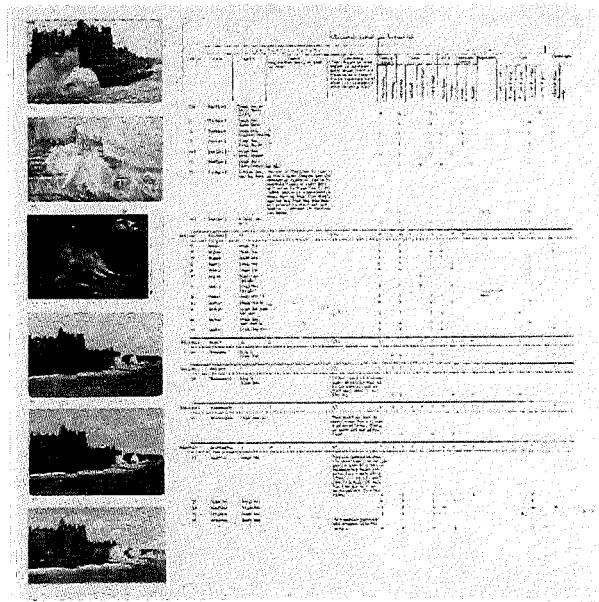


Figure 2.14

She invented her system for display that emphasised the aesthetic qualities of each piece through the grouping. A beautiful work consisting of 200 postcards, charts, a map, a book and notes. The chart analysing the postcards separates linguistic from visual traits.

Linguistic traits include:

Card no., Locale, Caption, Legend (explanatory text, on back of card)

Visual traits include:

Medium (photo or painting), Form, Colour, Presentation type (Sea & coast, Sea and pier etc), Catalogue, signature

I would love to have it.

In this exhibition, objects and their display were considered for investigation through looking. For instance, whether they needed to stand on their own, such as a framed photograph of a hand and the piece of machinery it operated as compared to the putting together of the women's portraits into one mounted piece - both in *Women and Work*.

I noted:

lists

and

displays that lead you, such as Dye's *Distancing Device*, 1970 which spells out

'K-e-e-p-G-o-i-n-g' as you walk backwards away from it

(See Fig 2.15)

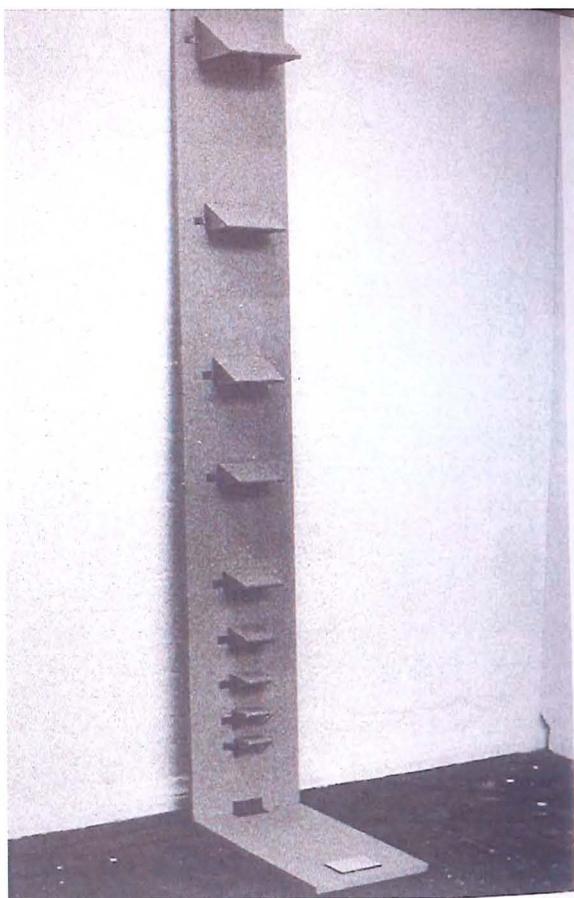


Figure 2.15

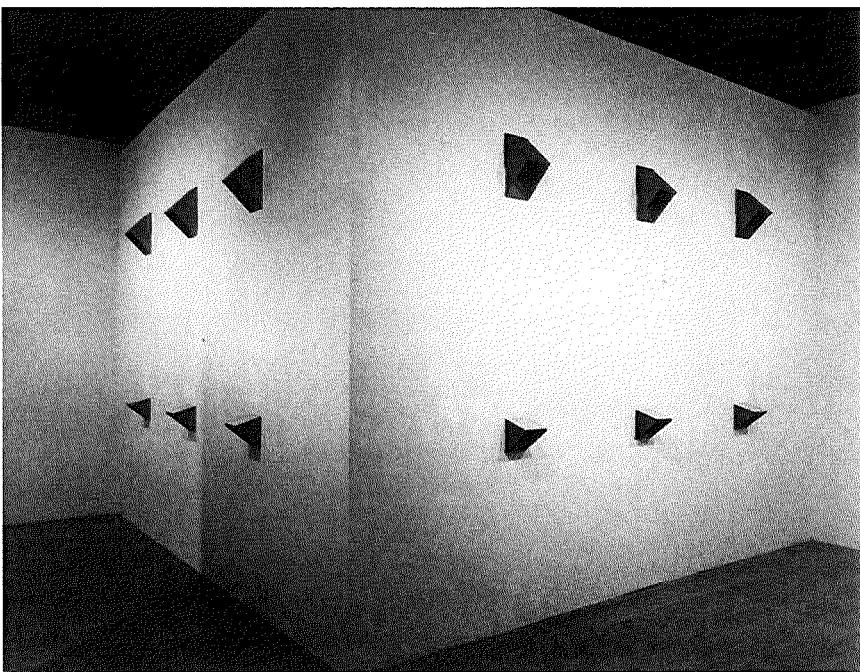
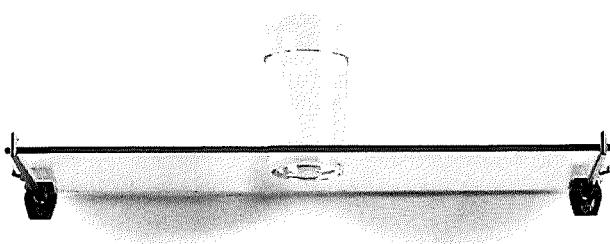


Figure 2.16

water on a glass shelf is transformed into an oak tree in the accompanying printed text (see Fig 2.17).

Figure 2.17



Craig-Martin's *Six Images of An Electric Fan*, 1972 (see Fig 2.16) also leads you to stand in particular positions. I was transfixed by the tiny images replicating the moving fan with its waving trail of ribbons. His famous *An Oak Tree*, 1973 is striking too: a glass of

The exhibition reminded me of things I had forgotten, particularly through my daily routine art psychotherapy practice. This made me reconsider elements of my clinical practice that I had taken for granted. Ideas resonated on many levels. This was part of the purpose of the art in the exhibition. It pushed the boundaries regarding fundamental beliefs about the functions and presentation of art. My comment 'I feel at home here'

was a recognition of my history, the importance of *place* and time too, showing how things could be re-visited through art.

The following exhibition illustrated the influence of more recent cultural paradigms.

#### **2.1.4 We all peel the onions**

An exhibition by Christine and Irene Hohenbüchler with participants from a Day Hospital in Cricklewood, North London, attached to the Royal Free NHS Trust.

This exhibition comprised material resulting from the Austrian artists' residency and was installed by the sisters at Camden Arts Centre.

I went to this exhibition after seeing *Live in Your Head*. Here there was an absence of text by the artists, but a member of staff gave me a photocopy of 'The risk of going public' by Barbara Steiner (1995). I thought it offered clues as to the origin of the method of display. I was wrong, but I will elaborate later.

Walking in to the exhibition was a shock. In my notes I have written:

glitter beads sequins on everything  
displayed on *fencing panels* why  
Names appear on some work

In the large, airy room four or six fence panels were set at an angle leaning backwards. They were new, large, orangey-coloured and poisonous-smelling. Fragile, glittery drawings, paintings and collages were hung all over them (see Figs 2.18, 2.19). The artwork had been cropped by cutting out the images with scissors. What about confidentiality of the names on some work...?

The overall appearance brought to mind a sweet shop - sugary, too many sweets - and Gombrich (1963). An odd combination, but his idea of oral gratification as a genetic model

for aesthetic pleasure seemed apt, with its analogy of food and needing a balance. Finding too much sweetness and softness seemed cloying, repelling and lacking in 'bite' or crunch. I noted that the appearance is infantile, the glitter, beads and sequins are glued on to paper, raising memories of school. My notes describe it as

sugar coated



Figure 2.18



I have also noted that I really liked some of the images but they were lost in the display. Why were things cut out with scissors? Another reminder of school. Four framed images were wall hung. I understand from *Victorya* that one person wanted his images framed, perhaps they were his.

Figure 2.19

Some of the work was moving and painful, but individual images did not seem to have been considered regarding

display. Most were installed in groups on the fence panels. The overall effect was 'Therapy'. My notes are minimal with no individual descriptions of the work.

I did not want to look at this exhibition. Would I feel the same if I knew the clients? Was it purely the arrangement or some intrinsic quality in the work itself? I have a similar response in mental health setting art rooms where the staff are not art psychotherapists. The work did not seem to be displayed as art or of particular artists, either of which would have given

the exhibition more coherence (see Figs 2.20 - 2.23). The individual image did not seem to be valued. There were very few people at the exhibition. Some immediately turned round and walked out.



My reaction was not to do with lack of mounts, or frames, but the apparent lack of attention to aesthetic qualities and nature of the content. The rawness and pain of some of the images was undigested for the viewer. It was 'therapy', but unworked and unresolved.

In *Victorya*, the broadsheet accompanying the exhibition,

**Figure 2.20**

several participants describe their reluctance to be involved and how they experienced the project being 'thrust' upon them, initially feeling like an invasion of the Day Centre art room.

One person says they didn't feel consulted. There were some pieces in the exhibition that looked tongue-in-cheek, maybe the clients were expressing reluctance to take part? Another participant spoke in the broadsheet about positive things gained from taking part, like



Figure 2.21

In *Victorya* the Hohenbüchler sisters are referred to as the 'artists' and the clients from the Day Hospital as 'group participants'. One person says everyone's names should be in 'tall' letters, not just the two people organising it.

keeping their mind occupied, feeling proud of making something, and enjoying the glitter. Another remarked on the poor quality of paper, saying they would like to see the work mounted with titles. Group members wanted to feel respected - if things were put straight on the wall, unmounted and unframed, they felt it suggested as a lack of respect (see Watson 2000). Is this, perhaps, what I was responding to?



Figure 2.22

The sisters were asked by Grant Watson if they were making a critique of the institution. They said 'no', they want to show how society works; 'who is included and who is excluded' and how some artworks are 'hidden away so you can't see it' (Watson 2000). Steiner (1995) describes the sisters' unconventional forms of presentation of work in institutions, such as a net displaying painted tea towels. They take the role of commentator, interpreter or mediator by emphasising distinctive features of the works and making them more accessible to a public who would not normally come into contact with it (Steiner 1995).



Figure 2.23

The absence of the Hohenbüchler sisters' voice in any text accompanying *We all peel the onions* led me to wonder about their aims. I looked for clues in Steiner's article. Bader (1989) is quoted, who imagines dreams originating in a fenced garden to which we are privileged to set foot in when inspired; the artist is allowed to enter completely and leave at will, but the schizophrenic is locked inside, becoming a prisoner. Was this an analogy to which the fence panels referred? She quotes Irene Hohenbüchler (1994) who describes the people they work with as being forced to the margins of society and kept in an infantile state. Perhaps the glue, glitter referred to this? One group participant found the materials exciting but remarked that to some people they suggest nursery schools and projects with children (see Watson 2000). If the choice of materials was a political statement, the participants did not seem to be aware of it.

Romantic ideas about mental 'illness' might have been involved with regard to the use of fence panels. But worse, if the sisters had been attempting to make a political statement the participants' experience of being infantilised was being repeated. However, again, I seemed to be guessing. In her essay on textiles and sexuality, Jefferies also looks for clues when reflecting on the Hohenbüchlers' exhibition *We Knitted Braids for Her*, 1995. More generous, she finds no boundaries or edges, their work resisting any 'final conceptual or material closure' (1996).

Steiner says the artists consider participants as equals; they aim at 'multiple authorship' rather than 'dissolving' authorship. 'Fabric' is used as a metaphor and texts are interwoven in their book (C. I. and H. Hohenbüchler 1995) so that individual authors can no longer be identified.

However, a serious ethical issue is raised regarding the sisters' work with people in vulnerable states. The sisters are the ones who benefit financially and further their career. The project does not directly benefit the participants. Despite claims of multiple authorship, the work is presented under the sisters' names. They have become well-established and famous within sections of the art world because of such projects.

Such issues do not appear to have been considered by the Hohenbüchler sisters. The conference '*Art, The Stuff and the Dream*' made it clear that my speculations regarding the thinking behind the sisters' installation were unfounded. Irene Hohenbüchler's presentation was part of a fascinating multidisciplinary programme exploring the use of art as a therapeutic tool, the links between aesthetic and psychological experience and the use of art as access to the unconscious. Her presentation about the Royal Free Project included slides and video material. I was able to ask her a few questions.

The 'truth' about the installation was much simpler than I had thought, and the ethical issue was movingly enacted amongst us. The sisters decided to use fence panels as a reference to gardens because they thought of London as the 'Garden City'. The glitter, beads and sequins

were chosen because they were a new material for the participants to use to do with textiles.

Hohenbüchler described being criticised by the participants, saying many were 'intellectuals'. She read out from *Victorya*: '... the artists just want to produce another piece of art in their list of establishment institutional installations. I don't think that we should be used as sort of tubes of paint for these artists who use themselves as twins as well to heighten their fame.' Laughing, she seemed to find it funny and to dismiss the statement, saying she was used to such criticism. However, a heated debate ensued and Irene Hohenbüchler protested at accusations that their projects 'used' patients. At this point a member of the audience spoke saying that she had been a group participant in the project. She felt they *had been used*. There was a tense silence.

Good chairing helped contain the emotionally loaded situation. Irene Hohenbüchler held to her position. She did not use people. However, it seemed she was not listening to the criticism. The art psychotherapists in the audience were the ones who seemed clearest about the power discrepancy in such relationships. The debated issue was how much choice was had when there is an imbalance of power. It was claimed that everyone was equal. This view ignores the locus of power in such unequal relationships and denies the effects of suffering and deprivation, not acknowledging that many people at the conference were likely to be particularly privileged.

These ethical issues raised by my visit to *We all peel the onions* and the conference became an important theme in the research. I will now go on to describe my methods for extracting different points so that they could become accessible for further consideration.

### **2.1.5 My 'experiment'**

In this chapter I have presented a discrete research process documenting my experiences of visiting three very different exhibitions, each raising issues regarding art psychotherapy practice. The process, referred to at the beginning of the chapter, had a number of stages.

In summary, very brief notes were taken while at each exhibition, from which a narrative was written for analysis.

## Developing methods

In order to structure my analysis I used Rose's (2001) approach to the interpretation of visual materials. Rose's scheme for 'producing empirically grounded responses' (2001:2) draws on current debates about what is important for understanding images over and above ocularcentric or visually-based culture (see for instance, Berger 1972; Haraway 1991; Mirzoef 1999; Foucault 1977; Foster 1988; Pollock 1988). Rose's approach is suited for my purpose as it is method driven rather than issue-based (Sullivan 2005:xv). As my heuristic account uses an autobiographical genre such an approach offers an explicit, critical methodology for interpreting a subjective text. Conveying this method of analysis introduces a contrasting 'voice' (see previous chapter 1.3 'Voices') where cooler, more distanced writing provides a counterpoint. As Gergen (1997) points out, the shifting registers also alter the author-reader relationship.

Rose offers a comprehensive way to carefully consider images, their social conditions and effects, and how the viewer looks at them (2001:16). She suggests there are three sites at which the meanings of visual objects are made: that of *production*; the *image* itself; and *audiencing*; proposing that these sites can be understood further using three modalities: *technological, compositional and social*. 'Technological' concerns are how and with what the art is made; 'compositional' concerns are about the visual construction of a piece and its qualities; and 'social' concerns relate to the political, social and institutional practices and relations interpreting and influencing the image (see Appendix 2, Table 2.1). My narrative text was analysed using these categories.

The way I went about it was in the manner of content analysis which reveals what is relevant about a text, any priorities that are portrayed, the values and how the ideas are related (see Denscombe 1998:169). This is done by reducing the text to smaller units which are often then quantified to make the analysis. Although content analysis is often used as a quantitative method based on counting frequencies, it can be used qualitatively by exploring

the relationship between categories (see Rose 2001:64) as I have done, connecting them to the wider context.

I did further mixing of methods to widen the focus (Rose 2001:191). Denscombe (1998) notes that the main limitation of content analysis is that it tends to dislocate the units and their meaning from the initial context in which they were made, and even from the meaning of the author. However, this was my intention in order to provide a way of looking outside/in. I could have used content analysis to consider the images themselves rather than the text that I constructed. But this would have limited the discussion by saying little about production or audiencing (Rose 2001:56). Additionally, the possible fragmentation of an image that can occur through content analysis was avoided by making an autobiographical text, as the expressive content that I included helps convey the mood of an artwork and the nature of my audiencing which at the same time is part of my reflexivity. Both of these aspects are difficult to include with content analysis as the sole method (see Rose 2001:67).

An initial examination of the text extracted issues that were significant to me about the narrative and that I considered relevant to the art psychotherapy process. For instance, aspects that might be considered when reflecting on a particular therapy or that related to basic assumptions I held as a therapist. There were forty five points in total and they were numbered and related to artist, work of art or event. These were then assigned to one of the three categories suggested by Rose (2001): production, image or audiencing, followed by deciding which modality was relevant. For example, Appendix 2, Table 2.3, Point No. 4: '*Temporary*' art that is not permanent (*Louw*) was assigned to the 'production' site. It related to the compositional modality as it was about the genre and the visual construction of the work (see Appendix 2, Table 2.1). My discussion is structured around the sites. The procedures that I developed in this chapter are replicated in my analyses of Tracey Emin and Grayson Perry's work (see chapters 2.2 and 2.3).

## **2.1.6 Analysis of narratives: *Three Commentaries***

In this section I will consider my response to the three exhibition visits. The points extracted and the sites to which they were assigned can be seen in Appendix 2, Tables 2.2-2.4. I will consider the first exhibition according to Rose's (2001) scheme in order to demonstrate the critical structure she suggests. I will then consider the other two exhibitions and finally discuss the issues that were raised in relation to relevant literature.

### **Distribution of the points**

The points I extracted from the text relating to the first two exhibitions *Textures of Memory* (nineteen points) and *Live in Your Head* (eleven points) are relatively evenly distributed amongst the three sites of production, image and audiencing but markedly different with regard to *We all peel the onions* where the distribution is more extreme: out of sixteen points, eight relate to production, only one relates to image and six relate to audiencing (see Appendix 2, Tables 2.2-2.4).

By comparison, in the text relating to *Textures of Memory*, eight points relate to production, six points relate to image; and five relate to audiencing. Slightly more emphasis is given to production. In the text relating to *Live in Your Head* three points relate to production; four points to image; and four points to audiencing with slightly more emphasis given to image than the other two exhibitions.

### **Modalities of the points**

When considering the points in relation to the three modalities suggested by (Rose 2001) each site gives a different emphasis to the modality, so for instance, 'technological' concerns relating to production are about how the image is made; when in relation to the image, are about visual effects; and in relation to audiencing, are about transmission, circulation or display (see Appendix 2, Table 2.1). My paragraph headings relating to the modalities reflect this emphasis. Although the modalities cannot always be neatly distinguished from each other, they are helpful as the detailed consideration they provide illustrates 'the complexity and richness of meaning in a visual image' (Rose 2001:188). Rose

suggests questions for approaching these intricacies that I found helpful to draw on (2001:188).

Broadly, the distribution of points indicates that my response to all three of the exhibitions shows a similar concern with the technologies of making and displaying images (see Appendix 2, Tables 2.2-2.4). The highest concern with compositional issues is shown in the text relating to *Textures of Memory*. The highest emphasis on the image is found in the text relating to *Live in Your Head*. The text relating to *We all peel the onions* places more emphasis than the two other exhibitions to production and audiencing. The points that I have extracted from these texts as a whole show a high concern with predominately social issues which is highest in *We all peel the onions*. I will describe the themes that emerged from the narrative and give an example to illustrate each modality. I will then discuss the issues raised in relation to relevant literature.

The distribution of points will reflect my response to the exhibitions, my concerns and interests. For instance, it is likely that the high concern with social issues in *We all peel the onions* as well as reflecting the issues constructed by the display, will reflect my concerns as a therapist about the clients.

## Themes extracted from the narratives

### *Textures of Memory*

#### Production

##### Technological modality: how it is made

Nearly half the points (8) relating to the first exhibition are about production. Four of these are technological: Points 3, 7, 8, and 12 illustrate how sustained attention to intricate detail in the making of a piece using the different tools and equipment, produces complex resonances. For instance, Point 3 (Broadhead's piece) depends on its technologies for its production; I missed it as it hardly existed in physical form which made a big impact on me.

### **Compositional modality: genre**

Three points are compositional: **Points 9, 13 and 17** are about genres visually constructing multifaceted qualities. A particular genre shares specific characteristics, locations and technologies, including the subtleties conveyed by different media. **Point 9** for example, refers to the importance of cloth and touch in textiles. The potency of this means of expression links to the importance of cloth throughout life at a very fundamental level.

### **Social modality: who made it, when, who for and why**

One point relates to social issues that permeate an image and provides an example of how economic, social, political and institutional relations can be studied through making an object: **Point 15**, Broadhead's piece investigates the body in relation to the building.

## **The Image**

### **Technological modality: visual effects**

Approximately a third of the points (6) in the text relating to *Textures of Memory* are about the image. One of these is technological illustrating that the visual effects of an image can be a critique of ideas: **Point 2** refers to Broadhead's choice of technology challenging the way I thought about vision.

### **Compositional modality: composition**

Three points relate to composition and suggest that insight can be found in the visual construction of an image: **Points 5, 11 and 14** illustrate the emotional resonances of domestic imagery and materials and a visual vocabulary in textile practices. For instance, **Point 5**: Binns use of cloth gave me an insight into the quality of clay.

### **Social modality: visual meanings**

Two points relate to social concerns: **Points 16 and 18** are how the social, political and institutional relations and knowledges saturating interpretation can be addressed by the genre or components of an image. For instance, **Point 18** has wide political implications. Vision is

challenged by Broadhead's piece that can be construed as questioning the primacy of the visual.

## Audiencing

### Technological modality: display

The lowest number (5) of points (approximately a quarter) in the text relating to *Textures of Memory* are about audiencing. None of these are technological and the majority (four) have predominantly social concerns.

### Compositional modality: viewing positions

One point is compositional: viewing positions can effect how actively the spectator engages with the image: **Point 10** describes the creation of disturbance, a sense of loss or pain which refers to the emotional impact on the viewer who had to bend down to get closer to see Wilson's torn fragments.

### Social modality: how interpreted, by whom and why

Four points have social concerns: **Points 1, 4, 6 and 19** refer to the cultural context and state of mind of the viewer effecting interpretation of images and implying multiple meanings. For example, **Point 19** highlights the importance of drawing on different fields and not just relying on one approach to examine and discuss work.

## *Live in Your Head*

### Production

#### Technological modality: how it is made

Compared to *Textures of Memory*, the points relating the second exhibition *Live in Your Head* place less emphasis on how the art is made. Just over a quarter of the points (three) relate to production. Only one of these refers to its technologies which are used for investigation: **Point 8** is about how Hiller's piece used visual charts and lists for exploration.

### **Compositional modality: genre**

**Point 4** is compositional and shows how the genre of the image can address the social relations of its production. This refers to Louw's 'temporary' art which as an installation ceased to exist materially after the exhibition as it was eaten by the audience.

### **Social modality: who made it, when, who for and why**

One point is social and refers to how the form of the work can reconstitute identities and relations. **Point 2** is about the political nature of the exhibition commenting on the previous historical primacy of painting and sculpture.

## **The Image**

### **Technological modality: visual effects**

Just over a third of the points (four) in the text relate to the image, which is similar to *Textures of Memory*. **Point 9** is technological and relates to the tools and equipment needed for the visual effects, which includes text that needs to be read by the viewer: Craig-Martin's deceptive piece draws attention to how interpretation can be influenced and changed by the technologies used.

### **Compositional modality: composition**

No points regarding the image relate to composition.

### **Social modality: visual meanings**

Approximately a third (three) of points relate to social aspects: **Points 1, 3 and 6** extend the political emphasis provided by this exhibition. For example, **Point 3** refers to 'good' memories being activated by the chosen work, illustrating how profoundly institutional practices and relations influence interpretations of visual meanings. In clinical practice, activating painful and disturbing memories may be inappropriate for fragile clients and yet may be construed as necessary by some therapeutic approaches.

## Audiencing

### Technological modality: display

A higher proportion (over a third) of points (four) regarding *Live in Your Head* compared to *Textures of Memory* relate to audiencing. **Point 5** is technological and about redisplay and looking back on work which is an important aspect of art psychotherapy practice: Harrison, Hunt and Kelly's installation focuses on particular aspects of a larger body of work.

### Compositional modality: viewing positions

Two points are compositional: **Points 7** and **11** illustrate how viewing positions dictate relations between image and viewer. For example, **Point 11** refers to both Dye and Craig-Martin specifically exploring the effects of how an image is seen.

### Social modality: how interpreted, by whom and why

One point (**Point 10**) refers to social concerns and how social identity shapes interpretation and the emotional impact on the viewer. In this case seeing the exhibition brought back my early roots in the conceptual art of the time and feeling out of touch with those art interests.

## *We all peel the onions*

### Production

### Technological modality: how it is made

My response to the text relating to the exhibition *We all peel the onions* places the highest emphasis on how the work was made. The distribution of the points' modalities is markedly different to the two previous exhibitions. Over half the points (eight) are to do with production. However, only one point relates to the technology: **Point 4** refers to the quality of the materials offered. I wondered if those used may appear infantile to the adults concerned.

### **Compositional modality: genre**

No points relate to genre.

### **Social modality: who made it, when, who for and why**

The dominating concern regarding how the work is made is social with seven points: **Points 1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 15** refer to confidentiality, privacy and power relations and how these saturate production of an image. For example, **Point 1** refers to who made the work, and emphasises the importance of an understanding of ethics when working with vulnerable people.

## **The Image**

### **Technological modality: visual effects**

There are no technological points.

### **Compositional modality: composition**

It is striking that there is only point relating to the image in the text about *We all peel the onions*. **Point 11** refers to the qualities of visual construction. I ask: what is it that makes artwork disturbing?

### **Social modality: visual meanings**

There are no points of social concern.

## **Audience**

### **Technological modality: display**

Under half the points (six) relate to audience. Three of these are technological: **Points 5, 6 and 7** refers to the display and consideration of authorship conveying the worth of an artist's work. For instance, **Point 5** describes the lack of respect that I felt was given to sensitive imagery by the form of the display.

### **Compositional modality: viewing positions**

One point is compositional: **Point three** is about the importance of considering the relationship of the image's components to the viewing positions offered. For instance, much of the work in this exhibition was literally looked down on by the viewer.

### **Social modality: how interpreted, by whom and why**

Two points relate to the social modality: **Point 9** and **13** are about the social relations of authorship and presentation. For example, **Point 9** draws attention to those relationships influencing interpretation of the work and how this will be transmitted through the methods of display.

I will now consider the implications of the analysis.

## **2.1.7 DISCUSSION**

### **Embodiments**

My approach to the analysis was structurally formal compared to the autobiographical narrative. I am fascinated that the combination of the content analysis and Rose's (2001) framework shows where and how I constructed meaning and understanding in the art of these three exhibitions. I would argue that the meanings are embodied by the art in how and with what it is made, how it looks and how it is seen, providing the vehicle for a transforming experience. I will discuss these aspects in relation to art psychotherapy and relevant literature.

### **Production**

#### **How it is made**

The analysis illustrates how complex resonances develop when there is sustained and detailed attention to making and the associated technologies. This is consistent with Sennett's (2008) consideration of craftwork. Craft is seen by Sennett (2008) to be as vital for the healthy functioning of societies now as it was at the time of the medieval guilds. He sees such skilled cooperation still taking place in modern equivalents, including music,

architecture, computer aided design and urban planning. Knowledge and skill are built upon and passed on through interaction in settled social spaces, knowledge existing in social practice rather than separate from it. His perspective is that as a social activity founded on skill, craftsmanship exemplifies the special human condition of being engaged. Sennett believes these skills are possible for most people to develop and with them a sense of self worth is achieved. De Waal sees this as slightly patronising (2008:27), commenting that the making process takes more precedence over the made thing. However, MacCarthy highlights the aspects that Sennett values: slow investigation with experiment and exploration, dependent on the use of tools and repeated body movements. Skills are practiced and developed in a relationship between hand and brain. There is great meaning in the detail: 'the grip on the pencil, the pressure on the chisel' comprised of enduring, innate, necessary and often slow rhythms (MacCarthy 2008).

The implication is that the knowledges are embedded in the practices and in the tools. The resulting objects embody complicated emotions. My narrative about *Textures of Memory* suggested that the sustained making process can be reparative and integrative. In most art psychotherapy situations nowadays sustained making is not what the therapy is about. In a clinical situation the therapist could miss the significance of subtle or minimal expressions such as those described in the narrative unless there are procedures for displaying them which give particular attention to the material presence of the piece and how it was made. In *We all peel the onions* a theme was that the media will have its own particular associations for individual clients. In *Textures of Memory* it seems that it was the sustained attention to fine points and how they were finished that gave the artwork its value. For instance, stitching was done in great detail in some of the work. In Wilson's practise with human hair, her work was displayed in small individual display cases that drew you in closely. In art psychotherapy, there needs to be the tools and equipment available for such work; structures regarding the length of time and how the environment is used; and a consideration of the current emphasis on a spontaneous approach to artmaking - making it clear that work can be carried on over time. Moving on to a different piece each week, which can happen, will miss the opportunity for following such a process through to enable a

reparative experience. Could this explain why the work in *We all peel the onions* looked raw and unintegrated?

A second aspect that emerged is that the technologies themselves can be used for exploration and investigation. The example I found so fascinating was Hiller's lists and charts (*Live in Your Head*). However, such technologies currently have a poor reception in art psychotherapy in the literature despite text/s and words commonly being part of art. In group analytic art psychotherapy, for instance, the use of words is seen to be associated with the need for control and to leave little space for exploration (McNeilly 1989:159). This view constricts multiple meanings in artwork to a single negative frame and also does not seem to be looking at current art practises. Hiller describes her charts and lists of words as commentaries (1996:162). As a small part of a much bigger body of artworks, they were the beginning for her of a whole way of working in art. Time is crucial for developing such a process.

### Genre

The text highlights how a consideration of genre in art psychotherapy clinical practice could significantly expand the predominant focus on painting and drawing<sup>1</sup> in the UK literature (see for example, Schaverien 1992, McNeilly 2006, Maclagan 2001b). Different genres of art have their own special characteristics and technologies that construct their visual qualities. *Textures of Memory* illustrates how potent textiles can be as a genre because of its fundamental importance throughout life. The nature of the genre can also address the social relations of its production as in Bristow's detailed, fine making expressing ambivalence regarding domesticity, bringing reflective, meditative states to mind, along with an edge where obsessiveness might entrap.

On the other hand, the image created can comment critically on the genre's characteristics. Yahoodi's prints show that the tools used in textiles create a visual language with acute emotional resonance, including a menacing undercurrent. Enormous subtleties are also conveyed with the media that is used, and whether imagery is repeated or changed.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Afterimage* 29(3) (Nov/Dec 2001), an issue on media art in therapeutic practice examines the use of photography, video and computers mainly in the United States, but includes from this country Rosy Martin and Jo

Textile practises rely on touch. Haptics, or 'the psychological orientation of touch' (Complete Oxford Dictionary) is explored by Patterson (2007). He describes the enduring assumption of the primacy of vision that *Live in Your Head* challenges: Aristotle's hierarchy of the senses (*De Anima* of c.350 BC) places sight as the most superior and touch in the lowest position. Patterson reconsiders non-visual experience, arguing that touch has been forgotten and is vital for embodied existence. Touch is a sense of communication bringing objects and people into proximity (Patterson 2007:1).

Touch combines a number of outward-oriented senses including the immediacy of touch on the skin, and inward-oriented ones that inform our perception of the spatial environment such as movement, balance and the position of the body. More metaphorical meanings of touch reflect being affected emotionally by others (Patterson 2007:3).

Patterson argues that the two-dimensionality of painting seems to separate what is being viewed from the viewer and implies a scopic distance. By comparison, sculpture's three-dimensionality implies more involvement and a sharing of the space. He sees the sense of materiality and the perceiving body, as described by Merleau-Ponty (1969) in his analysis of Cezanne, as more evident in sculpture and architecture (2007:91). Such embodied perception in relation to three dimensionality is also echoed by Boden. She sees the crafts as being grounded in an evocation of an 'enactive' response both bodily and social, such as reaching out to touch objects, whereas paintings rarely provoke such an impulse to bodily action (Boden 2000:297): 'it is typical of craftwork in general that, since it is potentially functional, it engages one on a bodily level' (Boden 2000:293). I propose that incorporating an understanding of these bodily aspects into art psychotherapy practice would greatly expand the client's creative art experience.

In the exhibition *Live in Your Head*, I was confronted by temporary art. This raises a particularly significant principle for the profession: should therapists always keep art work? Art psychotherapists are advised to keep client's work by the professional association

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Spence's work with photography.

(BAAT). However, my analysis indicates that this will severely limit the genre of work produced by a client, counteracting possible purposes of art. For example, sensory functions, described above, may be important to develop after therapy. Taking objects home may be a way of doing this. The work's significance needs careful assessment in order to understand the implications of it staying in the therapy room and/or the therapist keeping it after the therapy. Although there are good reasons to do so including for confidentiality, my findings suggest that a revision of the Association's advice is necessary.

Another significant area of genre raised by the three exhibitions is art about political and social comment. This is a salient point for art psychotherapy. The recognition of the social construction of identity and mental health problems is vital to integrate into clinical practice (McLeod 2001; Campbell et al 1999; Hogan 1997, 2003). Hogan sees advances in cultural theory having limited impact on art psychotherapy procedures today in the literature and wonders if it is fear that current practice cannot be held up to the detailed scrutiny that would be involved (1997:37). New therapeutic models to guide practice in integrating the effects of post-modernism and social constructionism into arts therapies are seen to be lacking by Karkou and Sanderson (2006:98). They cite the eclectic and integrative practice of Waller (1993) and the post-modern perspective of interaction described by Byrne (1995) as examples of art psychotherapy approaches recognising these issues. Art psychotherapists working with specific groups (for instance, specific racial or single-sex groups) are attempting to incorporate into their practice social theory that acknowledges the social construction of psychiatric symptoms (Hogan 1997:28).

Practitioners need to develop skills for recognising political and social aspects in artwork as well as being able to engage with any world view presented by their clients (McLeod 2001:118). For instance, a psychoanalytic model of art psychotherapy focuses largely on a very particular approach to audiencing and to the image itself (Rose 2001), rather than on its production and social context (Gilroy 2008; Tipple 2003). This can lead to interpretations about a client's political artwork being defensive and avoiding feelings. Hogan suggests such interpretations are dangerous because they pathologise any resistance to the therapeutic procedure and are abstract and remote from the context of the social

reality of people's lives. Criticism by a client should be listened to and not dismissed or interpreted by the person who set up the situation (Hogan 1997:40) as happened in the *We all peel the onions* project. Did this contribute to making the work in that exhibition disturbing for me to look at?

#### **Who made it, when, who for and why**

The text illustrates how social relations surrounding production of an image can be explored by the making process. The practices and relationships surrounding the art psychotherapy session will inevitably saturate production of the client's image, as shown by Tipple (2003) investigating the effects of his organisation and team on his clients' art, and Manners (2005) examining the influence on his own audiencing of the team where he worked. Could the tongue-in-cheek image I saw in *We all peel the onions?* be reconstituting the power relations in their project?

The questions in the subtitle above regarding social concerns are very relevant to art psychotherapy. Craft objects for instance, are often functional. The maker may be a daughter or a friend making something for someone in particular, for a specific use. The relations between them are likely to be significant and so may be addressed and refashioned by the object. The work in the exhibition *Live in Your Head* shows how the form of the work can reconstruct identities and relations as in Louw's work where the audience slowly demolishes the artwork. This is potent for the clinical situation. However, if clients cannot take objects out of their sessions (as advised), the genre of the work will be limited. The motivation to make it in the first place may be diluted or deactivated.

Ethical issues regarding confidentiality, privacy and power relations will imbue production of an image. I was concerned about whether the work in *We all peel the onions* was private. I suggested that the project's clients had little choice in taking part in a public exhibition because they needed the institution for their treatment. I also wondered how the Hohenbüchler sisters understood the social relations of the artworks' production. The integration of social theory is also a key issue in art psychotherapy. The Hohenbüchler sisters are described as the artists in the project. Similarly, in art psychotherapy in Britain

the therapist is usually understood to be the artist rather than the client and often takes a distant, observing role and does not participate in the artmaking. This stance feeds the disparate power relations that already exist, inferring that the therapist is the knowledgeable 'expert'. The roles will always have different responsibilities but it is important to consider how to make the relations more mutual in such a socially constructed situation (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:67). For instance, thinking of the client and therapist as 'co-creators of art and meaning' (Gilroy 2006:95) and taking part in the creative art process as therapist also offers more parity (see Mahony 1992b; Greenwood and Layton 1987; Haesler 1989).

## The Image

### Visual effects

The narrative about *Textures of Memory* implies that the visual effects of an image can be a critique of ideas. A critique is a critical essay and an image can be a visual equivalent. The text shows that part of these effects will result from the tools and equipment used to make, structure and display the image, contributing to the interpretation. Adamson (2008) similarly argues that craft's apparent disempowerment in relation to fine art has been used by artists as a tool of analysis and critique. Using the ideas of the autonomous (relating to fine art) and supplemental (relating to craft), he describes 'theoretical' craft objects that attempt to 'attain the conditions of autonomy within the boundaries of a supplemental medium'. His description of a piece of jewellery (usually a 'supplemental' object of adornment) supports my proposal that visual effects can be a critique in themselves: '... the pendant seems like a "self-standing" object, perfectly poised and formed in relation only to itself' (2008:091). This is a sophisticated reading of an image's visual effects.

### Composition

I found emotional resonances in the composition could provide insight as well as disturbance with, for instance, domestic imagery and the development of a visual vocabulary. Jefferies draws attention to the choice of fabric and cloth as useful as a

conceptual strategy operating in the transformative power of metaphor, interweaving between words and things, surfaces and skins, fibre and material, touch and tactility (Jefferies 2008:38).

Her words give a sense of such resonances.

### **Visual meanings**

Social practices and relations profoundly influence interpretation. Broadhead's piece intriguingly addresses these relations and knowledges with particular components of her image. Harrison, Hunt and Kelly also affected the visual meaning of their work through their political approach where their methods successfully gave respect to sensitive material.

I am exploring craft processes in the research because they have not been explored in the art psychotherapy literature. I sensed a marginalisation that has dogged craft in modernity. Visual meanings embodied by craft objects can be complex. Adamson (2007, 2008) explores fundamental differences between craft and fine art and dispenses with the problematisation of craft's second class identity: 'craft is interesting because of (rather than despite) its orphaned status in modern aesthetic culture' (2008:92). He argues that the perception of craft's inferiority to fine art is its defining theoretical and social property. It is an antithesis or foil to the ideals of modern art (2008:90). It is this that is the most productive thing about it. He uses examples of artists exploiting this sense of weakness such as Judy Chicago, Mike Kelley and Richard Slee, arguing that for them 'the physical and social space in which craft objects are made becomes a means of displacing value structures... a useful friction' (2007:168).

### **Audiencing**

#### **Display**

My narratives illustrate how the technologies of display effect audiences' interpretation. For example, value and consideration of authorship will be transmitted through the display methods. Is one looking up, down, how close or far away is the art, does it lead you? For instance, in the collective display in *We all peel the onions*, I felt individual work was lost. Equally the narrative illustrates there are many ways of redisplaying work without being

chronological. Technologies of display have not yet been explored in the art psychotherapy literature. New ways of thinking about this aspect of the therapeutic process are needed and Gilroy (2008) suggests returning to our visual arts background to consider how we examine our clients work. Curating is congruent with art psychotherapists' role as interdisciplinary mediators or translators (Gilroy 2008). In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to consider collaborating with clients in making displays but sensitive theorising would be needed because of the complexities of working with severe disturbance.

### **Viewing positions**

Viewing positions crucially effect social relations and how actively the viewer engages with the image (see also Damarell 2007). This applies equally to both private displays with colleagues or supervisors and as part of the clinical process with clients. In clinical practice it seems important to consider the relationship between positioning and the image's components or genre. For instance, a small pot without a foot could be looked at cupped in the hand, immediately creating a sense of intimacy and closeness. If there was a foot on the pot that raises it up, this and the profile needs to be seen for the nuances to register, perhaps at eye level. Another example is a series, where seeing images on either side will effect reception.

### **How interpreted, by whom and why**

The cultural context, state of mind and identity of the viewer effects vision, shapes interpretation, and provides an artwork with multiple meanings. These are significant aspects for art psychotherapy. Integrating this knowledge into practice is vital as one approach cannot cover all these aspects and different fields are needed to examine work. Isserou (2008) for example, uses child developmental and psychoanalytic ideas to consider the client and therapist looking together at art. He proposes that art psychotherapy theory takes as a premiss the capacity of the client for joint attention and argues that it is based on early childhood development. However, this doesn't take into account social and cultural influences or the effect of the image itself.

Interpretation of images can be conceptualised as a process with stages where the meanings will change. Writing about the exhibition *Live in Your Head* for the research I came to realise that I was out of touch with those art interests, which as a therapist will narrow my range of responses to clients' work.

Hierarchies and social relations of authorship will be transmitted through display methods. How can institutional authorization be given to the work? Mounts, frames and wall mounting can convey such respect, but there are many other methods which could be explored in art psychotherapy.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented an heuristic research process in which I examined my personal experience of three very different exhibitions. I used the process to raise issues about art psychotherapy practice. *Textures of Memory* had an emotional impact on me, partly to do with my own state of mind and was almost a rite of passage, but its impact was mainly due to the content of the work and curatorship of the exhibition. *Live in Your Head* raised my awareness of the impact of presentation and social comment by reminding me of the art of that period, particularly in relation to exposing the working conditions of women. *We all peel the onions* raised my awareness of ethical issues in working with people in vulnerable states and unequal relationships. These ethical issues run as a thread throughout the entire research process.

The heuristic process I used paradoxically both opened up a wider field and provided the parameters of the whole area of study which includes a personal lens. The experiment produced a critical framework that could be reproduced for comparison and further exploration at later stages in the research. The direct encounter provided source material which I looked back on, much in the same way as the art psychotherapeutic experience I offer my clients.

The issues raised about art psychotherapy were the result of my examination of the text and offer a way of reconsidering and making changes to clinical practice. I realised how

frighteningly narrow my clinical practice was in danger of becoming before I started the research, particularly with regard to the creative art process. It was as if I had been walking down a long narrow corridor and I had suddenly stepped outside.

The choice of exhibitions was important. Their relevance was significant at this stage of the research in that it raised my awareness of the perspectives and influences I brought to my clinical practice and this research. It also reminded me about the power imbalance when working with vulnerable people and how easily this can be misused. In the next two chapters 2.2 and 2.3 further insights from explorations of Tracey Emin and Grayson Perry's work raised issues around disclosure and the materialising of trauma.

# PART TWO – AN OUTER FRAME

## Embodiments

### 2.2 Tracey Emin: *This is Another Place* – memory and material practices

In the previous chapter I used description and analysis of three different exhibitions to provide an outer frame for my research. In this section of Part Two I will replicate my analysis with another exhibition visit that provides a contemporary positioning for the art making of my art psychotherapy group.

#### 2.2.1 Introduction

The fascinating work of Tracey Emin seemed particularly relevant to my project because she shows how an artist might manage memory or transform the effects of trauma and distress creatively by visual means. I will consider the role of material and cloth in her work as my own use of such media in my group showed significant potential for art psychotherapy where traditionally painting and drawing have been privileged. In order to examine Emin's work, I will consider associated cultural texts (see Wood Conroy 1998:63), including those of art critics from newspapers, art journals and books, as well as academic research. Several themes seem particularly relevant to my art psychotherapy group: the emotional response to her work; autobiography and narrative; and the use of materials.

The autobiographical narrative that follows, documents my subjective response to the exhibition *This is Another Place*, shown at Modern Art Oxford in November 2002 to January 2003. It includes thick description as found previously in *Three Commentaries*. My analysis of the text uses Rose's (2001) approach to the interpretation of visual materials. It contributes to the findings of this chapter and can be compared with those of *Three Commentaries*.

## 2.2.2 Tracey Emin: *This is Another Place*

This was the first exhibition in the newly refurbished Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, and as a famous Turner Prize nominee that year, it was Tracey Emin's first solo exhibition in a British public gallery since 1997. Emin sought to explore where memory merges with the present and future. I found it a painful show, but also magnificent. Brave and raw. It was like a ramble around her mind, taking the viewer through an impressive amount of diverse work, which filled all the galleries and ended with an intensely moving and evocative centrepiece. This huge assemblage of reclaimed wood formed a little hut teetering at the end of what I took to be a broken down pier.

### Journal:

It took two hours to get there and many memories came back as I drove around Oxford looking to park. For about eight years I lived in the City and the countryside outside so it was very familiar to me. I have greatly missed it since living elsewhere. I confidently made my way down Little Clarendon Street but was taken aback to find my memory had cheated me. Where *was* MOMA, as it used to be called? When I got there the gallery was full of people. A previous favourite meeting place of mine, it was great to see it again.

The first gallery was unlit, a velvety pitch blackness punctuated with a neon installation *Negative and Neon*, 2002 (see Fig 2.24). Cotter (2002) describes sinking into the purple carpet and blackness as being reminiscent of 'disco lounges or 80s cinema foyers'. Night-clubs, scary rides at the funfair, and the confessional also came to my mind. The neon lights irradiated their messages with startling clarity. Shouting and arguing (Searle 2002), or crying and whispering (Cotter 2002), this was like a conversation. To me the glowing handwriting shrieked in neon: *I know, I know, I KNOW; Fuck off and die you SLAG; Doesn't matter how good life gets, some things never change*. How should I read these words? What do the materials signal? A neon outline of a figure seemed to refer to Munch's painting *The Scream*.



Figure 2.24

A few strangers moved past. As if finding myself alone on a dance floor, I suddenly felt exposed, vulnerable, but on reflection that seemed an outdated image, referring to my teenage years. This seemed to be entering an inner world. It had taken me back, evoking past memories of being in such an environment. Where was it leading? Into her head, as Cotter (2002) suggests? Emin's map for the exhibition guide says:

to meet my Past

Leaving the messages burning in the blackness I shut the door and enter another dark space with stairs and ascend into more blackness. I was intrigued. On reflection there seemed to be the implication of an invitation here.

The title of the show '*This is Another Place*' invites questions and associations. What was the *original*/place? Where else might she or we be? Place suggests a particular part of space, or a building or town but can also be a position in terms of duty or hierarchy, an argument or thought process (see Oxford Compact English Dictionary, 1996). It refers to identity and location by being placed, but there is a suggestion that this is refused. Her poem in the accompanying limited edition book (Emin 2002) confirmed my impression:

Its not where we thought it was.

There is a sense of helplessness, of being pursued by unwanted sensations, thoughts, feelings; of loss of control, being caught, yet reaching out for something or someone. The poem encapsulates the exhibition :

Its not where we thought it was.  
Somewhere distant in our minds.  
A place you can return to - a memory.  
Past that never seems to go  
Away - A dream  
That's strangely joined to  
The FUTURE  
Something passing ME by - I Try to Hold  
The Hand of a ghost - Something - OK  
Someone who YET has not died.  
A Mental web - of Past - Present-  
And Future.

The compilation is a facsimile appearing as photocopies of her journal with personal notes, jottings, photos and drawings. There are lists of things to do for the exhibition and about a third at the end is blank, as if unfinished. The lined and numbered pages invite the reader to enter their own notes just as the viewer is invited to respond to the personal material in her work. There are frank writings about sex, masculinity and references to not having a baby. Her writing, with its mistakes and crossings out, is intimate. It draws me in and I start to feel I am getting to know her. The Munch figure appears again in drawings and is described

as a 'Homage'. *ME REALLY ME*, she writes, the next pages showing her in a gas mask clearly resembling the screaming face. So that figure in the neon room was her too (see Fig 2.25).

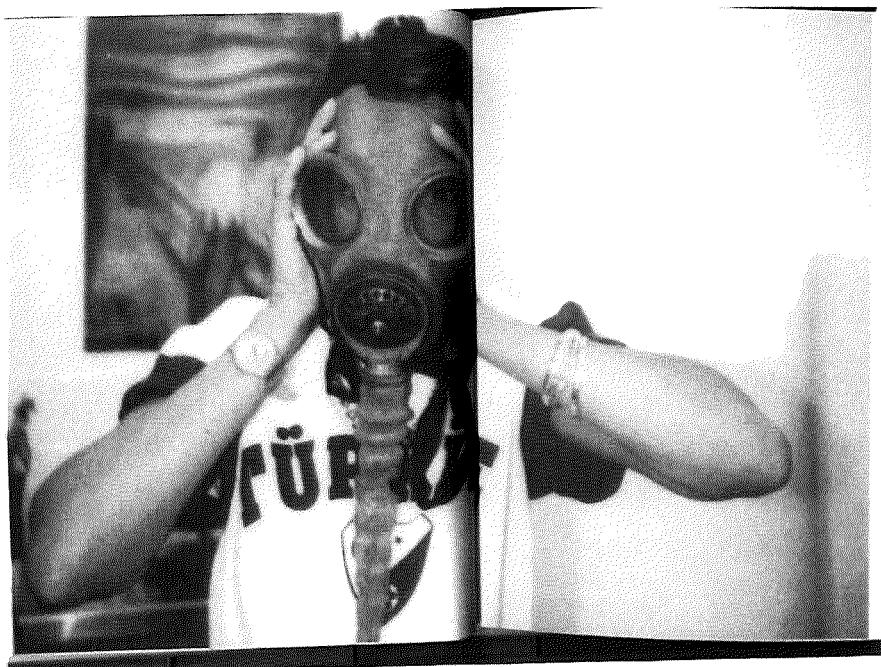


Figure 2.25  
The impression that

it is a lo-tech reproduction of her notebook with her handwriting and a scribbly pencil drawing in one corner conveys a sense of intimacy. But it is not lo-tech as the book is a printing of photocopies so it is meant to look this way, rather than being 'original' photocopies. An interesting twist. Printed in a short run of 3000, the book appeals to collectors and so could be seen as commodity oriented rather than freely available as in a long run, or cheaply as with photocopies. So it is a stylistic device adopted for a purpose, conveying a different 'aura' than 'real' photocopies which have the contradictory association of being a cheap, poor quality, throw-away form of reproduction. These are complex, temporal contradictions that underlie the 'thingness' and 'quiddity' of the object (Wood Conroy 1994:77).

The exhibition relates to motherhood, age and memory which concern her as she approaches forty (Cotter 2002) and presents unspeakable loss, tragedy and despair. Her assemblage *Gin bath, bed and Moses basket*, 1999-2002 is an example (see Fig 2.26).



Figure 2.26

There is no mattress on the bed, just the bedstead, tin bath and wicker basket. The emptiness of it all and the reference to abortion forelornly contrasts to the rumpledness of her famous unmade bed entry for the Turner Prize in 1999 (see Fig 2.27).



Figure 2.27

*Feeling Pregnant II*, 1999-2002. The baby's shoes in vitrine, with five A4 handwritten texts are described as 'poignantly hopeful' by Cotter (2002). I found the tiny shoes desperate. More so because I was reminded of the holocaust shoes. A sense of absence and death permeated the show and made it difficult to look at some things and continue to take notes. My notes are sparse. The resonances seemed unbearable, which I know are to do with the loss of my father eighteen months before.

When I saw *Little coffins*, 2002, which are large wooden drawers (see Fig 2.26, top right), I wrote in my notes:

Some of it is too painful - I don't want to look

There is a mass of people at the exhibition including a 'tour', in which there is heated discussion with the guide. One man says loudly and angrily that he finds it 'very boring'.

Many words and lots of swearing was a dominant theme. They confronted you everywhere, including painstakingly arranged on her appliqué blankets. For example, *Remembering 1963 (The New Black)* 2002 (see Fig 2.28); and *I do not expect*, 2002 (see Fig. 2.29).



Figure 2.28



Figure 2.29

Highly coloured, the blankets are hung on the wall. Carefully cut out letters are sewn onto domestic blankets in a rich patchwork of vibrant shapes, marks and images. The words and phrases are strangely arresting with angry, funny or anguished sentiments. Sometimes shocking, their directness contrasts vividly with the laborious methods of the construction, producing an odd poignancy.



Nine *Self Portraits with Docket*, 2002 (see Fig 2.30) are intimate photographs of a naked Tracey cuddling her cat Docket and they catch at me as I love animals. In her exhibition map this arrangement is called Furry baby. I think of my relationships with animals that operate at a profound level, very different to that with fellow humans, even if blood related.

Figure 2.30

Drawings, photographs, prints are treated like textures (for example *Mono-drawings*, 1997-2000 are placed in perspex). Delicate and sensitive, the monoprints' impact is through tentative, loose and simple line (see Fig 2.31).



Figure 2.31

Moving through different galleries I remember a range of overwhelming emotional experiences evoked by the different forms of her work. There is a life-death mask and delicate embroideries. The body and sex are a dominant theme. There are also witty and funny things such as bronze flip flops, and a soothing video of Emin pruning a

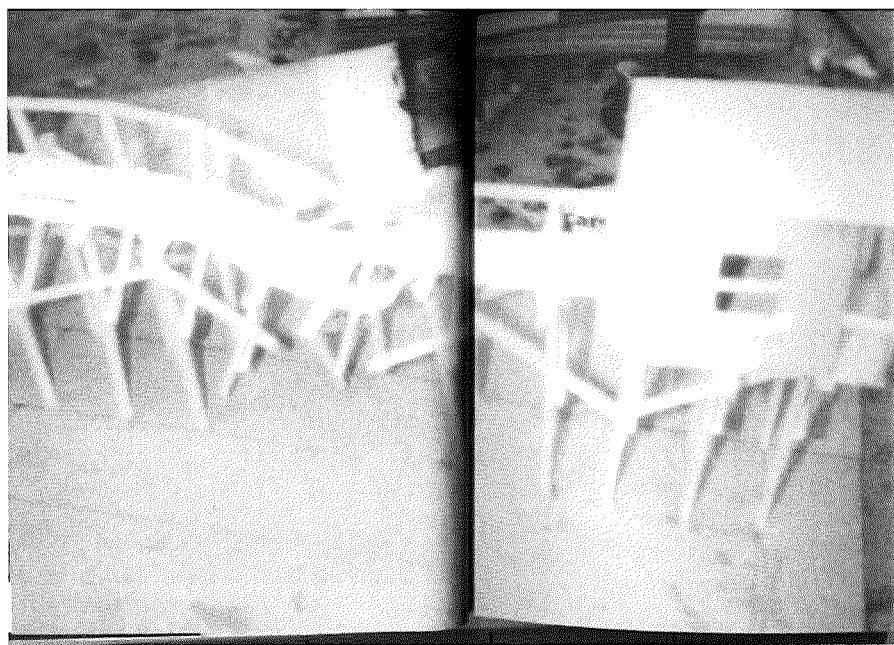
rose in her garden (however, it may not have been intended to be, as it is called Hard Love). The repetitive snipping reminds me of stitching. Exhausted by this emotional roller coaster it seemed difficult to think. Entering the final gallery I felt some relief to see a big, open space housing a large construction (see Fig 2.32). I found it quite breathtaking. My notes describe it:

*Knowing my enemy*, 2002. A small building on what looks like a broken pier. A hut which is pale green with a darker green window with a patchwork curtain. It has a very small balcony at the front and a door. The handrail of the pier is also broken. There is a crisscrossing of old secondhand timbers. The structure is approximately 18-20' long, maybe 20 paces, held together with metal plates at the bottom. There are also two ladders that are broken and don't reach the floor. It feels monumental.



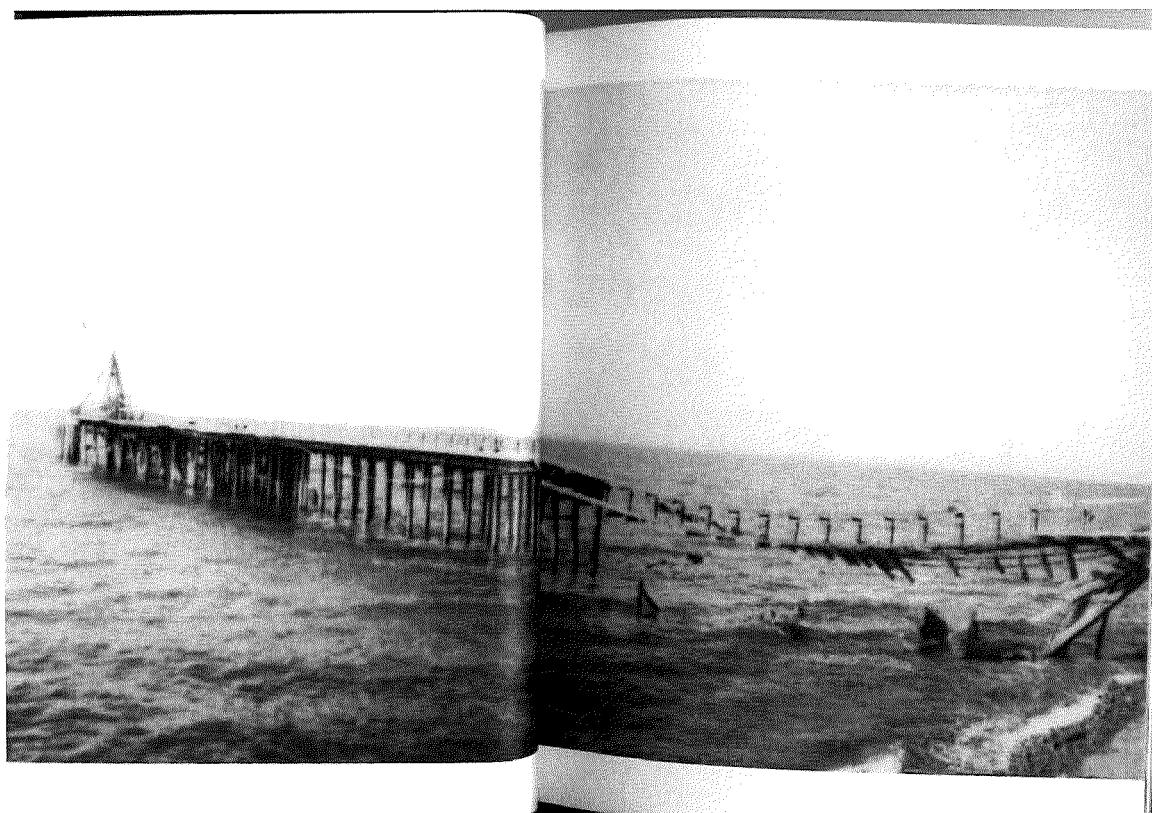
Figure 2.32

In her book (Emin 2002) there are blurry photographs of a small maquette approximately 6 or 9 inches high (see Fig 2.33).



**Figure 2.33**

and a fuzzy photograph of an actual pier in the process of collapsing (see Fig 2.34).



**Figure 2.34**

This huge structure stood in front of me was impressive and moving. Hugely evocative, it seemed a metaphor for collapse, decay and being at the mercy of the elements and aging processes. It expresses an awareness of time running out and refers to events in a personal history. Who or what is the enemy? Is it a person, something in or outside of herself? Many images and memories from my own childhood came flooding back of similar buildings, vague distant family holidays, play spaces, homes and structures made as a child. The assemblage is inspired by memories of a disused railway track and a fishing pier and the title comes from the fax written by her father describing his 'struggle with alcohol, gambling and sex' (Cotter 2002).

*Getting to know my enemy (faxes from my Dad), 1993* are four A4 fax sheets, framed together and hand written with crossings out and notes in the margin. I jostled with other people trying to get close enough to see the words and start to read, but I couldn't concentrate in these crowded circumstances. I sat down to contemplate the big, wooden structure and all that I had seen in the last two hours, before leaving.

### **Associated texts**

An inseparable aspect of Emin's work is the spectator's response and I will briefly explore this here in associated texts. Art critics, for instance often respond to her work and this exhibition with extreme language. Described as a major player in the contemporary British art scene (Davies 2002), her work is found challenging and controversial (Preece 1999), uncomfortable (Davies 2002), embarrassing (Litt 2002), shocking and disgusting (Spaid 1999), but also delightful (Oakes 2002) and exhilarating (Doyle 2002). The show is also described as 'just melodrama . . . fabrications' (Cumming 2002). The truth of her autobiographical stories is questioned (Preece 1999; Cumming 2002; Barrett 1997; Dorment 1997; Field 2002; Gayford 2002) sending critics and audiences into a 'frenzy' (Field 2002). Paradoxically, honesty and bravery are also viewed as the essence of the work (Barrett 1997). Boredom is claimed (Dorment 1997, 1998; and see my narrative) but typically vehemence undermines the claim: there is a 'tackiness' (Gibbs 2003), a ' . . . monstrous audacity . . .' (Dormont 1997), she is an 'irritant' (Lucie-Smith 2000). 'Unstructured

outpourings' Dormont flatly states, '... do not add up to a coherent artistic vision'. The work is 'raw and unedited' making her 'simply a diarist and raconteur' or, it is suggested as if even worse, the work is 'therapy' (1997).

By contrast, her monoprints are 'gorgeously pathetic and understated' (Gordon 1997); and there is unabashed admiration (Grieve 2002; Corin 2000; Lebowitz 2003): she is even worshipped as a goddess (Arning 1999). Admired for her willingness to reveal herself and for the risks she takes (Cotter, quoted in Paterson 2002; Grieve 2002), Stallabrass claims Emin has achieved brand status (2004:145). The press release for her Oxford show says works such as *Everyone I have ever slept with 1963-1997* (1998), her tent appliquéd with the names of family, friends and lovers (see Fig 2.35), and *My Bed* (1999) (see Fig 2.27) have become 'icons of artistic provocation' (Cotter 2002).

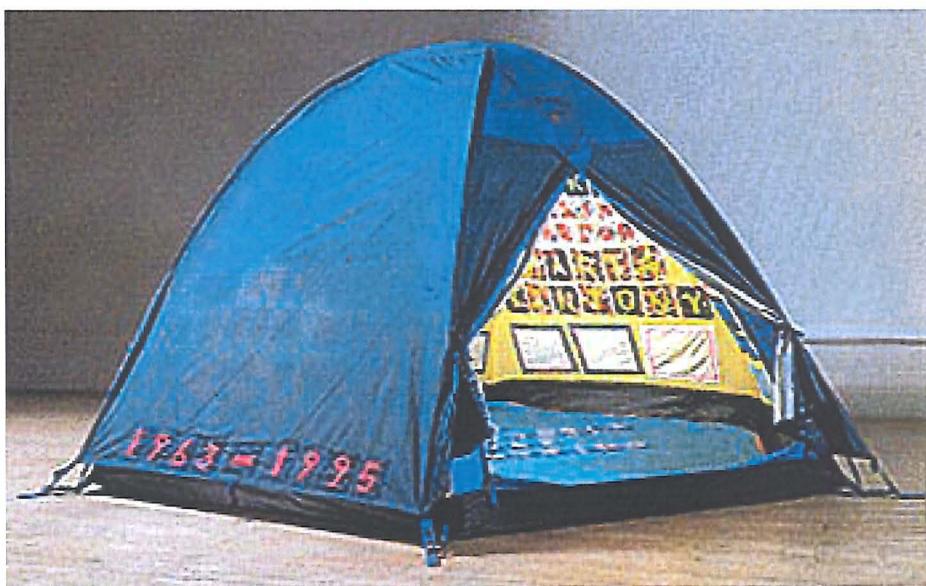


Figure 2.35

Over time, in some cases an angry response dramatically changes (for example, Dorment). She becomes a 'great seductress' and is beginning to look like a 'real artist at last' (Dorment 2001) and (in complete contrast to his previous statement in 1997) she now has a coherent artistic vision. Can there be such a huge change in her work? Her previous 'scribbly drawings' are now 'absolutely beautiful' (Dorment 2001). Townsend and Merck suggest such reactions

are either extraordinarily naïve or feigned ignorance. Her bed, for instance, is treated as if it is really her own bed, not a constructed artwork (2002:6).

What encourages the extreme responses and insulting reviews? Could it be sexism (Gayford 2002), or cultural and classist prejudices aroused by the content, the materials and their handling? How she recasts the personal into art and her personality into 'unprecedented mass-media coverage' is seen as pushing Britain's boundaries in terms of explicit autobiography and private subjects (Preece 2001:51). Collings suggests many art reviewers do not know much about the subject (2003:134).

Emin's work seems to touch on professional inadequacies. Some of the responses are abusive (as documented by Field 2002) and described as a battering. Field says her work strikes chords for all who have experienced, small-town, suburban life. The real liveness and ordinariness of it is what is difficult for the critics, but speaks directly to her fans, appealing to those fascinated by art but who have felt marginalised by the establishment that champions the exclusive and esoteric (2002).

Emin talks about class and sexist issues in an interview (Preece 2002). She suggests the references to her accent and background infer she is common and therefore not very intelligent. She says many male critics resent her attitude of 'what you see is what you get', as there is no great secret for them to unravel (2002).

Some critics seem to feel attacked or affronted. Although Cotter (2002) says one becomes part of an intense and confrontational conversation in encounters with Emin's work, sometimes her work appears to be taken literally as directed at the viewer (for example, Searle 2002; Litt 2002). A sexualised review of the book *The Art of Tracey Emin* (Merck and Townsend 2002) suggests the artist-public relationship invited by her work is one of lover to lover. Described as the aesthetic of the dumped, it avoids a more serious consideration of her work or the book (Litt 2002).

The Young British Artists movement, including Emin, discovered the media was 'a place to do business' where entry into folklore with her tent has been described as upping her 'psycho-slut status' (Muir 2001:39). Muir points out, however, that *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995* is a work of relative tranquillity, echoing the experience of being underground in the Shell Grotto, Margate which is a cave decorated with thousands of seashells. Looking up, it can be seen that the shells have been signed by courting couples from the last century. Knowledge of this adds further poignancy to the work that is one of great intimacy (see Fig 2.36). Cotter sees the force of Emin's art being in the combination of uncompromising language and frankness of subject matter translated into delicate, handcrafted objects (2002). I would suggest that tenderness is hidden in the deliberately provocative and misleading language. Beneath the surface of the words there are gentler, softer and more fragile images, perhaps used knowing this is more disconcerting than the louder, angrier words. Barber says the anger is designed to discourage pity as Emin does not want to be seen as a victim. She rages rather than weeps (2001ii:26).

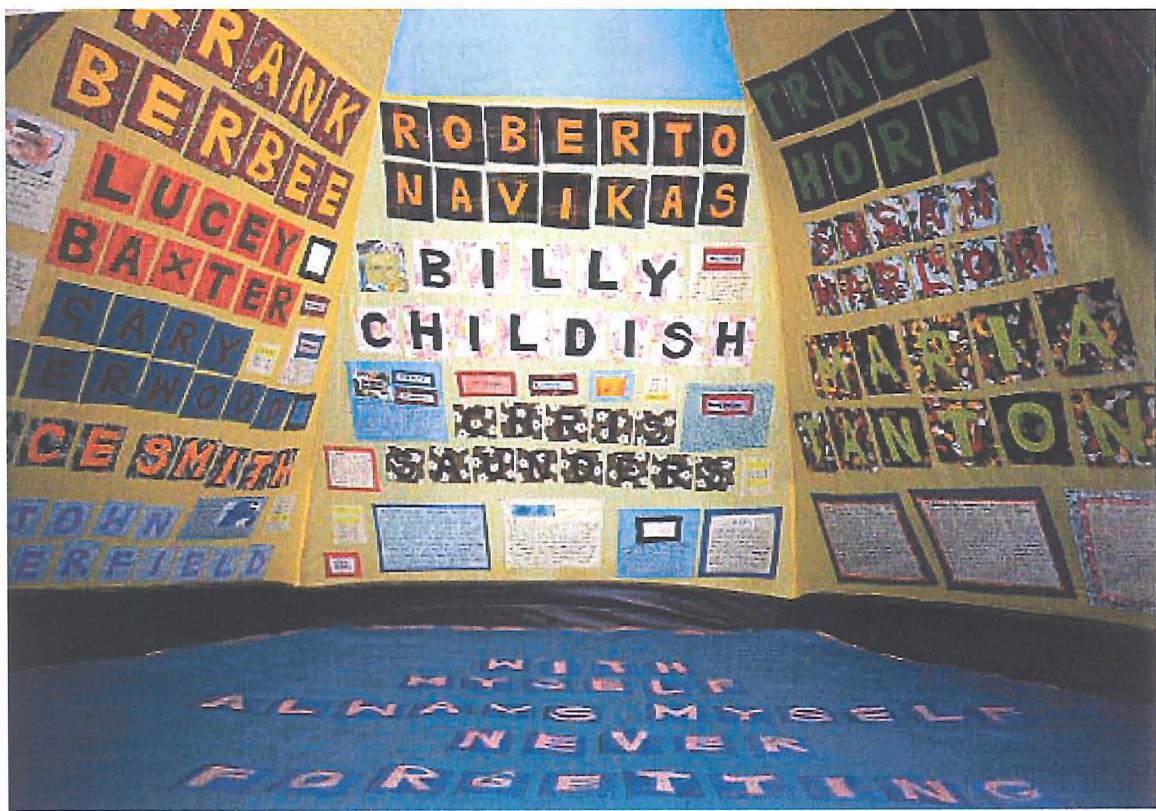


Figure 2.36

What Emin has to say about her work makes it seem like a great fuss about nothing. Is she really unaware of the offence people might feel, or the pain it might stir in a viewer?

### Emin's own words

Emin describes her use of materials to Preece (2002). She likes poor materials and fabrics. All her pieces are made with recycled materials and objects that she really loves. She constantly edits and works on things, thinking about whether it is aesthetically 'right'. A blanket might be drawn out and take a long time. Seeing it as a painting, layer upon layer is cut, taking one off, changing another.

Her exhibitions are often arranged so people can spend two hours there. She wants them to walk in, look low, at the different levels and angles, and be 'emotionally manipulated' . . . to leave feeling something: 'I want them to laugh, smile, feel sad. Even feel angry, that's okay' (see Preece 2002). She describes staging her Bed in three venues and the importance of the setting for the impact of the piece. In New York the room was too small, making it look like a bed in a bedroom. It needed to look like a bed that had come out of a bedroom and into another space in order to make it into art. In Japan, the large factory setting made it look beautiful in the distance with two neons to set the scene. Getting close up to the bed, you realised everything was disgustingly dirty. She believed it was the most theatrical show she had done, and at a time when she was feeling suicidal. The Tate show was 'okay'.

Her description of her vision for the Oxford centrepiece shows how I projected my own ideas into the image:

The next big sculpture that I'm making is a bridge. In Cyprus, there's a disused copper mine, and the railway track for the cargo comes down from the mine to the sea. It's all eroded and gone. For about 200 meters, there's this rustic and mad, demonic, chaotic, twisted bridge that goes along there. I want to make a representation of that for my show in Oxford - about 20 meters long (Tracey Emin in Preece, 2002).

Another interview (Barber 2001i) makes the point that Emin wants to show you things and has vast archives of her life in filing cabinets. In this interview Emin discusses her use of

words, saying that they are what makes her art unique in a way that she finds almost impossible visually.

Emin has always written, keeping a diary since she was fourteen, and her work has always been autobiographical (see Bowie and Emin 1997). A modern philosophy course in 1992 opened up her thinking about art. What is important to her now however is the conviction and belief behind it, the essence of where it is coming from, so it is like a conceptual idea (Bowie and Emin 1997:26).

Like the critics, my own response to her work was extreme and one of being taken on an emotional roller coaster. What I saw provoked profound memories. Her use of materials had hidden layers of meaning that I discovered when examining my art practice during the research in chapter 3.2. I enjoyed the intimacy she seemed to invite with her openness and use of the quotidian, everyday detail, the humanness of her spelling mistakes and crossings out. Emin refers to her work as a critique of the issues she is addressing and the anger and swearing speaks of rage at the abuses and suffering of such victims. It is interesting that many seem to take it personally as if feeling attacked, perhaps because of the critique of class and gender issues.

I will go on to consider my narrative.

### **2.2.3 Analysis of narrative Tracey Emin: *This is Another Place***

My methods for extracting the issues that were raised by the exhibition were the same as *Three Commentaries* and the points can be seen in Appendix 2, Table 2.5. I used Rose's (2001) structure for my analysis and go on to discuss the issues that are raised for art psychotherapy practice in relation to relevant literature.

## Distribution of the points

As in *Textures of Memory* and *Live in Your Head* the points I extracted from the text relating to this exhibition (twenty six points) are relatively evenly distributed amongst the three sites of production, image and audiencing (see Appendix 2, Tables 2.2, 2.3 and 2.5). In *This is Another Place* there is slightly more emphasis on production (eleven points) which is similar to *Textures of Memory*. Seven points relate to image, and eight points to audiencing.

## Modalities of the points

Compared to the three exhibitions in *Three Commentaries* the text relating to *This is Another Place* shows the highest concern with compositional issues, just slightly more than *Textures of Memory*, but well above *Live in Your Head* and *We all peel the onions*. There is an equal concern with social issues which again is similar to *Texture of Memory*. This is interesting given the predominant focus of both exhibitions on material and textiles. However, this may reflect my developing art interests and curiosity at the time in the potential of these media.

## Themes extracted from the narrative Tracey Emin, *This is Another Place*

### Production

#### Technological modality: how it is made

The majority of points (11), nearly half, relating to the exhibition are about production. Three of these are technological: Points 18, 23, and 24 are about the technologies the production depends on. For instance, Point 18 refers to laborious methods of construction.

#### Compositional modality: genre

The majority of the production points (6) are compositional: Points 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, and 21 illustrate the wide scope of different genres and half of these show links with gender.

For example, **Point 15** is about the cultural tradition of patchwork which is addressing identity and the relations of its production by using autobiography that shocks.

#### **Social modality: who made it, when, who for and why**

Two of the points relate to social concerns: **Points 2 and 20** are about the identity of the maker and the time in her life when it was made. **Point 2** for instance, refers to the cultural significance of relationship. The form of the first installation referred to her youth and impacted on me by bringing back my own.

### **The Image**

#### **Technological modality: visual effects**

The lowest number of points (7) in the text relating to *This is Another Place* is about what the image looks like. Two of these, **Points 4 and 10**, depend on the technology for the visual effects. **Point 4**, for example refers to the use of neon and words.

#### **Compositional modality: composition**

Two points relate to composition: **Points 19 and 22** illustrate how the different components of an image can comment critically on the genre. For example, **Point 22** shows the visual construction of humour (the bronze flip flops).

#### **Social modality: visual meanings**

Three points relate to social concerns: **Points 5, 17 and 26** are about the components addressing the relations that interpret the image. **Point 26** refers to contradictory associations produced by stylistic devices.

### **Audiencing**

#### **Technological modality: display**

Eight points in the text relate to how the image is seen. Only one of these is technological. **Point 6** refers to the means of display and how it is lit and where it is placed.

### **Compositional modality: viewing positions**

Two points are compositional: Points 3 and 7 are about how the visual construction affects reception of the image. For instance, Point 3 shows how darkness can evoke memory. Not being able to see powerfully affects the audience and their response.

### **Social modality: how interpreted, by whom and why**

Five points are social in their concerns: Points 1, 11, 12, 13 and 25 are about the effect on the audience and influences on interpretation including the cultural significances of practices and relations. Point 13 refers to the unconscious emotive response of the audience.

I will go on to discuss the implications of the analysis.

## **2.2.4 DISCUSSION**

In *Three Commentaries* I argued that the meaning and understanding I constructed about the three exhibitions was embodied by the art in how and with what it was made, how it looked and how it was seen. My analysis of *This is Another Place* finds an emphasis on production and the visual construction of the art that includes the use of genres addressing gender and identity. Audiencing is also emphasised and in particular the cultural significances of practices and relations affecting interpretation. These aspects are vitally important to incorporate into art psychotherapy practise and highly relevant to my group. I will firstly discuss the relationship of her work to gender and identity.

### **Autobiography and narrative, gender and feminism**

What is Emin's art communicating? In the literature relating to her autobiographical and narrative approach there is interesting discussion about her controversial relationship to feminist practice. Miller describes how, in freely mixing biological and socially constructed identities, Emin uses this space to locate her critique as one from within, not outside, the dominant culture. Using classic roles of womanhood, her work is built around narratives of her very personal biography (2003). Miller argues that while making this construction a

necessary part of her 'female-ness', Emin's strategy is nevertheless subversive. She believes that by capitalising on her internal conflicts she is having the last laugh as a woman with all the social markers of her 'difference' intact. As an exercise of empowerment gendered constructions of womanhood are manipulated, serving her own ends as a woman (2003). However, Miller says another view might be that she has sold out and is competing on male terms. In *I've Got it All*, 2000 (see Fig 2.37), Emin pulls a load of cash towards her crotch whilst wearing her signature Westwood dress, suggesting she's won the game and knows what the fame is really all about. But I suggest this image could be ironic - it's *only* money?



It could be sad, not triumphant. Miller makes the point that the derogatory mantle of slag - a societal restraint reigning in women exercising sexual freedom - is shrugged off by Emin. Ownership of her sexual appetite reconfigures and renegotiates the terms of engagement. Miller does make a final accusation of Emin's complicity with male dominance through not taking an overtly political stance, saying that women should take ownership of their role in order to alter

the structure that serves those who suffer in its wake (2003).

Figure 2.37

As one of the later artists in this generation of so-called 'bad-girls' Emin rejects a passive female role and makes provocative art about gender, assertively using sexual stereotypes rejected by their predecessors (Falkenstein 1999:60), including butch heterosexuality and excessive behaviour. This may be veering dangerously close to complicity with the laddishness of male peers (Hopkins 2000), and collusion with the male gaze (Pollock 2000).

Accessibility is a theme related to Emin's autobiography (see for instance, Grieve 2002; Doy 2003). Emin refers to the broader social phenomenon focusing on the self and valuing confession and spectacle (Asselin and Lamoureux 2002) saying that the climate has changed towards her way of thinking with a more personal emphasis now (see Durden 2002:22). However, moral concerns are raised (Adams 2001; Muir 2001) about artists using their

bodies as works of art. Emin is seen to have 'art-marketed' her nakedness by trading personal experiences in a blurring of boundaries (Adams 2001:42). Durden pointedly says that turning these life experiences into art provides the privileged classes in the artworld with 'an abject exoticism' that fits with a wider fashion for degrading realism in contemporary visual art (2002:22). However, Corris argues that it is never merely solipsistic because Emin's work repeatedly confronts the problem of 'how the social is inextricably embedded in individual consciousness' (1995:84).

These warnings suggest the work is just 'unstructured outpourings' (as described by Dormont 1997). However, Emin herself describes careful consideration being given to what to reveal, what aspect to show:

... it's all edited, it's all calculated, it's all decided. I decide to show this or that part of the truth, which isn't necessarily the whole story, it's just what I decide to give you (see Barber 2001i).

It is only part of Tracey that she gives us. Her viewer reactions are intended and her discourse one of context and intention (Preece 2001:53).

This is clearly evident in an analysis of *My Bed*, 1998 to 1999 and the changes it undergoes as an installation as it moves from site to site. Cherry shows that situating the work within the concerns of the time, evidences much more than confessional outpourings. It is a serious and troubling piece about 'migration, diaspora and sexual difference' (2002:154). This aspect is missed when the work is situated only within recent art history: 'At her best, Emin has the ability to hoover up and personalised classic art of the past' - a reference to Ed Kienholz and Robert Rauschenberg (Buck 2000b:60).

How are the deeper connections visually constructed by Emin's art? How does her use of genres and their visual qualities embedded in the work affect reception?

## The language of genres using material and cloth

Emin's art is about common but rarely discussed emotions (Cotter 2002): familiar topics to therapists and therefore of particular interest to art psychotherapy. She makes intimate experiences public, fashioning them out of materials that give rise to speculations and associations across a wide range of possible meanings. I will focus on her material practices with their particular reference to the intimate and hand-made. What is being interrogated with these materials?

Her practice includes words, material and personal experience. Words and cloth have long drawn inspiration and meaning from each other, including the historical associations with embroidery and weaving (Hemmings 2002). Jefferies asks of this juxtaposition: 'how can the female subject inscribe herself in avant-garde textile practice?' (1995:168). Embroidery and appliquéd are associated with submissive, socially constructed 'feminine' attitudes (see Parker 1984) which offer a sharp contrast to the 'shocking' images and words Emin's methods fashion, hence highlighting them. Barber describes how her seemingly 'artless' self exposure is transmuted into art: the feminine prettiness, the delicate line, painstaking embroidery entices you in and then she 'socks it to you with the words' (2001ii:26). Earlier, I described how viewers have been embarrassed, confused (Searle 2002) and disturbed by the combining of different discourses and shakeup of cultural norms. Emin exposes herself, her hopes and fears and, as my experience demonstrates, also exposes the spectator to these feelings in a way that can be raw and painful.

Emin's art-autobiography is the vehicle that interacts with the audience's memories and empathy, or lack of it. How this works in practice, seems important. The polarised media response results from this, the artworks' titles facilitating 'media-genic' headlines (Preece 2001:52). Durden takes the view that the readymade objects, for instance a beach hut or Emin's bed, rely on the autobiographic narration for their significance and import (2002:28). This doesn't fully explain the impact of such imagery and of her use of materials on the memory of the viewer that my narrative illustrates. For example, Emin gives the 'unfashionable feminist quilt . . . a dramatic and defiant comeback' (Buck 2000b:60). I would

argue that the materials and the way they are used have an impact on the viewer that has a number of powerful aspects with contemporary themes.

The relationship of cloth to the body in art is of fundamental significance. It can stand in for the absent body as well as denoting femininity (Doy 2002:19). It is suggested Emin is referring to these concerns. Textiles can also be used to indicate marginality with 'their reference to the popular, the unvalued, the disregarded, the disappearing ethnic, the feminine - in a sense reinforcing the stereotype' (Wood Conroy 1994:226). Wood Conroy associates the comforting, domestic and ritualised textiles of our everyday lives with the pre-linguistic, sensory area of experience traditionally understood as maternal and feminine (1994:122). The ubiquitousness of cloth, across time and cultures, suggests a commonality Johnson (1999a:6). Blankets, sheets, embroidery and fabric have close physical connection with the body that activate early memories (Wood Conroy 1994:122). Even if specific meanings are not understood, there is associative potential that is recognised which results in a textile medium that suggests both belonging and difference (Johnson 1999a:6). The combination of these associations with the frank and defiant words is dramatic (Field 2002). This is not new; 'crazy' quilts that transgressed patchwork conventions in the second half of the nineteenth century were also seen as rebellious (Colchester 1991:108).

Needlework has a history of being associated with the acquisition of prescribed feminine characteristics:

Patience, submissiveness, service, obedience and modesty were taught both by the concentrated technical exercises as well as by the pious, self-denying verses and prayers which the samplers carried (Parker and Pollock 1981:66).

Other associations being challenged by Emin's use of these forms are the elevated status painting and sculpture have over other arts termed 'applied' or 'decorative', claiming they involve less intellectual effort and more utility. Emin's misspelling also seems to refer to this hierarchy.

Jeffries expands on this, arguing that, even though using quilting and embroidery, Emin's tent, for example, 'refuses . . . a woman's celebratory experience' as per Chicago's feminine crafts revival in *The Dinner Party*. The tent's environment using old clothes and household fabrics could be comforting, but displays the names of lovers, family and friends, telling of debt, suicide attempts and abortion (1997:38). The temporary structure refers to womb as well as to home suggesting an irony in Emin's exploration of current issues relating to the female body (Carson 2000:56). Jefferies says that whilst denying the designated 'feminine' position of patience, prudence, nurture and nature, a 'monstrous feminine' lurks below the surface with a dangerous and pleasurable sexual energy that is chaotic and angry. This hybridity ruptures verbal and visual narratives of stereotypical femininity and autobiography and is a destabilised place for both maker and viewer (1997:38). This illuminates the discomfort and at times rage expressed by large sections of the art critic community as well as others in academia. Emin explores dangerous waters with regard to established and traditional stereotypes. Jefferies says 'gendered contradictions encoded critically in the hybridization of textiles are disturbing and troubling to viewers' (1997:9).

Preece points to another aspect. Emin's appliquéd work is seen to take a favoured feminist genre that acts as a platform for the image and text:

Her autobiography is not only the subject matter, but also the process of sewing, with memories generated in the process . . . the form itself leads to constructing texts (Preece 2001:53).

There is a physicality to stitching: Horne describes a subtle, gendered contradiction regarding memory and says it often suffers from the psychological aspect being stressed rather than the physical when used with regard to artistic activity. The meditative concentration achieved through repetitive, deliberate processes can focus time and bodily action, integrate reflection, action and materiality in a process of embodiment, empowering the self as the investments of ego involvement diminish (Horne 1998:38).

This allows a perceptual process where control is regained over one's actions. He sees the body and self entwined in this, embodying subjectivity. This illustrates how the visual construction of Emin's work embodies complex and contradictory qualities. The suggestion of this self-containment and autonomy, is also part of a stereotype of femininity; the image of the silent embroiderer, the seductress, has disturbing overtones (see Parker 1984:10), which is found in the literature. Horne suggests that some cannot read the language of such combined physical and thinking processes (1998:38). Searle, for instance, describes 'scrappy' canvases, the 'tired fuzzy line' of Emin's drawings and the 'slackness' of her writings. He experiences embarrassment : 'even talking about it feels intrusive and awkward' (2002:12) and sees no other intention behind the manipulation of materials than to express her feelings.

Townsend and Merck describe the quickness of the transmission of emotion in Emin's work and impression of hurried production (2004:11). This is careful staging. Her appliquéd blankets cannot be done hurriedly. There is a team of people making them. Emin says she would like to spend more time sewing the blankets, to be more hands-on, and refers to its time-consuming nature (see Wainwright 2002:204). Healy makes the point that Emin's work depends on its profound humanness and flaws with a deliberate and vital 'sloppy aesthetic' that is effective because she uses an apparently unskilled and naïve approach to create a powerful authenticity (2002:162).

Laborious technique must be significant to the maker as suggested by Horne (1998). It seems important to note that her appliquéd blankets have associations with her family. Her father particularly likes them as they remind him of his mother. His wife Rose is described sewing the blankets for one of the shows (see Barber 2001i).

The reading of visual and tactile qualities conveys infinite categorisations and the cultural traditions that are embedded in the artefacts. Highly complex ideas are, in effect, transmitted (Diana Wood Conroy 1994:229) by these objects and I suggest, simultaneously - unlike text which is linear in its reception. Cloth and clothing provide a place for social messages to be deliberately conveyed visually, silently and continuously: infinitely variable,

like language, any message can be encoded, but the code has to be learnt (Barber 1994:149). Swift examines this idea, exploring the concept of fashion's role as aerial, referring to the transmitting and receiving of social and cultural messages and feeding deeply from cultural archives (2005:102). He contends that in highly complex meaning systems, some information exchange is passive and unconscious (2005:104). Thus the irritated, bored and angry responses to Emin's work are sensing what is conveyed but not necessarily understanding it.

Wood Conroy suggests the complex 'language' contained in textiles therefore is invisible to the uninformed viewer where even a basic understanding misses the full range of metaphor and allusion, as in any language. Practice is needed to learn to see and feel the minute visual criteria of these 'material signifiers'. To 'read' this visual and tactile language is to know in a different way to verbal thought processes (1994:227).

The literature I have reviewed in this chapter has demonstrated that the role of material and cloth in Emin's work embeds highly complex ideas that can be transmitted and received passively and with unconscious absorption. However, a conscious reading of such artefacts can be learnt and developed. By using Rose's (2001) scheme my analysis highlights the network of relationships connecting such objects with the maker and viewer involving a spectrum of social and cultural traditions, associations and hierarchies.

These characteristics make such material practices very significant for art psychotherapy clinical practice. This chapter illustrates how they can express and transmit profound experiences of memory and autobiography at an unconscious level. Lawrence and Obermeyer explore identity and mother/daughter relationships through the medium of textiles and describe their experience in their correspondence. Obermeyer poignantly describes her daughter's use of art when about to be hospitalised and directly refers to art psychotherapy not exploiting the benefits of such materials:

One thing I can say with certainty is that everyday I am grateful for my training in the visual arts. It trains one to be flexible, investigative and relentless in one's search for meaning. Without these skills, I don't think I could have carried Emilie as far as I have. Doctors, nurses, therapists and

social workers are consistently surprised by the ingenuity I have used to reach out to her. They are now recommending some of my 'tricks' to other patients and their families.

I wonder why art therapists depend so heavily on pen, paper and crayon to define emotions when the human need for touch is so well documented. Pen, paper and crayon are simply less tactile. These last few months I often found Emilie behind a chair in our living room weaving on a little tapestry loom, interlacing texture and colour. When the cloth became large enough, she would rub her fingers over the many textures again and again. Often when Em was on the edge of an anxiety attack, I would bring in bowls of rice or baskets of yarn for her to use to soothe herself. The stimulation of running her hands through uncooked rice or strands of mohair allowed her anxiety to mellow enough to the point where she could use words to define her feelings (Lawrence and Obermeyer 2001:72).

Tracey Emin's exhibition emphasised the cultural significances of relationship and traditions of making, indicating how her work acts as a critique of such issues. The lack of ethical issues highlights how *We all peel the onions* raised those problematic areas. In my narrative about Emin's show, there is no reference to dignity and sensitive material, which is not surprising given the 'in your face', exhibitionistic style of her work, but it does draw attention to the abusive and exploitative issues critiqued by Harrison, Hunt and Kelly's *Women and Work*. It is also striking that although Emin's central focus is on textile practices, the exhibition opens out an enormously wide range of making, conceptualising and audiencing processes for artmaking. Attention is drawn to meditative, repetitive, laborious processes with soft, domestic materials, stitching, patching, snipping. There is also the use of words in many forms, loudly swearing, glowingly shouting in neon, softly crying. There is casting, video, photographs, drawings, embroideries, prints, maquettes and enormous constructions with reclaimed materials. Size and scale is explored. Buildings, architecture and building construction methods are used, including the disused railway, and there are assemblages of domestic, vernacular objects. The means of display and power of fully using

the environment for affecting the audience is made clear. It seems to challenge every boundary, opening up huge creative possibilities for art psychotherapy practice on many levels. The glorious richness of imagery of this exhibition suggests to me how restricted and impoverished the discipline has become in its methods and practices today.

I have proposed in this chapter that the textile materials that are a central feature of Emin's practice have the ability to express profound experiences of memory and autobiography at an unconscious level. The impact of the visual construction of the image on the audience has also been emphasised, including the effects of labour and time-consuming technique.

In the next chapter 2.3 I will explore the work of Grayson Perry.

## **PART TWO – AN OUTER FRAME**

### **P Embodiments**

### **2.3. Grayson Perry: ceramic practices and art psychotherapy**

In this section of **Part Two** I will describe my response to visiting a display of work by Grayson Perry. Like the previous narratives in *Three Commentaries* (chapter 2.1), and *Tracey Emin* (chapter 2.2), I made brief notes at the time of my visit, from which I composed an autobiographical text for analysis.

#### **2.3.1 INTRODUCTION**

My choice of the artist Grayson Perry not only addresses my practice as a studio potter but also provides a rich contextualisation of my group's use of clay. There are many useful parallels with Tracey Emin but his main medium is clay; he was successful in winning the Turner Prize in 2003 with his arresting pots. In the following investigation I will explore how Perry's use of ceramics as an artist can simultaneously materialise autobiography and interrogate social and cultural concerns which are urgent issues to develop in art psychotherapy practice. I will examine his work and the spectator's response in relation to associated cultural texts including those of art critics from newspapers, art journals and books, as well as academic research, as I did in the previous chapter on Tracey Emin's work. The analysis of my narrative uses Rose's (2001) framework for understanding visual materials. I will discuss the implications in relation to the findings of the previous two chapters.

#### **2.3.2 A private exhibition of Grayson Perry's work at Victoria Miro 14, March 2008.**

At the time I hoped to see Perry's work, I could find no public exhibitions. After several phone calls the Victoria Miro gallery, who represent Perry as an artist, offered me a private

viewing of his work that they were currently holding. These three pieces were from his solo exhibition *My Civilisation: Grayson Perry*, held April 28-August 31, 2007 at 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan, as a result of his residency on the Artist in Residence Program, 2005 by the Museum and the Kanazawa College of Art. The time I had to look at the work would be limited.

**Journal:**

Seeing Perry's work at this time was significant to me personally as I had moved several months previously back to the area where I had started out as a studio potter. I set off to Victoria Miro in excited anticipation from Goldsmiths where I was teaching that day. Travelling round London on public transport in rush-hour was a shock after the rural environment where I was now living. Once outside my tube destination, I tried to find my way amidst the traffic. As I walked along I felt increasingly uneasy about where I might end up. I had lived in the area many years before when training to be a potter but it was unrecognisable to me now. Huge buildings - sleek, urban business premises abutted desolate poverty. I left behind the traffic and crowds, entering an increasingly bleak, industrial landscape. The gallery was set amongst warehouses and as I approached it in the lowering light, it seemed strangely juxtaposed to the nearby drive-in McDonald's. I was dimly aware of a huge, white shape hanging over the building in the background. This was to be my private space.

There was a vast, cast iron door which, like a shrunken Alice, I struggled to push open, entering straight into an exhibition of Yayoi Kusama's work. Waiting for my host, I gazed, fascinated at the beautiful, obsessional and repetitive paintings, and a mirrored, tardis-like structure in the middle of the room. I couldn't resist pressing my face into a box shaped viewing compartment. Instantly I was transported into another altered state where a kaleidoscopic, internet infinity showed flashing lights, mirrors and endlessly repeated reflections of my face. Quite a preparation for what was to come. . .

The building itself began to make an impression. The white walls rose steeply upwards like deep slabs, invitingly showing thin slices of activity and people between and behind them. I

did not have to wait long and was led quickly and quietly through more white spaces and then suddenly we were outside in a water garden. The views over London were breathtaking - it was like entering another world after the one on the other side of the big door I came in earlier. We immediately turned back on ourselves, my escort unlocking another door into the adjacent building. He smiled at my sharp intake of breath. Huge expanses of glass looked out on views of Wenlock Basin, part of Regent's Canal, bringing into the space an extraordinary light. One or two striking pieces of art were stunningly set off by the expansive and minimal, white walls reaching upwards. Two people were leaning towards each other, talking quietly as they gazed across the water. Another person sat silently in the stillness. But on looking closer, was she texting? Maybe she was also an attendant. I learn that this was Victoria Miro 14, a private exhibition space occasionally open to the public for special events. Conceived as an inspirational environment in which to view art (see Victoria Miro 2008) and for private buyers, I was amazed by my experience there. It seemed designed to surprise and make you think. We went up and up a staircase described as 'shockingly' narrow and likened to an expressionist film (Heathcote 2007) that on returning later plunges steeply through an oppressively thin shaft. We then passed through more white galleries glimpsing panoramic views of sky and London. We turned again and there, round a corner on a white plinth, just above waist height was one of Grayson Perry's pots.

My escort showed me to where the white L-shaped space went out of sight from this first pot and there were two more pieces. Again on plinths just below shoulder height, they looked wonderful in this minimal space.

I was aware of the pressure of time and concentrated on the three pieces which the environment so spectacularly displayed. The first piece was *Personal Creation Myth*, 2007 (see Fig 2.38). It was a very large rounded vase with a narrow neck and classical, swelling shape which shimmered with rich lustre and under and overglaze colours. It had an imposing presence. I immediately looked at how it was made. As a coiled and pinched pot its execution was extremely skilful both in terms of its imposing size and how the fullness and steep curves of the shoulder were drawn into the neck. Strong vertical painted lines became

markedly curved when seen from the side, emphasising the shape. It was not perfect however, which was strangely reassuring.



Figure 2.38

I noticed it was not totally balanced, being slightly heavier on one side at the top. I know how large coiled pots develop a life of their own as they fill out, any slight imperfection becoming exaggerated as they get bigger, and despite all efforts, nothing seems to rectify the accruing weakness. However, this was under control with the slight imperfection only noticeable if looked for.

The colours, decoration and references to rare oriental vases conveyed a lyrical quality that then, on closer inspection, darkened and intensified. Even though being familiar with his work from photographs, it was a shock to look closely at the reality. I felt an intrusive intimacy, finding myself a voyeur. I didn't want to look, but a ghastly fascination with the seductive, incised drawings drew me in to find an extraordinary narrative played out around the ravishing vase.

I found the multicoloured surface beautiful in its colouring and quality of glaze applications. A complex network of sgraffito, drawing, text, photographic prints and transfers makes up a layered, decorative collage in a powerful visual narrative referencing a number of ceramic traditions. For instance, the gold and red Japanese Kakiemon enamels of Arita ware (see Jenyns 1965); the *famille rose* and *verte* colours of 17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese porcelain - he had even included a faithful representation of the familiar gnarled tree trunks with upright, straight twigs and delicate blossoms; the gilding and mother of pearl lustres of Meissen and their *Chinoiseries* imitating Oriental wares - a huge gold sun is painted on the shoulder; and the transfers of Italian and English porcelain as well as 19<sup>th</sup> century earthenware. Displayed on its pillar in a corner, the pot was impressive enough to make an impact on its own in the white minimal space. As I continued looking, I was drawn, almost against my will, into the dark interior of a hut.

A family is gathered round a birth scene. There seems to be the Virgin Mary, a baby . . . but, it begins to dawn on me, the baby is still attached by its umbilical cord to a Perry-like male/female figure, half naked with explicit male genitalia, kneeling in a sexy, off-shoulder sumptuous robe. Actually, it is a Teddy Christ child. . . Perry as Claire, his transvestite persona, gazes adoringly at his teddy Alan Measles, his substitute father that he has given birth to. Close by, a young girl raises her hands in awe and rapture at the newborn teddy, and behind her are other figures gazing on in wonder. Described as Perry's own creation myth (21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, 2007), this is intensely autobiographical. Moving round the vase I noticed various people from different periods and cultures, the poor and disabled gathered at the birth scene, looking on (see Fig 2.39).



Figure 2.39

The image of a head-scarfed woman refers to Perry's photographic work where he is his own model (see for instance, Fig 2.40).



**Figure 2.40**

More sinister, in the background of the birth scene, an ominous male figure that must be Joseph, looms over Mary, in the darkness of the hut. Is this Perry's step father? In the hut there seem to be references to potting - sieves, buckets, bricks. I start to see a Japanese or Chinese potter's workshop.



But then I realise it is taken from his 'Essex Man's' hut (see Fig 2.41) which he built and photographed in France, attempting to create a folk culture.

**Figure 2.41**

In the distance, behind the elaborate and bizarre scenario there seems to be a battleground or war. Explosions, tanks, burnt trees... .

Moving on from the profoundly disturbing imagery of the beautiful vase, I looked at the second vase. *This pot will reduce crime by 29%, 2007* (see Fig 2.42).

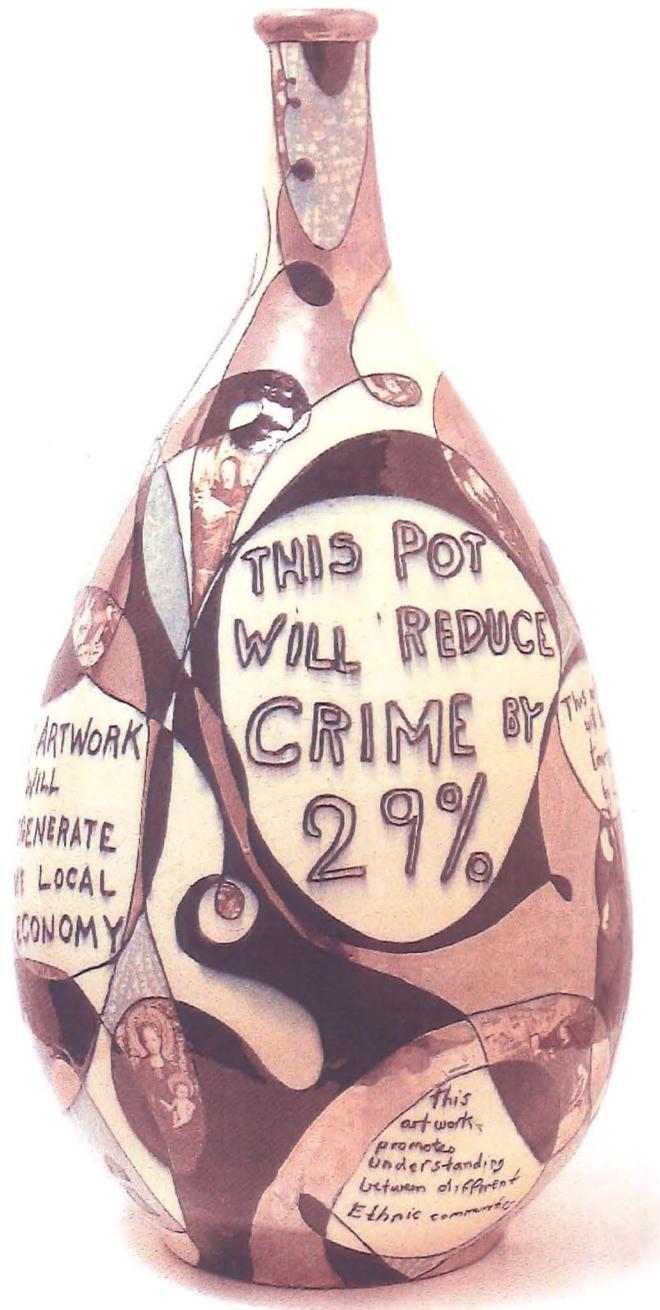


Figure 2.42

It is a very tall vase with an oval body rising upwards gradually into a tall, thin narrow neck. There are photographic images of Madonnas and child. The shapes of the decorative pattern

had been created by a wandering line that had then been filled in with oxides, lustre and underglaze colours over a pale background. Central shapes had been written on in black making a number of claims, for instance, This artwork will... 'boost tourism'; 'regenerate the local economy'; 'promote understanding between different ethnic communities', etc. Almost hidden amongst these often quite ugly shapes were Madonna and child images. The statements seemed to be a critical stab at the artworld ironically pointing to the aims of socially minded projects (Yoshioka 2007).

It looked handsome on its pillar, but almost austere compared with the previous pot, and although I admired it at the time, looking back I now feel relatively unmoved by this piece. Perhaps the aesthetics of the piece were more effective than I remember, the size was certainly imposing. Or perhaps I was meant to feel unmoved. A wandering line is an easy way to make a random pattern that is then engaging to fill in. A bit like painting-by-numbers, demands made about choice are minimised - it is doodling in an obsessional kind of way that is relaxing and soothing for the artist, with everything connected. The viewer however, I know from my reaction to this pot and from watching my clients do this, is not engaged; it is rather boring to look at. There seems to be a preoccupation with surface, which may be intentional: perhaps implying they were superficial messages about superficial approaches to art? The irony was juxtaposed to the references to religion. How much was this about Perry and how he feels about his work and his artworld?

I turned to the final piece, *Our Father*, 2007 (see Fig 2.43), a very large oriental figure of an old man walking with a staff and a dog. It is rusty red and made from cast iron. Was this a monk or pilgrim? I thought of Han dynasty bronze figures and tomb models. It looked intriguing and full of detail - a multitude of paraphernalia was attached to the figure. Where was he going? Like the first pot, it then began to dawn on me as I continued looking, that these were disturbing gadgets. An unpleasantness began to take hold of me as I looked further.



Figure 2.43

There were guns, grenades and what looked like bottles - probably bombs, or perhaps poison. Barbed wire poked out of the basket on his back next to books and tablets. Knives and swords were next to a woman's handbag. Books hung off chains. Perry's teddy Alan Measles was strapped to another basket at his waist. A skeleton hung from one ear, a head swung from another. This was a war figure. I dreaded to think what hung from the innocent dog's collar. Whose father was this? It seemed to refer to religion, fear, war, brutality and violence.

It was time to go. I followed my host back out through the astounding building, plunging down the stair well and back outside.

## Associated texts

Perry's work shocks in ways that are reminiscent of Emin's. I was fascinated, however, that the response of critics was markedly different. Perry seems to merely 'unsettle' the contemporary art world (Jardine 2004; Rosen 2007) with his 'disconcertingly uncomfortable' (Enright 2005) work but little more than that. One or two critics appear angry or dismissive - his art and biography are for instance, 'neat, shallow and unconvincing' (Darwent 2006). However, I could find none of the outrage that Emin received, even though there is similarly disturbing imagery, sexually explicit material, and dark subject matter. Collings points out that as professionals in the art world, they are both:

... victims of abuse, use text, do multi-styles and are willing to be embarrassing in a controlled context where the codes of conceptual academy are confirmed (Collings 2005:44).

In Perry's work there is additionally explicit sadism, violence and brutality. He seems rather popular (Collings 2005) in lots of ways - to be 'loveable', and 'fashionable' (Perry quoted in Heard 2003). The majority of people using the comment board on leaving the Turner Prize exhibition at Tate Britain said his pots were fantastic (Iqbal 2003). La Placa (2002) even sees 'unmistakable genius'. Perry says he has always had a good response - he puts it down to his warmth and openness about human issues (Perry in Iqbal 2003). Collings, however, seems to have a problem with his work and is dismissive and rather patronising:

The Perry mix includes dressing up, doing cartoons, being obscene, looking glum and making pots, as well as giving a lot of chatty accessible interviews in which 'child abuse' often features. The mix is good for ordinary people and, by coincidence, since the relationship between the broadly ordinary and the impossibly obscure is a very delicate thing, it happens to turn the art world on too (Collings 2005).

The shock of seeing his imagery is referred to by a few critics (for example, Jardine 2004) as well as the mixture of attraction and repulsion (Gleeson 2004). But the sheer number of his pots in the New Labour show at the Satchi Gallery in 2001, with their black humour, obscenity and violence, began to wash over one critic 'as easily as decoration' (Gilbertson 2001). What might have caused such numbing? Perry says he is used to such images and can

be 'mildly bored' with the themes (Perry 1987). The critical edge in his work (Gilbertson 2001) could get lost with sheer volume, wearing thin, in danger even, of seeming superficial. Enright (2005) for instance, suggests that the harder, critical edge was lost since Perry joined the mainstream having won the Turner Prize.

Superficiality is also suggested by other critics. Reviewing his autobiography *Grayson Perry: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*, ghosted by Wendy Jones, Shoard (2006) is ironical and withering, implying he is coldly calculating about his career moves. She believes he is 'desperate' to shock, but Perry's statements like the one above do not seem to bear this out - he is mostly rather casual about it all. Gray (2002) thinks Perry's 'inspiration' is 'admirably clear from the quotation in the monograph accompanying the exhibition *Grayson Perry: Guerrilla Tactics* at the Barbican in 2002:

I make perversion to match the curtains, tribal artifacts for the psychotherapy-literate Islington tribe (Perry 1997:57).

This quote appears coldly cynical out of its context. It is from his article *A Potter's Day in Ceramic Review* and uses psychotherapy language. The whole essay is funny and self derisory, and showing a sense of disappointment: 'I am often woken by the sound of my wife rifling through the wardrobe choosing me something to wear. When she senses I am awake she snaps open the flap which covers the transparent panel in my rubber sleeping bag so I can see out'. . . However, the fantasy ends: 'Then I am awoken by my four year old daughter turning on Cartoon Network, and a day more like every other potter's day begins. A day of Radio Four, powdered milk and disappointments' (Perry 1997:56).

Perry mocks and teases and is open about his self doubt: 'I spend a lot of each day giving myself pep talks. I find it increasingly impossible to view my pots with any kind of objectivity. Having rejected the values of craft I find it hard to reconcile my stuff with the values of contemporary art' (Perry 1997:56).

There is general agreement that Perry's approach is provocative (for example Sidney 1988; Enright 2005). Pointing out the contradiction in his work, Gray (2002) draws attention to

the care and detail with which he depicts appalling violence. Indeed, the viciousness he explores visually on his pots (La Placa 2002) and in meticulous language in print (see Perry 1997) is frighteningly sadistic. This is far removed from the innocent little girl he portrays when dressed in female clothing.

Given the extremes he portrays, it is intriguing that Perry's work produces such moderate reactions in the critics. However, Jardine, contrary to many of the critics, argues that the feelings evoked by the displayed dramas are 'shockingly strong' and even 'overwhelmingly intense'. She says the beauty of the work from a distance is seductive, evoking the *gravitas* of precious oriental ceramics, and that the viewer is *rewarded* by a hypnotic level of detail, sinister though the components are. She says his pots are scary (Jardine 2004). This view is not held by the majority of critics. Are cultural issues involved, such as gender or class in influencing reactions? There are traditions to what he presents - dressing up, cross dressing, sado-masochism. He is now considered to be part of the mainstream, embodied in his winning of the Turner prize. He reflects people's experience in this culture. By presenting familiar tropes that are easily taken in, it is reassuring.

### Perry's own words

I will briefly include some of Perry's ideas about his work that I noted when I saw him lecture at *Ceramic Art London*, at the Royal College of Art in May 2005. The following is my subjective interpretation of the lecture and conversation that took place afterwards between Perry and Emmanuel Cooper, Editor of *Ceramic Review*. Like Emin, Perry downplays the subversive imagery and disturbance portrayed in his work.

Perry opened his lecture 'Life after the Turner Prize' saying that his pots are him, what he is concerned with, and they are meant to be provocative rather than shocking. His pots reflect and are often about the artworld to which he belongs. He was wearing a dress and he talked about being a transvestite. He said the press reaction at the Turner Prize seemed to be pretending that everything was quite normal: 'seems quite well-balanced, friendly, nice family . . .'. He has done work about galleries and collections he would like to be in, the network of culture that decides 'what is art'.

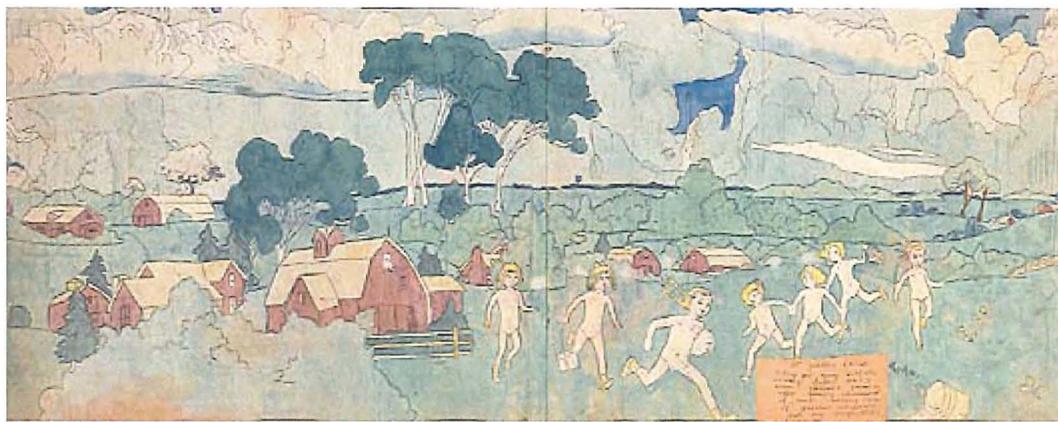
He showed slides of his work including the print *Map of an Englishman* (see Fig 2.44). Perry described it as a map of his mind. He used it to talk about his work, pointing out various areas. He was open and funny, he joked, his delivery was casual, friendly and accessible.



**Figure 2.44**

He trained as a sculptor. There were references to the influences on his work including his six years of psychotherapy. His wife is a psychotherapist. He talked about Morton Barlett who made anatomically correct wooden dolls of children in the 60's and photographed them as a way of constructing his own childhood. Another influence is Henry Darger who died in 1973. Darger was an Outsider artist who used watercolour, tracings and experimented with inventive techniques involving collage for 250 large drawings which were part of a 19,000 word visionary epic (see Smithsonian American Art Museum 2008). His story of the Vivian princesses - seven young girls leading a rebellion - is about good and evil (see Fig 2.45).

Some pictures are very violent. People thought he was a repressed paedophile. Perry said he makes Darger-esque vases, he is interested in surface and internal layers, interior conflicts, for instance, parents' voices.



**Figure 2.45**

Cooper asked Perry if he was both an artist and a potter. Perry explained that clay was his medium. His signature style is that he is a potter. He makes traditional pots that he copies from books. He likes the associations of pots: they are humble, small, and don't shout, they have a friendliness, they are precious. He likes the traditional, the very precious, and archaeological artefacts. He plays off these things. He likes sensual surfaces and he said that a working class background influenced the images. He found psychotherapy shocking as a subject matter and way of looking at the world. He wanted this on his pots. The making process is important, where the handwriting communicates to others unconsciously. Unlike many studio potters, Perry does not like surprises in the kiln, he wants complete control of the process.

Unlike the moderateness conveyed by most of the art critics, my response to Perry's work was intense and very much as described by Jardine (2004). As she suggested I initially found a seductive beauty effectively evoking the 'gravitas' of precious oriental ceramics. On further looking, I did experience the level of detail as hypnotic. The sinister elements shocked me. Part of the effect was mirroring aspects of my emotional experience on the way to the gallery.

I found the work painful, disturbing and intrusive even though initially seductive. If I saw too much of it I might perhaps become numb, like Gilbertson (2001). As much as I admire his pots, I do not want one, it would eat away at me, little by little.

I had not expected to be impressed. I was very surprised at the sheer presence of the work as I stood in front of it. Perry had clearly achieved great expertise in his medium during the time he had been working. These were objects that could only be made through sustained and intense engagement.

I will go on to present my analysis of the narrative.

### **2.3.3 Analysis of narrative Grayson Perry at Victoria Miro 14**

My methods for extracting issues that were raised by the display replicate those I used for *Three Commentaries* and *This is Another Place* including Rose's (2001) framework for the analysis that follows. I will then go on to discuss the implications for art psychotherapy practice in relation to relevant literature.

#### **Distribution of the points**

As with all the previous exhibitions apart from *We all peel the onions*, the points I extracted from the text relating to this exhibition (thirty one) are relatively evenly distributed amongst the three sites of production, image and audiencing (see Appendix 2, Tables 2.2-2.6). In *Grayson Perry* there is slightly more emphasis on audiencing (twelve points) which is very close to that in *We all peel the onions*. Ten points relate to image and nine points to production.

#### **Modalities of the points**

Compared to the other exhibitions the text relating to *Grayson Perry* shows a much lower concern with technological issues, and the second highest concern with social issues after *We all peel the onions*. As well as reflecting concerns of these exhibitions, this may reflect my response in that both these exhibitions are related to fields where I have specialised knowledge.

## Themes in the narrative Grayson Perry at Victoria Miro 14

### Production

#### Technological modality: how it is made

The least number of points (9) relating to this exhibition are about production. Only two of these are technological. Points 23 and 26 refer to the technologies that the production depends on. For instance, Point 26 is about laborious methods of construction. Coiling is a very labour intensive and lengthy ceramics method compared for instance, to throwing on the wheel.

#### Compositional modality: genre

The majority of production points are compositional (five): Points 10, 14, 15, 24 and 27 describe the qualities visually constructed by particular genres. Point 15 for instance, refers to the resonances of the special materials used by the genre of lustre wares, another time consuming technique.

#### Social modality: who made it, when, who for and why

Two points are social: Points 2 and 16 are about the social, political and institutional practices and relations that saturate production. For example, Point 16 is about the power of familiar tropes and traditions of making, not only reflecting Perry's background, identity and interests but also affecting reception.

### The Image

#### Technological modality: visual effects

A third of the points (10) in the text relating to this display is about what the image looks like. Only one of these is technological. Point 17 is about the resonances of clothing visually constructed by the components of the image which is the inscribed drawing of the sexy robe which has contradictory associations.

### **Compositional modality: composition**

Two points relate to composition: **Points 20 and 28** refer to the visual construction of qualities that affect what the image looks like. **Point 20**, for instance remarks on a hypnotic level of detail.

### **Social modality: visual meanings**

The majority of points (7) relating to the image are social: **Points 9, 11, 12, 13, 25, 29 and 31** are about social, political and institutional practices, knowledges and relations that saturate what the image looks like and affects the visual meanings. For example, **Point 25** is about art as political and social comment.

### **Audiencing:**

#### **Technological modality: display**

The majority of points (12) relating to this exhibition are about audiencing. Only two are technological. **Points 4 and 6** are about the technologies of display. **Point 4**, for instance refers to thresholds and doorways affecting how the image is seen.

### **Compositional modality: viewing positions**

Four points are compositional. **Points 5, 7, 8, and 18** are about the effects on reception of the image by how the viewer is positioned in relation to the components of the image. For example, **Point 18** is about the surface treatment of the object itself drawing the viewer in to look further.

### **Social modality: how interpreted, by whom and why**

Half the audiencing points (6) are social. **Points 1, 3, 19, 21, 22 and 30** are about the social, political and institutional practices and relations that interpret the image. **Point 21** refers to the creation of disturbance in the viewer which can be evoking loss, pain, poignancy and how this and their identity effects interpretation.

I will go on to consider the implications of my analysis.

## 2.3.4 DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, my analysis of Emin's work in the exhibition *This is Another Place* emphasised audiencing as well as the use of genres that were linked to gender and identity. It is interesting that in this exhibition of Perry's work there is also an emphasis on audiencing and genres with similar links. Compared to the other exhibitions, there is a strikingly lower concern with technological issues. Although the lowest number of points in the analysis relate to production and how it is made, the majority of these are about the qualities of different genres. Overall, with this exhibition there is a high concern (half the points) with cultural issues and the social, political and institutional practices and relations effecting interpretation and visual meanings.

These areas are significant for art psychotherapy. There are implications that considering genres of work would not only greatly widen the scope but also provide an avenue for addressing cultural issues that are so essential to incorporate into theories of practice. If autobiography can be embodied in the art, how do these aspects manifest themselves in Perry's work?

### Disclosure and the materialising of autobiography

In my account above I refer to Perry's words being playful, where he makes light of his approach and subject matter and illustrates the importance of humour in his work. However, references to madness and his psychotherapy experience indicate darker and more disturbing aspects. His large, coiled ceramic vases include images of himself and his experiences. They are autobiographical pots and at the same time mirror social concerns and conditions. Perry confronts us with depictions of collapsing societies. Like Emin, Perry has made himself a household name through his autobiographical art, his openness, his writing and public appearances, so it is interesting that a friend writes his autobiography (see Jones 2007). Why did he not write it? De Waal, who finds the book flat, thinks writing it would have suited Perry's reflexive style down to the ground (2006:58). I would suggest that the flatness could be an underlying sadness. The raging violence and angry compulsion that Perry expresses in his work, the obsessive quality of the detail, the fetishist qualities that he

describes, the endless masturbatory fantasies, and apparent (though denied) desire to shock and attack - all have a strong, defensive quality that hint at sadness and loss that, like Emin, instead is transformed into rage. He has produced a graphic novel *Cycle of Violence* which he describes as fantasies that are part of facing up to becoming a father (Perry 2002). Interestingly, unlike the autobiography by Jones (2007), this comic strip genre, a narrative made up of drawings, is visual expression. It is curious that he has not authored the written book about his life when he is such a master of autobiography in his art. Jardine describes him shrinking from taking on an authoritative role and links that with him embracing a subordinate, inferior stance in his self presentation as a 'tranny' potter. She argues that he has relinquished the artworld status of a powerful masculine figure. She concludes his is a 21<sup>st</sup> century art with the contemporary importance and power of an emotional intensity that acknowledges the failure of reality to fulfil our desires, with inevitable disappointment (2004). She describes Perry's use of the 'humble' vase as choosing to inhabit:

... that 'second space' - the space of inferiority - traditionally allocated to craft-based artworks produced by women over the centuries, during which they were excluded from the public sphere. The repetitive painstaking nature of such 'women's work' has been designated second-rate, circumscribed and limited in its ambition from the outset- or so connoisseurs and critics have maintained. Almost by definition it lacks the intrinsic élan or brio that could give rise to descriptions such as 'serious', 'important', 'brilliant' (Jardine 2004).

His is a war of attrition, rejecting what he describes as the elegant gesture in throwing pots on the wheel, like 'ballet'. His splendour is in the hours of toil rather than effortlessness (Jardine 2004). The result is imposing indeed. The complexity and impact of his pots would not be achieved with quick techniques and spontaneity. Adamson (2007), referred to earlier, describes the second-rate, supplemental role of craft as what is interesting about it rather than the problem and Perry shows how this can be used to great effect. He describes playing off the different associations.

Perry has emphasised the effects of his early experiences on him and his life regarding his parents splitting up, the loss of his father and the physical abuse by his stepfather. He describes 'closing down' (Jones 2007:13) and in adolescence hiding feminine-like characteristics, leading eventually to his cross-dressing. He describes his way of coping then, and now, as finding comfort and escape in creating a parallel universe (Jones 2007:128). Harrod describes the authorial aspect of being a potter presiding over alchemical transformation. Clay bodies and glazes are created involving the elemental process of firing with its ritual and risk, intense physicality and importance of touch (2004:94). I would argue that Perry experiences these things even though denying it by pouring scorn on studio potters openly engaged with these fundamental features of making pots (see Perry 1997). Such aspects of intense engagement are evident in his work. In her essay on these particularities of pottery Harrod (2004) finds links with biographical and autobiographical writing in the discipline, arguing that ironic framing with theory will not sit easily with such intense experiences. I would suggest that this is relevant to Perry's work and that his rather over-stated and cynical attacks on studio pottery may be because these are aspects he recognises in himself but does not wish to identify with. Although he does not write autobiographically, he visually narrates his story in an intensely autobiographical way in *Personal Creation Myth*, 2007. He uses it to connect to his perceived horrors of contemporary society, layering it together as a political collage, with methods that are labour and time intensive. Harrod sees Perry as one of the ceramicists whose irony and cultural comment is ideally suited to the complex language offered by ornament. She describes it as an optical theorising (2004:94), which seems an apt description for an embodied approach.

How this is constructed into his autobiographical narratives is described by Kubicki (2002). Perry's psychotherapy drives his explorations into areas such as sexuality, transvestism, gender, the body and desecration of the traditional. He pushes the boundaries of what is acceptable (2002:39). For example, Corn, commenting on his curated assemblage *The Charms of Lincolnshire*, 2006 at Victoria Miro gallery, says 'the overall effect was jokey and nightmarish, pornographic and funereal' (2006:166) (see Fig 2.46). Like Emin, this work is therapy (McIntyre 2003).

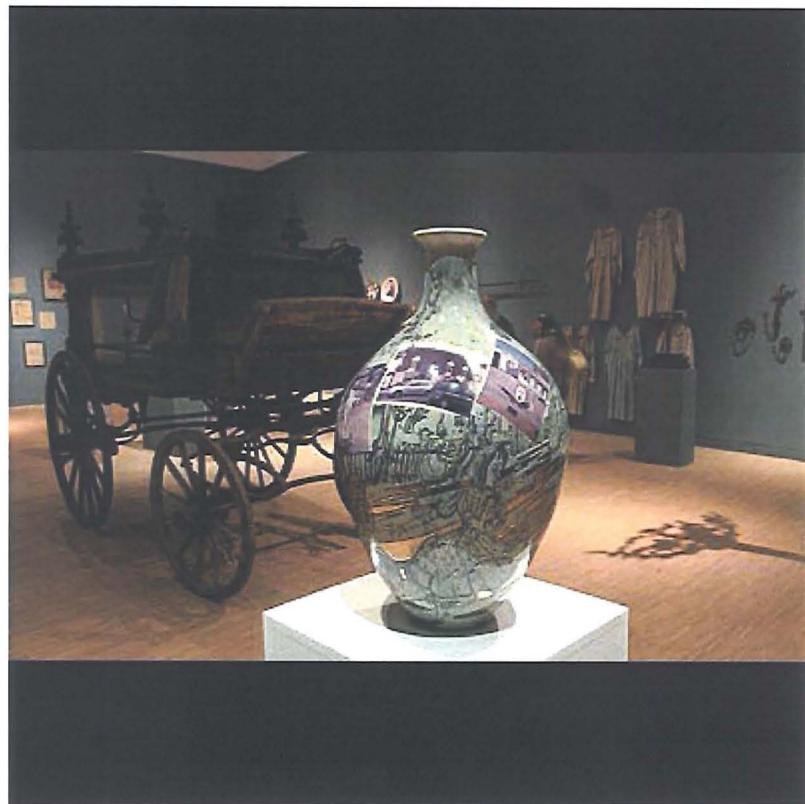


Figure 2.46

### The language of genres using clay

Perry describes himself playing with all the nuances and associations of pottery. As I have suggested, the contradiction in Perry's claim to be an artist rather than a craftsman, is also seen by Clare who points out the careful concern Perry shows for the material qualities of his pots, his technical facility with clay and his use of colour, line and surface which is inseparable from the narrative (2003:37). Perry's work illustrates an array of genres within ceramics and art history. Operating within the satirical tradition of Hogarth or Gillray (Clare 2003; Stout 2003), his work has developed over many years from the 1980's when it was clumsy and lacking in skill (see Sidney 1988). His style even then had the same identifying features, full of contradictions - a collage of decorative techniques using autobiography, drawing, provocative and sexually explicit material, and referring to historical precedents of ancient, elite ceramic traditions. The patchwork of popular imagery, both printed and painted, is reminiscent of Dada collage in the 1920's and of Victorian scrapwork (Vincentelli 2000). Collings (2005) describes it as putting together things that

don't belong together in an almost surreal way. Perry's techniques are sophisticated and highly skilled, including using those drawn from industry, such as the use of lustre as part of his palette. Spence documents a rich history of its use including medieval alter pieces, and its importance to faith in Arab culture. A decline in its use in pre-industrial ceramics was revitalised in the early 1970's. Lustre has metaphysical, spiritual and alchemical associations due to the technical challenge of its use, its use of precious metals and because of its powerful visual stimulus (Spence 2001). Perry uses a modern oxidised resin lustre not only to mask out areas he is unhappy with, but to add to the spectrum of colour in his 'chronicles'- it is heavily charged literally and metaphorically with associations of light (Spence 2001:33).

Perry's work critiques stereotypes including art and ceramic traditions. His work is seen by De Waal as deliberately 'evening class', corresponding to good decorative china. He makes an explicit link to Perry's transvestism by likening the extremes of decoration to a form of dressing-up, as if trying out roles and identities (2003ii:31). De Waal sees decorativeness as a condensed way of exploring gender and sexuality because decoration has been seen as a secondary, feminine attribute to be contrasted with the masculine primacy of form. In ceramics this idea was powerfully consolidated through the writings of many of the principal writers for whom the areas in which women worked in ceramics (principally china-painting and figuration) were 'invisible' and beneath their notice (De Waal 2003i:204).

Gleeson suggests the pots look like 'beautifully decorated . . . ornamental table lamps - contemporary amphorae' (2004:59). Collings (2005) pins them down further, saying that Perry's work is often described as beautiful, but actually it is a 'kitschy beauty that mass-produced Victorian fake Orientalist pots went in for' (2005:43). The power drawn from such ceramic traditions is reinterpreted, arriving at a simultaneous repudiation and reassertion of value-laden, bourgeoisie, ceramic objects d'art (Enright 2005). Perry's pots are subversive in that they question the status of ceramics and the hierarchy of art and craft in the same way he does with his cross-dressing.

Kubicki sees him deeply involved in the making and physicality of his art objects, with the psychological, personal and anarchic aspects giving his work an edge and its uniqueness (2002:38). As mentioned previously, Harrod points out how the potter presides over the risky elemental, alchemical process that transforms clay (2004:94). I have suggested sadness is an aspect that Perry presents. Jardine centralises disappointment and the fear of failure in his psychological and emotional makeup (2004). Perry describes the disappointment he feels so keenly as a physical sensation on opening the kiln (Jardine 2004). This must be the blow to the idealised fantasy of the imagined pot that must be at the heart of every potter's making process. By making giant pots in such a slow way Perry is making an enormous emotional investment (see Fig 2.47).



Figure 2.47

Layers of seductive combinations of sgraffito, drawn line, glaze and lustre tell the story around the classical silhouette of the pot, hitting you with grotesque and claustrophobic scenes. Maiden sees this as a cinematic quality, reflecting Perry's early interest in this genre. He uses these forms of pots for their familiarity so that they are easily absorbed and do not detract from the narrative (2003:54).

It seems apt to say he uses *guerrilla tactics*, the title of his solo exhibition at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 2002 to draw us in with stealth (Stout 2003; McIntyre 2003) and then slaps us in the face (La Placa 2002:76) rather as described previously about Emin's style. Perry describes his work as 'needling people':

It is like poisoned treasures. It is treasure but could be cursed. Or dark from the subconscious, they are things that have been brought up from the deep.

'Excavations.' It is like archaeology and psychology (Perry 2007).

My response to Perry's work surprised me as I had not expected to be impressed. I reacted very much as described in the associated literature, indicating how effectively his methods manipulated the viewer by their use of tropes from ceramic traditions. The metaphorical associations combined with seductive surface treatment places the viewer in a recognisable and pleasurable place only to be jolted by the unexpected contradiction of shocking images and narrative strains. Our fears and experiences of societies breaking down are mirrored. The examination of Perry's ceramics confirms my experience of an intensity of the sheer physicality of engagement with clay involving an elemental transformation, akin to an alchemical process. The complex language of decoration and ornament, and the aspect of risk and attendant disappointment are embedded in the pots and visually constructed as recognisable genres that are powerfully transmitted to the onlooker. How they are received will also depend on the social and political relations affecting the audience and the complexities of display and composition, as I have endeavoured to convey.

## CONCLUSION

In this part of the dissertation I described and analysed my response to displays of art using Rose's (2001) framework for the interpretation of visual materials. I was fascinated to find that this highlighted a different emphasis in each exhibition.

The exhibitions all contributed to raising my awareness about the relevance of art to art psychotherapy clinical practice. The ethical issues of working with people in vulnerable states and unequal relationships were highlighted by *We all peel the onions. Textures of*

*Memory* raised my awareness of the resonances of material practices and sustained attention to detail. *Live in Your Head* illustrated the importance of social comment and curatorship, bringing back my early art interests. The cultural significance of relationship and cultural traditions of making were emphasised by Emin's show, as well as how an enormously wide range of making, conceptualising and audiencing processes could be accessed for the art psychotherapy process. Perry and Emin's work demonstrated how autobiography can be materialised simultaneously with political and social comment.

My findings regarding Perry's work support the proposals I made as a result of the analysis of my response to Emin's art. Clay, textile and other materials have the ability to express, in ways that are specific to each material, profound experiences of memory and autobiography on an unconscious level. The detail of the making process in both Emin and Perry's work is what is important for expressing and conveying their autobiography. This is only achieved by lengthy, time-consuming, slow labour whether by Perry himself or a team in Emin's case.

Additionally, the description of my experience at all the exhibitions illustrated that every aspect of the arrangements for viewing work, including the building and its architecture, has an enormous impact on the work's reception.

The genres that an artist uses were unexpectedly highlighted as a route for accessing cultural significances of artwork, the author and the viewer. The analysis of my response to Perry and Emin's art illustrates how this can operate. Perry manipulates the viewer by using reassuring and familiar tropes and forms so as not to detract from the powerful and contradictory shocking social and autobiographical narratives. Emin uses familiar genres and materials that are fundamentally disturbing in themselves. They unconsciously unsettle and evoke memory and contradictory messages that also shock the viewer. Perry says it is the personal handwriting that communicates unconsciously to the viewer. Genres, as visual constructions, need time to develop.

I have argued that the meaning and understanding I constructed about the exhibitions was embodied in the art and as Rose (2001) describes in how it is made, what it looks like and

how it is seen, and that this offers the vehicle for transformation in art psychotherapy. Unlike transference based analytic frames, Perry and Emin's art illustrates how in depth exploration and narration can take place as therapy and become materialised via a complex visual language charged with metaphorical and literal associations.

In terms of art psychotherapy practice the implications are that autobiography and memory can be expressed, materialised and transformed at an unconscious level through sustained engagement in a creative art process that is labour and time intensive. Profound experiences and complex ideas can be embodied in this process that can be conceptualised as optical theorising. The exhibitions illustrate a richness of imagery that suggests such artmaking has the potential to unleash the full power of art as healing. The environment for such therapeutic work needs dramatic rethinking and all boundaries need considering in order to release a fuller and more creative approach to practise that allows time for visual constructions to develop and that manifests cultural issues of difference.

In the second part of my study I have demonstrated the principles of using exhibitions and displays of art as sites for visual arts research where I documented my response in a narrative framework as a form of data generation for analysis. This process provided an outer frame for my research that I explored to examine the creative potential of sustained making in art psychotherapy. In Chapter 3.1 of **Part Three** I go on to examine my own artmaking in an autobiographical account of my personal art histories.

# PART THREE - MY ART PRACTICE

## finding a living archive - sites of practice and their impact

In Part Three of my project, I will explore my personal art practice and its profound influences. The first chapter 3.1 describes the context, my inspiration and what I make. In chapter 3.2 I examine my art practice during the research period when I discovered an archive.

### 3.1 '*A secret abundance*'



Figure 3.1

Here I explore my art practice, its history and sources of inspiration. I will describe what I make, how and why. Images and journal extracts are included. I will examine relationships between what I made in the NHS group and outside it and analyse the main themes that emerge. Authors from the field of English literature and theory relating to the crafts are used to illustrate my argument. Later, in **Part Four** I will examine in detail my work in relation to that of my clients and the group process in a visually-based case study. Firstly, I will introduce an image that seems to characterise the project.

### 3.1.1 What I make

#### *My I*



Figure 3.2

My eye looks back at me (see Fig 3.2). This autobiographical account was difficult to write as it seemed to extend backwards in a continuous backdrop to daily life that did not seem to be accounted for in any systematic way in my mind, my archive or my research.

By going back in time one problem that hindered my writing was the disturbance caused by the memories that became more vivid the longer I examined them. I used images to drive the narrative which seemed congruent with my visual heuristic methodology. I found the words to speak about the experiences by collecting photographs and artwork associated with different stages and sites of my art practice. Figure 3.2 encapsulates my approach and I will talk about this first.

Figure 3.2, *My I*, was taken during my training in studio pottery at Harrow College of Art. I am putting on eye makeup. A light shines down on my old pine table (in my current studio now) where artwork, a continuous role of paper, my makeup bag and other items can be made out. A second photograph of that image has these objects more in focus and identifies them as including a recently bought pot by Richard Batterham; a packet of Sutton Seeds; a recently fired bowl by a friend; drawing inks; postcards of art; a tiny square slab pot I had made; a bottle top; a Penguin book; a Japanese calligraphy drawing torn out of a pad; notebooks and journals started on the studio pottery course. As I look back at the camera in this photo I am smiling. I am taken aback - and taken back to that time, over thirty five years ago. The objects, apart from one bowl, are all part of what I make or are part of my daily life now, although textile interests are not yet apparent. I examine myself at that moment, and look back at the onlooker, at this moment, myself.

The photograph was part of a display I made in my studio where I unpacked my archive during the research. This process proved to be the bedrock of my research. I also used it in the display made in the Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles cabinet in 2006 (see Fig 3.1, left hand side of the cabinet, it is behind the magnifier on the glass shelf). I placed a magnifier that I had recently unpacked, in front of the photograph as a metaphor and to examine the image closer. Forgetting that the sun shone through a velux window in the roof at midday, I found it uncanny to discover a hole burnt in the photograph

two weeks later (see left hand side of Fig 3.1). This image, for me embodies the research process.

### Sites of my art practice

I was surprised to find I have set up eight workshops and studios during my career, five for myself and three for organisations. I have always made things which led to my training in 1971 as a studio potter in the Leach tradition (see Leach 1940). More recently, I developed my interests in the use of basic materials in textiles. Most of the objects I make are for use but are also intended to be sculptural - small epiphanies in the sense described by James Joyce and Marcel Proust. I am amazed at the insistence of major themes that run throughout the different types of art practice and the clear indication that each site impacts on what I produce. This connects to my work as an art psychotherapist: I encouraged retrospective reviews of clients' work at the end of their period of therapy and themes would emerge that had not been apparent in individual sessions.

### The context

The origins of this artmaking go back to a country childhood in Southern England playing on my own in 'my' wood, and Scottish ancestry on my mother's side which was imbued with the women's textile practices. As an only child I was born in London a year after the end of World War II. My father was a prisoner of war for most of it and was rescued by the Americans after a 400 mile march through Germany amid much bombing, including that of Dresden. His account of these experiences during those years is included in a book written by a close wartime friend, and read by him over and over in later life (Cawston 1993). They too both kept journals. My father's friend's account (below) of that particular night is characteristically low-key and understated. I include the extract as it gives a flavour of that time:

*Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February*

*... Marched 20 km. Told 2 km more. So marched further 12 km!! Bloody Hell! Just about all in. Arrived in Pülsnitz during large air raid. Issued with soup. Bedded down in church hall. I slept the night on top of an upright piano. 24.00hr. NOTE On this night we were only 7 miles from Dresden and the air raid referred to was the controversial one in which the ancient city was*

*destroyed by the ensuing fire storm. We had no idea of the true scale of the raid at the time although it was obviously exceptional. We could see our planes silhouetted against the glowing red clouds reflecting the huge fires on the ground. In retrospect, it was surprising that we experienced no noticeable increase in antipathy towards us by the local population (Cawston 1993).*

The book includes descriptions of items they made including manual pumps made from tin cans for air ducts in escape tunnels, how they learnt to crochet blankets and their own army hats using a crocket hook carved from a

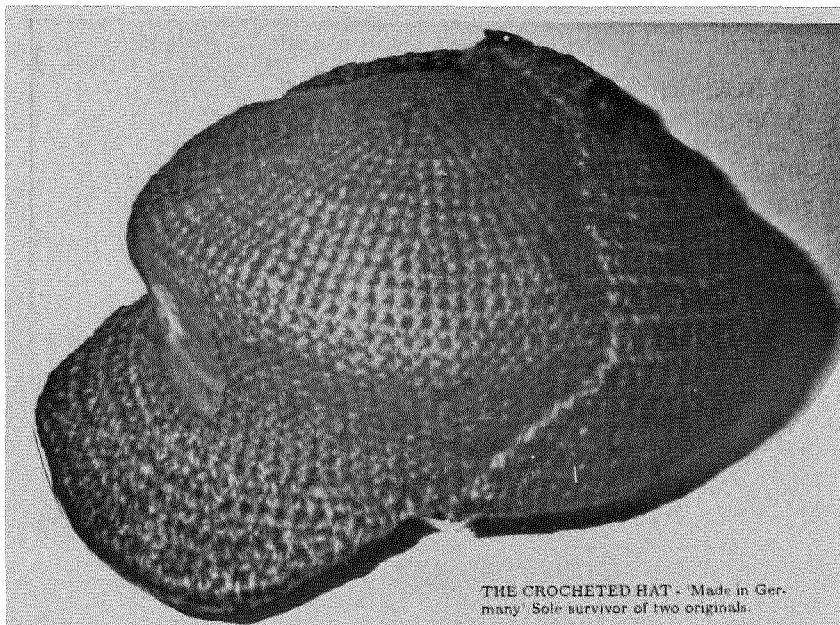


Figure 3.3

toothbrush handle and wool pulled down from the tops of socks and sweaters (Cawston 1993) (see Fig 3.3). This practical approach to making things out of available materials appears to be something I inherited as well as the urge to document.

The austerity and scarcity of the early post war years in Britain was the cultural climate I was born into - my parents' new home, a first floor flat, was heated by coal kept in a wardrobe on its side. I was born in the severest winter on record, and slept in the freezing bathroom. When I was seven we moved from the outskirts of London to a more rural setting and my father commuted to the city. My mother supported my father to develop a successful career. He specialised in the brokering and shipping of minerals and travelled extensively, frequently accompanied by my mother on major trips. In Australia he started up

a mining operation. I mention this because of my own interest in minerals and raw materials. My father made things, as might be suggested by the war account. He was skilled with his hands and put this to practical use in the house and garden. In retirement, his attention to detail was developed in furniture restoration. As an only child, I spent time with him learning such skills and my mother's similarly skilled approach using vegetables grown in the garden, locally gathered food and materials for use. This context for my art practice is a privileged but industrious, white middleclass upbringing - they struggled for their achievements, having started with nothing.

My earliest art memory is a colour drawing I did when I was about four years old. I felt proud of it. It was of a woman wearing a dress and high heels feeding chickens. The next memory I have is of intense involvement in making things from raw materials gathered from the natural environment around me. Having no siblings I usually played on my own accompanied by my dog in the woods around us that had once been a Norman deer park. We lived in one of a group of Victorian cottages built as 'country' retreats in an area of extensive ancient woodland at the top of chalk upland (the North Downs) and near to the Pilgrims' Way. It seemed to have been an area richly favourable for habitation and near to a road that was the main route south to The Weald for several thousand years (see Lambert, 1921). There are Neolithic sites, a Roman encampment evidenced by many Roman snails in our garden. Nearby, Betchingley Place had been the site of Saxon, Norman, Medieval and Royal Tudor palaces before its demolition. I include this detail as I believe being steeped in such an environment full of natural history and archaeological remains influenced my aesthetic and visual perceptions and artistic development. The abundance I sensed I speculate was related to the chalk soil that provides a rich habitat for wildlife and animals unlike the clay valleys a bit further south which provide unfavourable conditions shown by the lack of evidence of ancient habitation.

I made bows and arrows from coppiced hazel, constructed encampments and looked after my animals. I walked the footpaths with my dogs. I rode the bridle paths on horses and galloped along fields bareback. I remember carving a chalk owl figurine with a penknife, sitting amongst enormous beech trees' roots that formed pools of water. I cast animal footprints

with plaster of paris for later identification. I am amazed that all these aspects have re-emerged in my art practice. I make my own tools in the course of my ceramics (see Fig 3.59). I make animal figurines in clay (see Fig 3.25), including a duck seat (see Fig 3.27). A series of bird baths explored the shapes of those beech tree root formations (see Fig 3.27). Casting has been significant, for instance in making sprig moulds (see Fig 3.19) and in my art psychotherapy group (see Fig 4.1 in Chap 4.2.2).

My animals needed a strict routine. I was busy, running, usually late, at six in the morning, down the hill to the horses' rented field a mile away and back up the track to get to school (two miles in another direction) on time, whatever the weather. At times other children visited. Among my friends was an older girl who took me blindfolded on exciting expeditions into different areas of the woods: 'Today we are going to Africa . . .' (Huge creepers of Old Man's beard, wild honeysuckle, rambling over trees grown up in a Second World War bomb crater). She taught me to make fires, cook our lunch and build shelters using materials to hand, including an impressive one thatched with grass.

Describing these few memories makes me see how like my current life this is in so many ways, even down to my studio used for the research which I had originally planned to be a low impact building using local materials including straw bales. This unexpected continuity surprises me.

I was taught woodwork and to knit and sew at primary and junior schools. Even then, I was happy with methods using simple technologies including knitting a dishcloth, making a pair of stilts and a box for screws and nails. After that I did sporadic knitting at home and remember various sweaters that might take a year or more to knit which also seem to have been influenced by my maternal grandmother who visited us each year and who was a knitting and fine crochet expert. My mother was a sportswoman and accomplished athlete, winning at her tennis club even in her 70's. She and her twin were due to swim for Scotland in the Olympic Games the year the Second World War started.

My grandmother had been a music teacher. I remember her continually knitting and admiring her ability to watch television without looking at her needles. I still have examples of her work. My mother loved sewing and made many of her clothes but rarely knitted as the strong tradition in Scotland grew to have negative associations with privation and financial necessity.

My art teacher at school was an artist who encouraged and inspired me. I would spend as much time as possible in the wonderful environment of the art studio full of art, plants and found objects, probably still influencing my current home environment. She emphasised close observation and discipline in looking through practice of drawing skills, inspiring many students with her approach to our projects that were developed imaginatively in stages as creatively as possible (see Figs 3.4, 3.5). Most of my work from that time has been lost.



**Figure 3.4**

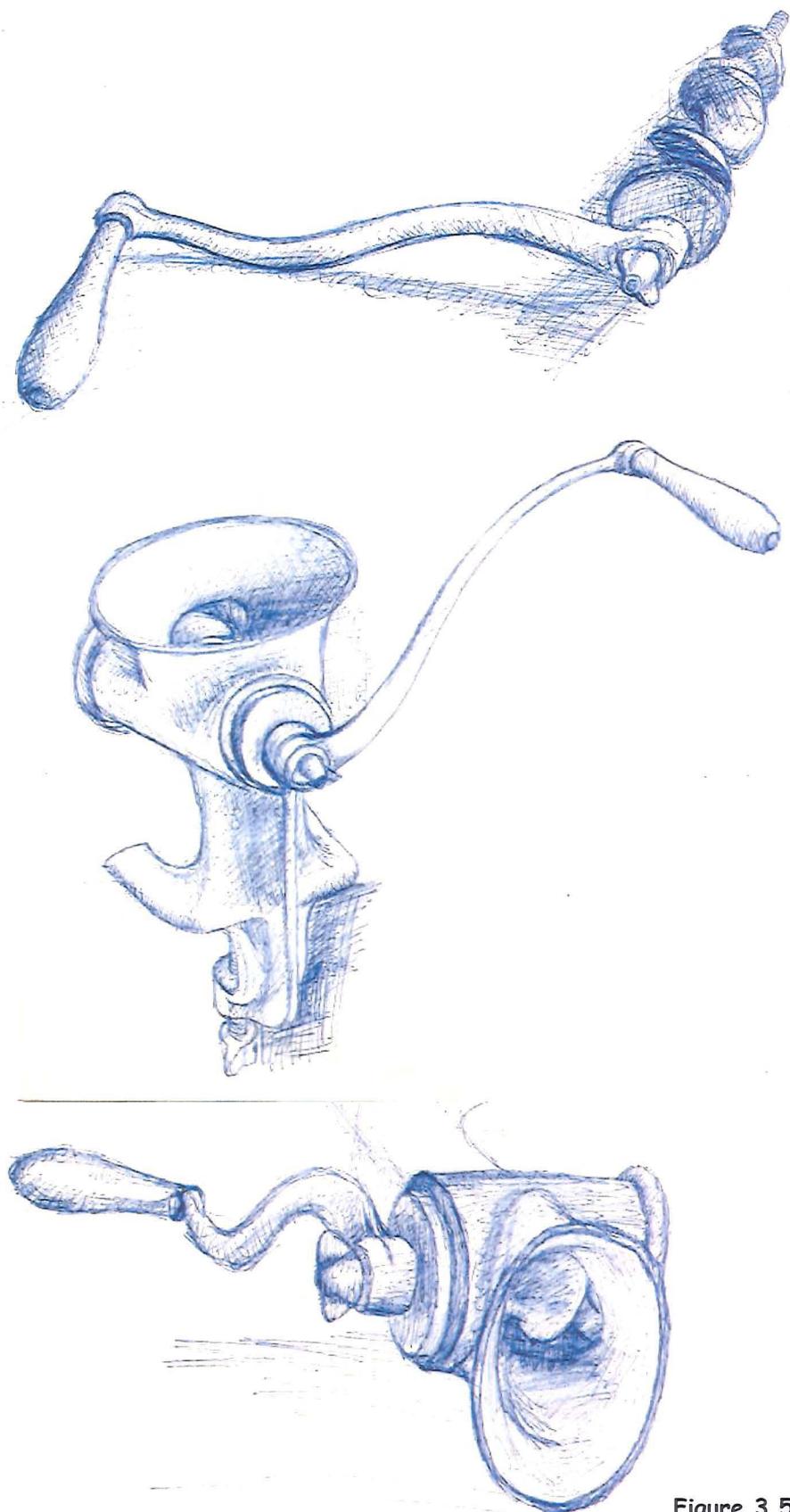


Figure 3.5

Other interests I was developing included psychology and philosophy, reading avidly and intrigued by ideas about perception and the mind. The drawing *Circuit board* (Fig 3.6) was done while at school when I was endlessly sketching in notebooks. I was interested in industrial artefacts and buildings which I later developed in my ceramics training. It is an image that describes my research project: all the connections are traced, one bit links to another in a seemingly tangled whole but it has its own logic. This has been the challenge - to untangle the mass of connections.

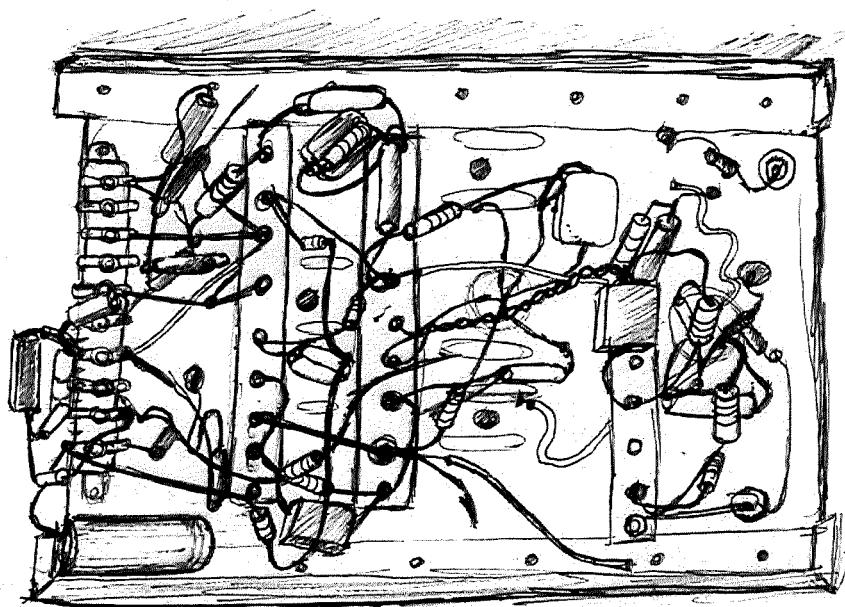


Figure 3.6

#### Art School 1965

My first attempt at art school in 1965 was tangled. I had been given a place a year earlier than usual and, despite my parents' and headteacher's advice, left school after one year in the sixth form and before taking A'levels. My art teacher supported my decision knowing my dedication to art. However, teenage confusion escalated as I could not relate to the course and I left depressed, after three months. I had been looking forward to it for many years, expecting to meet others with similar ideas and to find it as exciting as art at school. I had

not anticipated the difficulties. I felt infantilised by a strict timetable, having grown used to the independence of self-directed learning at school and it seemed retrogressive. I was shocked, deeply disappointed and ashamed, unable to articulate my feelings.

I did not know that art colleges were undergoing huge change and reform at the time. I feel slightly vindicated by Madge and Weinberger who say that the student who decided to go to art college at this time 'was entering a maelstrom' (1973:17). Their research looking at the functioning of an art college over three years during this period found 'instabilities, ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the role of artist and art student at that time' (1973:17). I fit most of the profiles for students in their study and also find that my reactions were similar to theirs, including the confusion, depression and disorientation. As one of the dropouts, I too had expected things to be very different. I most enjoyed learning new skills and working with different materials while I was there, such as lithography, life drawing and wood carving.

### London 1966

I moved to London in 1966 and there was a very grey period during secretarial training and first jobs. It was not what I wanted to do but I felt under parental pressure after my previous failure. However, further training in the first computerised typesetting brought really interesting work on the first issues of *Timeout* and *Oz* magazines. Things looked up. Suddenly I found myself in the heart of the counter culture of that period and it was a great relief to meet people with similar ideas. Working for *Oz* at its outset in Britain was fascinating. Widely considered *The Underground magazine* it was fiercely anti-establishment, very flamboyant and controversial, provoking storms of outrage and two court cases. With Richard Neville as editor and Martin Sharp and Jim Anderson as co-editors, their pioneering and satirising endeavours tackled politically contentious and heady issues. The most influential aspect regarding my own art was the magazine's emphasis on exciting and bold visual presentation, including use of fluorescent inks, metallic papers, comic strip and pull out posters<sup>1</sup>. I went on to work with the business editor Peter Ledebour

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.oztrading.net/Library.htm>.

when he set up the publishing firm *Big O Posters* where I continued to be immersed in the rich visual imagery of posters that are now collectors' items. My own artwork became freer, more fluid and expressive, as I experimented with different materials, for instance using inks with brushes (see Fig 3.7). Juxtaposed to this, there was the serial, repetitive aspects of typesetting that marked the start of such characteristics in my later art practice (I typeset the whole of the two doctors and dentists directories in 1970).

Figure 3.7



#### First studio 1970

Whilst working for the typesetting firm *Dahling Dahling* in 1970 I discovered clay and was captivated by throwing. I rented a basement studio in the same building complete with kiln

and other equipment, but soon realised teaching myself would take a long time. The work I made then appears to have been influenced by the potter Ruth Duckworth (see Fig 3.8).



Figure 3.8

I had been in therapy for a while, probably because of my general confusion about the way my life was working out. I had left home, moved away and my working life was not directly involved with art that was my passion. I got the encouragement I needed from my second therapist who helpfully and directly told me not to do art as a hobby but to get serious training. I had been in therapy briefly before but that therapist had been very different and hardly spoke at all in sessions. The extreme anxiety and disturbance that the silences provoked in me influenced my later approach to clients. I really appreciated the warmth and wise counsel of the second therapist. There is a noticeable exploratory shift in my two dimensional work around this time in that my ink drawings feature more people and faces (see Fig 3.9).



Figure 3.9.

### Harrow Studio Pottery training 1971-1973

I was enthralled by my later studio pottery training. Three months after my therapist's intervention I started my training in studio pottery in 1971 - the first decade (termed by some as its' 'golden years') of the Harrow Studio Pottery Course set up by Mick Casson and Victor Margrie. Considered a ground-breaking course, it equipped students with a vocation and re-introduced the social element of high quality accessible crafts objects independent of a fashionable art scene. It felt perfect for me, my beliefs and value systems. I can see now it was a logical step, given my previous experiences. Around this time my journal and sketch book start to include the occasional entry of poetry or prose. I include an extract that would have been written about an early morning walk across a field at the end of a tube journey as I approach the college:

*The light freshness of the breeze  
and quiet insistent warmth  
of the sun  
have a weight  
that muffles  
sounds  
carrying far through space  
Grasses, branches wave  
Everything is nearer  
but the vastness  
has increased  
1971.*

The skills taught at Harrow by practising potters were those designed to set up a self-supporting studio. All the students threw themselves into the rigorous regime of repetition throwing, applied chemistry, geology and simple engineering including, for instance, kiln construction (see Figs 3.10, 3.11) and wheel building. I still have my electric wheel and make my own tools (see Fig 3.58).



**Figure 3.10**

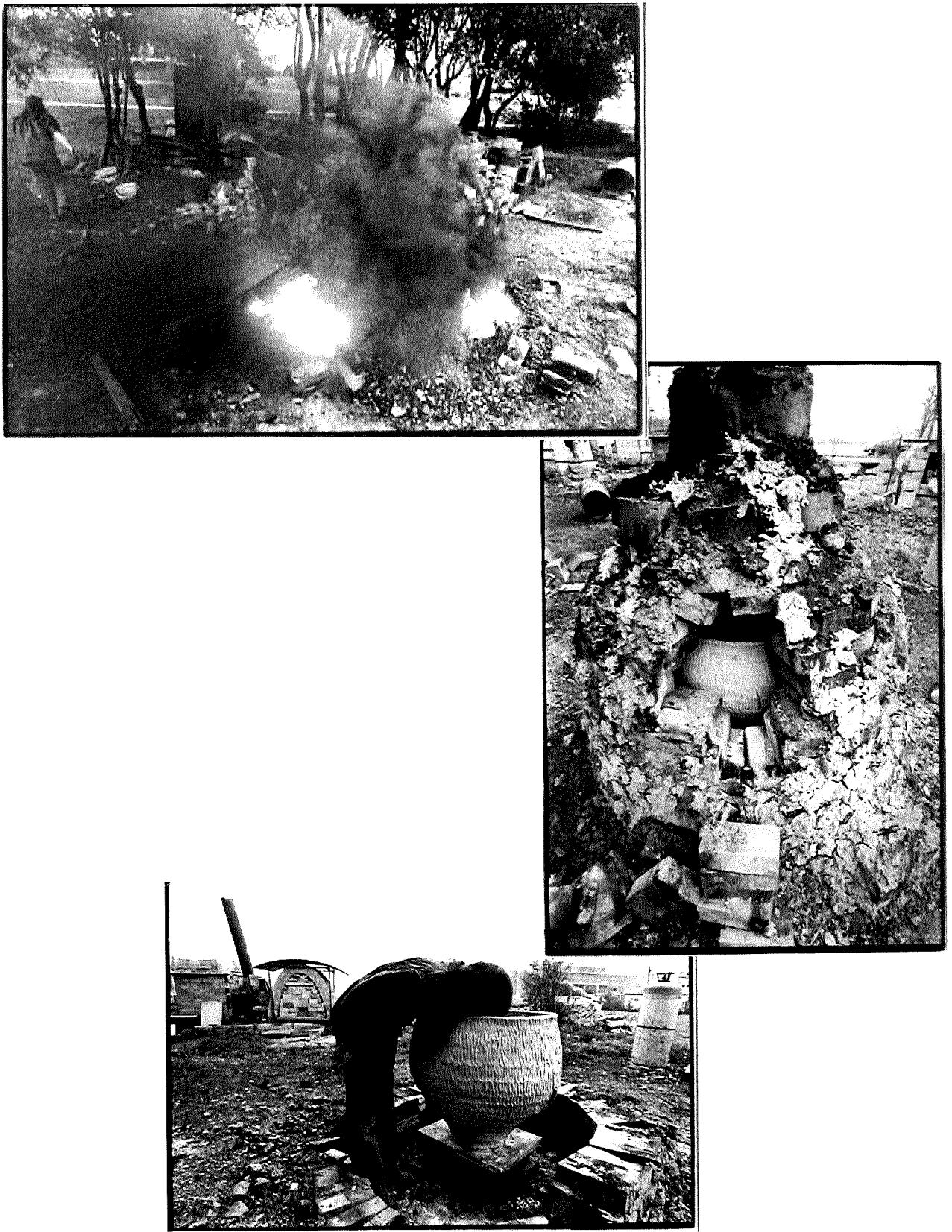


Figure 3.11

Its ideals were based on those of Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts movement. By the mid-70's, a self righteousness which 'denied the contemporary' (De Choisy 2000) had developed, confident to ignore the trends and critique of the art world. Harrod points out that one aspect of the early studio pottery movement was a strong relationship to food. It acted as a critique not only of industrially produced ceramics but of objects of 'ritualised dining habits of the upper middle classes' that had become extraordinarily complex (2006:96). The new ceramics were meant to be less pretentious and for different, simpler food. The course enabled me to develop my own glaze recipes and range of domestic ware; I also made handbuilt sculptural work (see Figs 3.12, 3.13). What I learnt was the foundation of all my later practice based on materials.

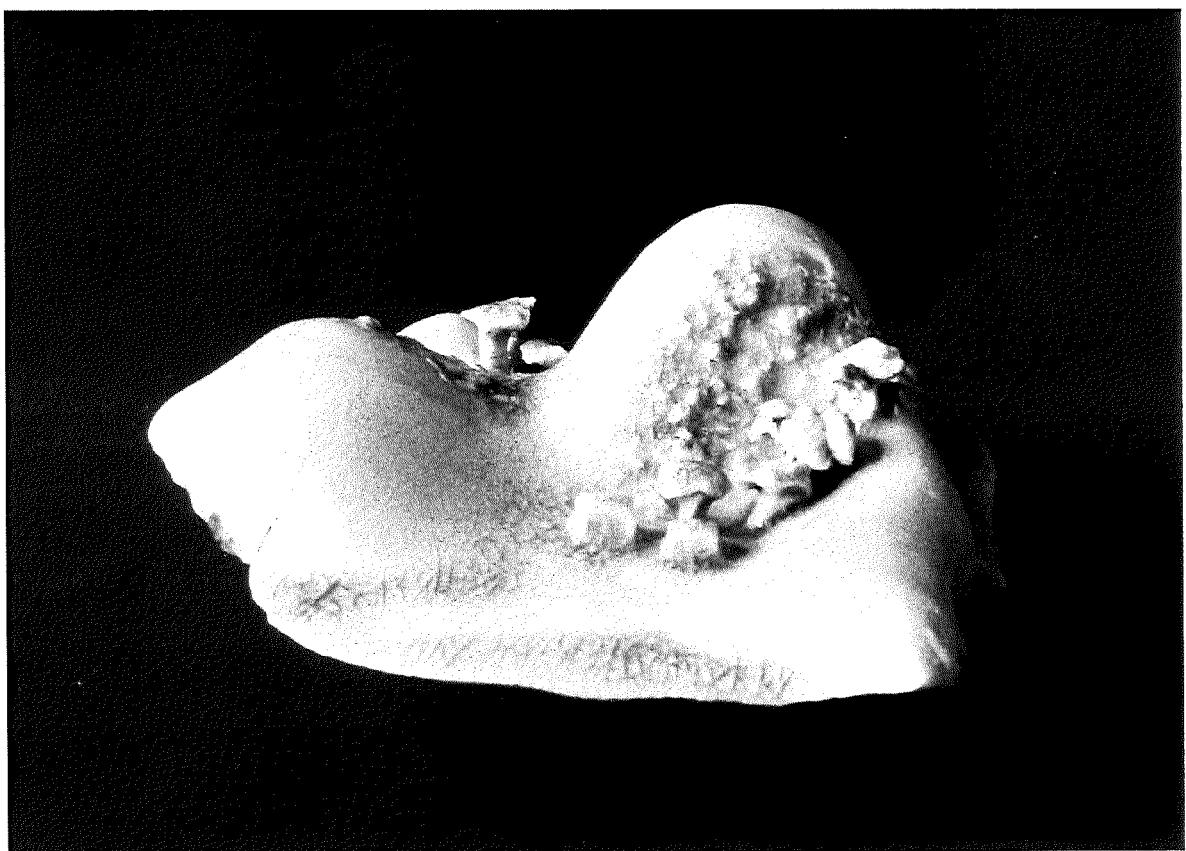


Figure 3.12



Figure 3.13

### Studio potteries 1973

After I qualified in 1973, my partner and I moved to the Oxfordshire countryside where I shared a workshop and kiln with another, newly qualified potter. It was wonderful to get back to the countryside again. I had missed it enormously while in London, pining for space, solitude and the natural environment. My notebooks reflect this:

*The low sun, a misty pink, fades softly as it is enveloped by the dampness.*

*The newly turned dark earth absorbs the slowly creeping mist like smoke and the cobwebbed plants suddenly glisten.*

30.10.73

*Breathy cows*

*on*

*grass crusted*

*stone earth*

*whiteness*

*shimmers*

*butterfly pigeons*

*struggle*

*through a frozen sky*

1.12.73

*Crystalline blackness*

*even though*

*the moon above*

*gives unearthly light*

*picking out*

*every fragment*

*of pottery and glass*

*that glitter*

*on*

*Christmas cake*

*earth*

9.12.73

I started making and selling and was delighted with the opportunity of two exhibitions. A newspaper cutting shows I took part in an exhibition in Abingdon organised by the Council of Small Industries in Rural Areas (CoSIRA) in September 1973 (see Fig 3.14).



**Figure 3.14**

It shows the drums I made while at college. I had asked for an interview with the African drummer who was at the time working with the Rolling Stones. He advised me about the technical aspects of obtaining hide for the head and how to tension it over the body of the drum. The other exhibition was of new work at Trinity College, Oxford with a painter (see Fig 3.15), consisting of domestic ware and handbuilt functional pieces.



**Figure 3.15**

A year later we moved to a small market town and our new house was an old bakery. I set up a workshop with a gas kiln with the help of the Crafts Advisory Committee (CAC) Setting Up Grant. I went on making wheel made, reduced stoneware and porcelain domestic ware with some handbuilt sculptural objects. I carried on developing my own glazes. The notebooks document extensive glaze tests and the collecting of local materials such as clays and ashes (see Fig 3.16) for testing.

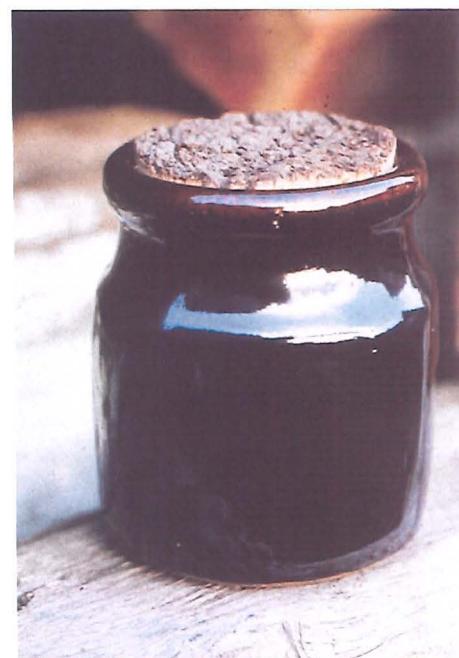
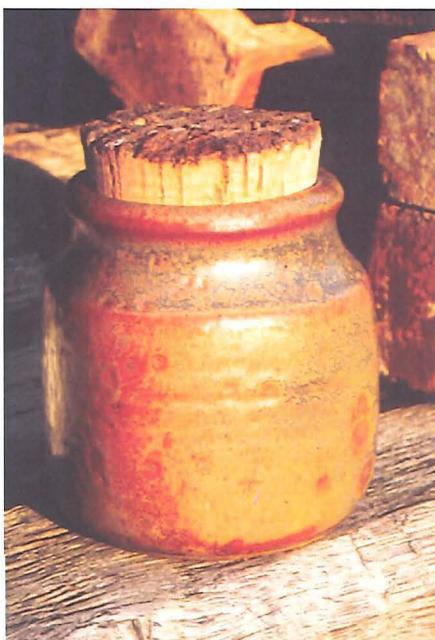


Figure 3.16

I sold my work to galleries in London and the south of England. Local commissions included a dinner service and an unusual one of 70 canary nesting boxes for a private zoo. For two years I taught a weekly evening class for Social Studies students at the Trade Union funded Ruskin College in Oxford. My approach encouraged the students' expressive work with clay that underlined its therapeutic potential as they were undergoing huge changes in their lives as politically active, mature students with no previous further education. I was very pleased to have another exhibition in 1977 and that this time it was solo at the Beach Thomas Gallery in Burford (see Fig 3.17). I started developing sprig moulds. I made porcelain covered dishes for cheese and butter and was influenced by Creamware in some explorations where I made tea strainers, soap dishes, flower bricks, spoons and ladles. I made handbuilt pots with heavily grogged clay and dipped and poured matt glazes. I loved handling the coarse textured, leather hard slabs and carving into them when constructed, in contrast to the creamy smoothness of throwing porcelain. During this time I started voluntary work for the newly started charity *Childline*.

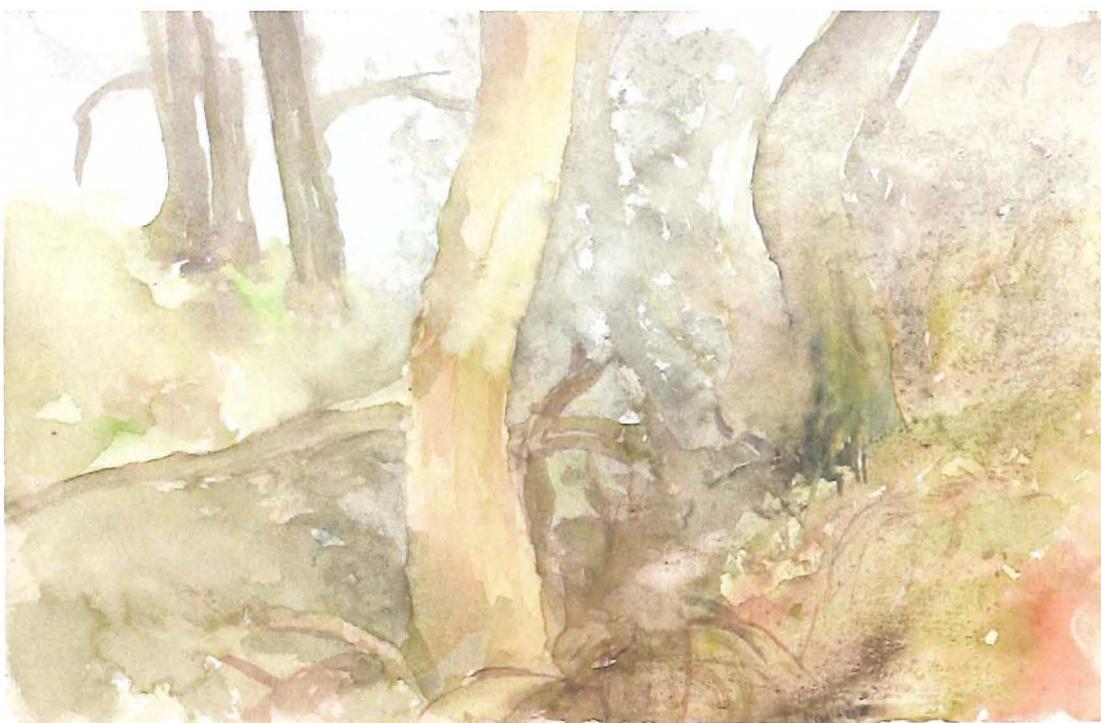


**Figure 3.17**

### **Devon and endings 1979**

My partner was commuting to London to his own studio but over a number of years this became increasingly problematic. Eventually we separated. Perhaps too quickly after this very sad and traumatic process I decided, in 1979 to move down to Devon where I had been offered the opportunity of setting up another workshop by some furniture makers. In this same year I exhibited in the exhibition *British Ceramicists*, at the Galerie Piedestal in Brussels. Living and working in historic buildings amongst creative people in a self sufficient lifestyle with my dog and other animals was a rich experience. However, combined with the major loss of my marriage it was to eventually culminate in a decision to close my business.

I loved being in Devon and really enjoyed working closely with other people, the regular routines of meeting up for meals and breaks during our working day and helping each other out if needed. We worked hard and had breaks at weekends visiting local sites of interest. A watercolour I did then in an ancient wood (see Fig 3.18) intriguingly bears an uncanny resemblance to one I did unknowingly fourteen years later (see Fig 3.28).



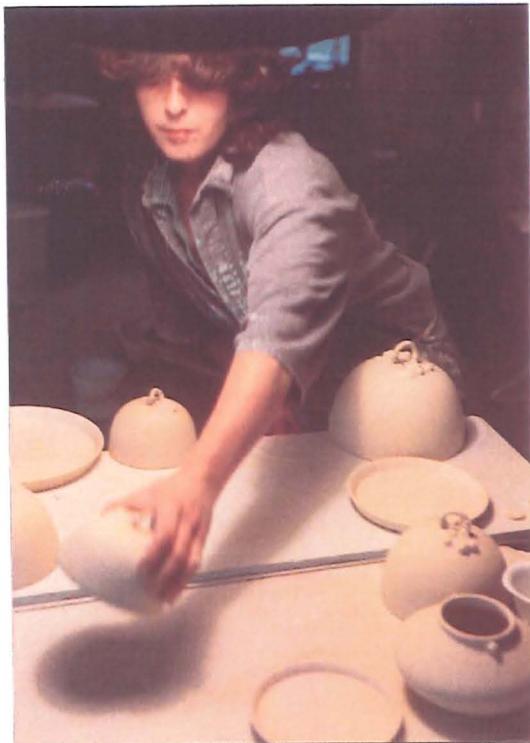
**Figure 3.18**

The body of work that I produced during this period was reduced porcelain, heavily worked with fine detail. I worked in series using sprig moulds. The sprig moulds were imprints I took from local plant material, twigs, berries, shoots pressed into a piece of soft porcelain which was then fired. I found this process fascinating. The immaculate detail obtained from using the smooth, fine porcelain perfectly replicated the natural objects (see Fig 3.19).



Figure 3.19

The resulting mould was used to repeat these small studies again and again. I incorporated them into my pots as handles or embellishments (see Fig 3.20), but I wondered how I might have developed them if I not been tied to making a living from the work (see Fig 3.23).



I also collaborated with one of the furniture makers on combined wood and porcelain objects such as wooden lidded porcelain pots, sleeveers and liners (see Fig 3.22). We exhibited these in a mixed exhibition in 1980 at Otterton Mill, Devon.

Figure 3.20

Along side these investigations I explored the rare and elusive copper red glaze with its dramatic blood and blackberry reds produced by manipulation of a reducing kiln atmosphere that miraculously changes the green of oxidised copper oxide to these vivid shades (see Fig



Figure 3.21

3.21). As well as exhibiting in *British Ceramicists*, I also felt a sense of achievement to have this work accepted by the Oxford Gallery, well known and respected at that time for Contemporary Crafts.



Figure 3.22

The financial and emotional difficulties of the previous few years eventually resulted, after much soul searching, in a decision to investigate other ways of practicing art and making a living. I decided to close my business, move back to Oxford and explore the idea of art psychotherapy.



Figure 3.23 *Sprig lids*, 1980.

### New directions

When I arrived back in Oxford in 1980 I did voluntary work with Philippa Brown, art psychotherapist at Littlemore Hospital. I was excited to be offered a job at the Warneford Hospital as a potter in the occupational therapy department. I was given a free rein in their well equipped pottery. I really enjoyed working with those who attended: adults, older adults and adolescents who were inpatients or attending the Day Hospital. I helped them make what they wanted out of the available materials, facilitating expressive and exploratory claywork that also included pots for use. I emphasised the complete process including clay preparation and using the pugmill that requires a serious physical engagement that people seemed to find therapeutic. I was moved and fascinated by the benefits I could see for people in working with the clay. My dog was also given a therapeutic role and was much appreciated by the patients.

The OT dept support group was run by group psychotherapist Sidney Bloch and I enjoyed his relaxed style and use of humour. My deepening fascination with groups propelled me to undertake a year long Institute of Group Analysis introductory course in groupwork and family therapy. There were also stimulating conversations with Philippa Brown and Charles Lutyens, Warneford Hospital art psychotherapist. In 1981 I curated an exhibition of the work people did in the pottery called '*Explorations in clay*' which I set up in the Warneford entrance hall (see Fig 3.24). Looking back this marked the beginning of my therapeutic work. This experience in adult psychiatry was pivotal in my pursuing art psychotherapy.

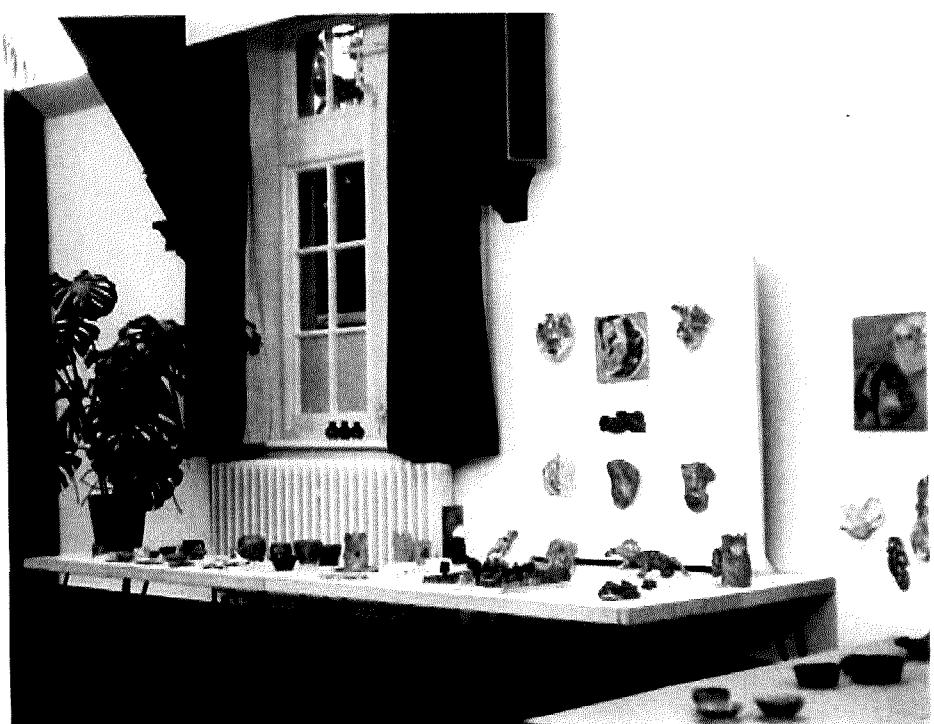


Figure 3.24

The ending of my business freed me to further explore different materials and approaches in art. I painted more, using water colour and inks and made collage. My journals at this time indicate the continued involvement with the landscape around me.

#### Wytham Woods, Oxford

*I have moved to the old Laundry at Wytham Abbey where residents have a rare permit to use the adjacent woods owned by the university... Solitary walks in these old woods with my dog are magical. Standing with her silently, under an ancient oak a tiny Muntjac deer, no bigger*

*than my terrier, who can't believe her eyes, startles away from us, back into the undergrowth. Its white rump flashes as it leaps through the leaves. At night we hear them barking to each other, a ghostly sound.*

*There are large leaves in the woods, up the path from the Paddock - as big as rhubarb leaves but gray green, soft and fluffy. The huge size, colour and texture fascinates me. Perhaps I could dry them and turn them into a big, delicate crinkly leaf. I have hung some up and put one with a large dock leaf into a slow oven...*

*...I am looking at a tree - a beautiful, very old beech. There are hollows formed by the roots at its base, full of dark water and rotting leaves. I remember this as a child, looking up, its huge limbs and new delicate, barely formed leaves, the light shimmering through them. I plan to try and reproduce these hollows, perhaps in porcelain, a vase with an ash glaze. Perhaps pressed out over a mould, thin fragile edges, translucent in places and reproducing the surface of the bark, with torn edges.*

May 1981

Later in 1981 I embarked on the Goldsmiths professional art psychotherapy training course.

#### **Art psychotherapy training 1981-1982**

My placement in Gloucester during training further compounded my fascination in the expressive and exploratory potential of art psychotherapy combined with the intriguing power of group dynamics. I saw enormous benefits for the clients I worked with. I did not do artwork myself, except in one open group session I made a portrait in clay of my dog who I was greatly missing (see Fig 3.25).

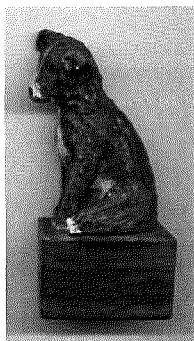


Figure 3.25

In the experiential groups in college I enjoyed experimenting in shared artmaking and the challenge of the intensive group sessions. Many of these sessions were directed or structured with themes or suggestions and were therefore noticeably different from the completely unstructured group analytic experiential group I had been part of in Oxford. The art made in the art psychotherapy workshops was usually completed in one session and I have not kept any of this work.

Finishing my training in 1982, I hoped to develop work as an art psychotherapist in Oxford (there were only two posts there at the time). It was not to be. I did sessional work for Artlink as a potter with visually handicapped people. This was extremely interesting, helping me to see their engagement with clay and think about vision, touch and texture in art. However, nine months later the difficulties of a localised work approach was clear. When a job at the Henderson Hospital came up in Sutton in 1983, I was keen. I commuted for six months and then my new partner and I decided to make the move to Kent.

#### **Henderson, the beginnings of material practices and a participative art practice 1983-1992**

It was in the nine years at the Henderson that I developed my ideas about art psychotherapy and groups (see Chapter 4.1). The Henderson Hospital Therapeutic Community was an internationally known model for working with young people diagnosed with severe personality disorder (Whately 1980). The residents, as they were called, were there voluntarily for up to a year. Social analysis was the main tool. Described as a 'living-learning' situation, the small residential unit self-consciously pooled 'the institution's total resources, staff and patients' in further treatment (Jones 1968:85) in a combination of sociotherapy and psychotherapy. The highly structured 24 hour programme included formal roles, shared responsibilities and elaborate procedures with small, large, formal and informal groups (see Mahony 1992b). I conducted so-called task-centred Art Work Groups and analytic Art Psychotherapy Groups, as well as other groups in the intensive programme.

In the Henderson art work group I worked on my own art alongside the residents. I explored different media and styles. I painted, drew, made pots and sculptures in clay and

plaster and started weaving on a four foot loom. I wove a rag rug with a circle motif in the centre that took me nine months, the residents teased me about how long it took. I repeated this practice in the group I am studying for this research.

In this work group, all three staff and up to fourteen residents took part in artmaking several times a week for two and a half hours. I note this as the more distant role of observer is extensively used within art psychotherapy practice (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:67) and artmaking in sessions is often considered unhelpful to clients, for example see Wadeson (1980) (see chapter 1.1). This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.1. At the Henderson, I could see and assess the benefits of sustained artmaking for everyone and compare it with the more analytic art psychotherapy group that I conducted once a week. In the work group we did not explore the content of the art but for half an hour at the end we had tea and talked about how people got on. In terms of art psychotherapy, I now see it as a studio approach which I did not realise at the time. Importantly for this research, in hindsight I can now see that the relaxed approach with absorption in self-initiated artmaking with a wide range of art media was working at a deeper level than the more analytic approach which, for this client group, was more threatening and stressful as well as verbally, content and transference focused.

At the Henderson I had the opportunity to design and set up another studio environment. I ensured the space was big enough for using a wide range of media (see Mahony 1992b) with different adjoining facilities, kiln room and discussion area (see Fig 3.26). It came to be used by residents and staff twenty four hours a day.

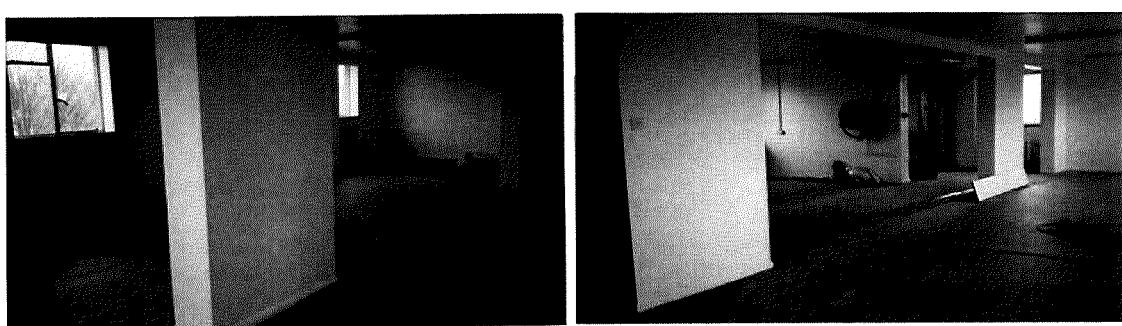


Figure 3.26

During this time I arranged a number of periodic weekend workshops for friends and colleagues run by a friend, Sarah Walton, in her studio. We had trained together at Harrow. We all had a stimulating time under the watchful and insightful eye of Sarah who helped us during these intensive two days to achieve our ambitions with the clay for later saltglaze firing. I see that Sarah facilitated our work in a similar way to the approach I used at the Warneford, the Henderson and in my group which I am describing in this research. It enabled me to explore my childhood image of dark water beech tree pools described earlier, producing a number of bird baths which I also carried on as a series at the new Henderson studio. I also made a seat supported by two ducks (see Fig 3.27). This was made in several pieces and cemented together.



**Figure 3.27**

One of the watercolours (see Fig 3.28) I did during this period was of a friend's wood. I referred earlier (see Fig 3.18) to the similar qualities it has to one I did fourteen years previously.



Figure 3.28

### Material practices

I had always wanted to learn to spin and after moving to another village, a new friend introduced me in 1995 to the Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers. The tactile experiences of working with fibres alongside a predominantly female peer group and the portability were a revelation. I could pick up and put down my work anywhere unlike clay. Ceramics is demanding of time, space and effort with heavy materials and equipment, requiring constant attention to the clay drying and attendant processes. I revelled in these differences and immersed myself in these new materials (see Fig 3.29).



Figure 3.29

Once again the simple technology appealed, collecting local materials, seeds, lichen, obtaining fleeces, and growing plants for dyeing. I carried out extensive tests, as I had done with

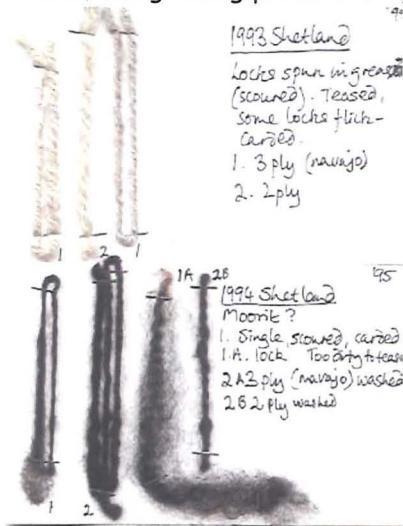


Figure 3.30

spinners to help with funding.

After the course I used a specific technique I had learnt (right angle wrapping onto a core yarn) to spin a chunky yarn from silk and merino wool that was light and bubbly with air. I then knitted it into a hooded coat (see Figs 3.31, 3.32). This

took several years, its duration being the important aspect of time for this research.

glaze tests (see Fig 3.30). I went on workshops and the beginning of this research was marked in July 1999 by an incredible trip to South Uist in the Outer Hebrides for a week's 'master' class with spinner Ruth Gough of Wingham Woolls. I felt privileged to be there.

The course aimed at providing expertise to a small group of spinners who were trying to uphold traditional textile skills on the islands but was open to non-resident



Figure 3.31

I would situate these material practices with textile artists Polly Binns, Maxine Bristow and Anne Wilson. Their work was shown in the exhibition *Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth*, and I describe it in my chapter 2.1 *Three Commentaries*. I see juxtapositions of emotional and contemplative issues with conventions of utility. I am concerned with

exploring material processes characterised by slow labour. This connects to my ceramics practice, along with detailed making associated with objects for use (see Fig 3.32). Relationships include the ambiguousness of domesticity, comfort, gender-indexed activities, and associated loss, separation and death.



Figure 3.32

My interests as a whole can also be seen to bear relation to aspects of Eva Hesse's obsession with materials, particularly regarding repetition and seriality as shown at the Tate Modern (November 2002). In an undated notebook she writes:

Sequel - what follows after, continuation or resumption of a story or process of the like after a pause or provisional ending (Hesse circa 1967 quoted in Spector, 1979).

Although there are unifying factors such as 'repetition' and 'surface texture', the contradiction of intentional disunity is suggested, this is what I find so compelling in my work with materials:

Series, serial, serial art, is another way of repeating absurdity (Hesse quoted in Sussman, 2002:27).

## A participative art practice - inside and outside the group 1992

In 1992, I took another job, (see chapter 4.1), this time with management responsibility in a new community mental health team. It was here that I set up the outpatient group that is the subject of this research, described in Part Four, where I set about actively developing my ideas about group art psychotherapy.

In the art psychotherapy group I introduced my own artmaking in order to facilitate an art based studio approach. Archival activities (museum-like) for documentation and display, and experimentation seem to have predominated, reflecting symbolic processes taking place in the life of the group. I later made tapestry weavings in the group which were explorations of the horizon where land and sky meet and their role is examined in Chapter 3.2. As a language in their own right, the tapestries seemed to be documenting the group process, slowly, stitch by stitch. Serial activities were prominent with multiples that seem to be exploring minute detail, like a continuing story as referred to above by Hesse. The significance of such processes such as possible functions, for instance, containment, is explored in Chapter 4.2 and 4.3.

During the course of my research I completed a number of garments by preparing fibres, spinning and then knitting the yarn into the finished object. I made a display of these a glass cabinet at the Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles at Goldsmiths (see Fig 3.31).

I kept this part of my art practice separate from the group. It seemed a very private part of my home life. I kept other aspects separate such as work that I had started in the group which I left in the group room until finished, and work I had started outside the group, for instance, at home. Despite my efforts at separating off different parts, fascinatingly, as shown in chapter 4.3, I discovered aspects of work I was doing outside the group appearing in clients' work without them seeing it. An example is described below. This has significant implications for clinical practice.



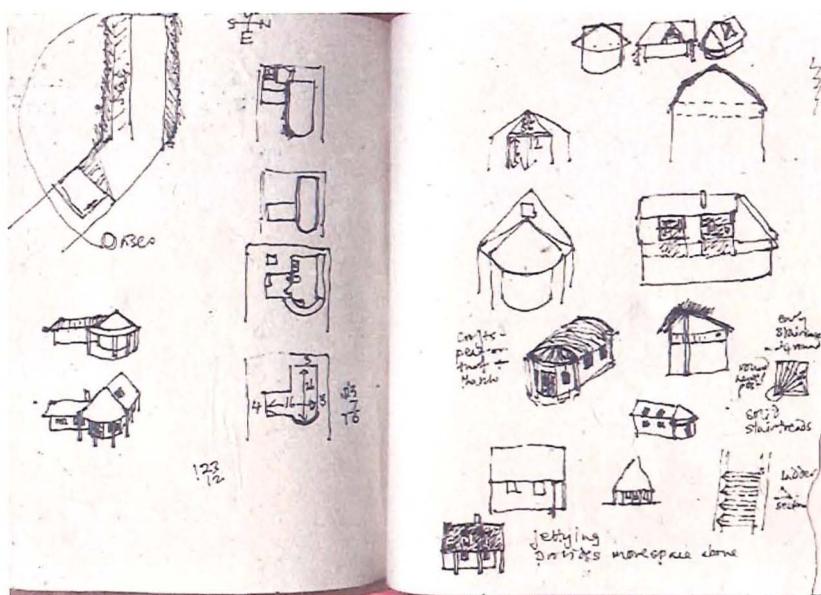
Figure 3.33

My art practice that took place in the group is examined in more detail in the case study '*Co-creators*', Chapter 4.2. I used varied media but textile methods predominated in the latter stages of the group (see Fig 3.34). The use of textiles in art psychotherapy, whether by clients and certainly by therapists, is very unusual in art psychotherapy. Through an extensive examination of the literature I know of no other examples. Art psychotherapists usually keep their own art practice separate (see Chapter 1.1).



Figure 3.34

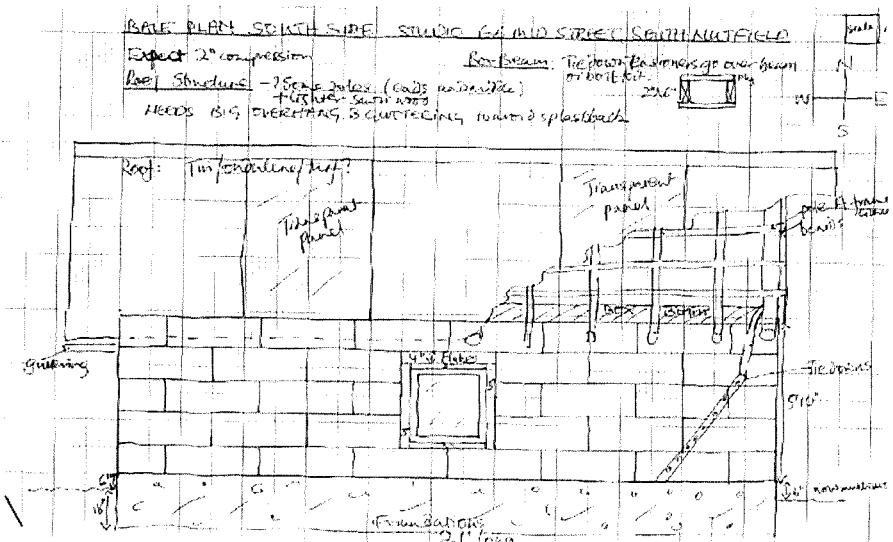
### Inside/Outside?



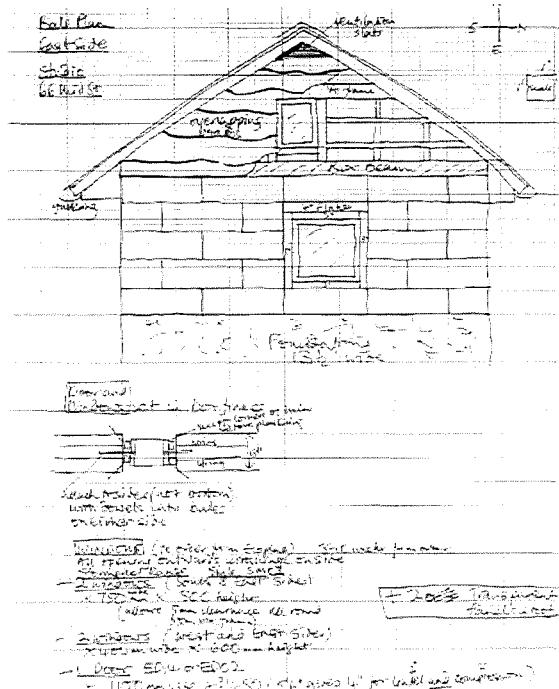
I will describe an activity outside the group and its emergence in the group. I designed a low impact (including off the mains) building for my studio (see Fig 3.35).

Figure 3.35

The image contains two architectural drawings of a traditional Scottish croft house. The left drawing is a detailed cross-section showing the internal structure with labels: 'RAILS PLINT STOKE SING' at the top, 'Expect 2" compression' below it, 'Raft Structures - 75% index (walls non-loadbearing)' and 'TIE DOWN TO GROUND' on the right, and 'NEEDS BIG EVERYTHING' at the bottom. The right drawing is a plan view with labels: 'Roof beam: Tie down to ground over beam or tie it in' at the top right, 'TRANSPARENT panel' on the right, 'BED room' in the center-right, 'GARDEN' on the left, 'STAIRS' at the bottom left, 'FIRE place' in the center, 'WASH BATH' at the bottom center, 'KITCHEN' at the bottom right, and 'DRAINAGE 12' ft from the bottom.



### Figures 3.36, 3.37



framed buildings (see Wright 1991); and Alexander et al's (1977) work where using local community resources is a main principal. Raising the walls and roof was to be a group process facilitated by an expert straw bale builder, taking place over a few days and being photographed.

A more pragmatic approach became necessary and a small barn was built instead (see Fig 3.38), and with electricity. The spinning course on South Uist influenced and confirmed my ideas about the building. Having

believed I had kept these very personal aspects of my art practice out of my group, I was fascinated to find one of the members of the group systematically exploring three



Figure 3.38

dimensional room settings and environments for teddy bears which she was 'dressing'. Another example of links emerging in the group's artwork is described in Chapter 4.3.

#### During the research: the silent land (Woolf 1934)

My material practices are even harder to write about than my ceramics as they seem to be a language in their own right. The following quote by Virginia Woolf helped me to find a voice: Woolf argues the close connection between literature and visual arts using Sickert's painting as an example. The vehicle is a discussion of dinner table guests searching for the words to describe what they see in art:

Now they are going into the silent land; soon they will be out of reach of the human voice... They are seeing things that we cannot see... They are making passes with their hands, to express what they cannot say; what excites them... is something so deeply sunk that they cannot put words to it... maybe... there is a zone of silence in the middle of every art (Woolf 1934:11).

This seems just like my experience. In the essay her argument vividly focuses on seeing and colour and the problem of how meaning is conveyed without words.

But here the speakers fell silent. Perhaps they were thinking that there is a vast distance between any poem and any picture; and that to compare them stretches words too far. At last, said one of them, we have reached the edge where painting breaks off and takes her way into the silent land. We shall have to set foot there

soon, and all our words will fold their wings and sit huddled like rooks on the tops of the trees in winter (Woolf 1934:22).

I am struggling to describe what happens during my textile practices. The long established problems of finding words for images has been examined in various art historical approaches (Elkins 2000) including the influence conferred on the meaning of the art objects (Carrier 1991). I include Woolf's words as they resonate with my own experience of silence and the lack of words for describing this aspect of my art practice. They also relate to the challenge of this practice-based PhD and the forked nature of the issues surrounding the combination of having a written and practical element, encapsulating the tension inherent in the interdisciplinarity and therefore the profession.

Woolf's landscape metaphor resonates with another aspect of my art practice which I will go on to describe.

I am intrigued that the beginning of the research is marked by a visit to the Outer Hebrides and is finished and marked by another visit to these islands in 2006, this time Harris and Lewis. I went to see the remaining traditional weavers of Harris Tweed. During this visit I made tiny sketches of fragments of views of the landscape around me. I put these together in a display in the Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles Cabinet arrangement (see Fig 3.39). They relate to the title and subject of my thesis overall. Each one may provide a slightly different view or be from a different angle, but they seem to fit together with many interlinked relationships. They also relate to the source of my inspiration; landscape.

Figure 3.39



### 3.1.2 Sources of inspiration

A fascination with the texture, detail and substance of raw materials from the natural landscape is the source of my inspiration for investigation, shaping and making things. An underlying sense of a secret abundance in the natural landscape underlies this excitement. It bears some relation to the detailed observation and intense absorption of Mary Webb's nature mysticism (see 1928), and the healing and nurture of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911). It seems possible that my rather solitary childhood and its context

developed an engagement with the local natural environment, becoming attuned to ancient responses to that particular landscape that provided rich surroundings for settlement.

### Landscape



Figure 3.40

I have studied those local substances of natural history, geology and mineralogy since I was a small child. I learnt to exploit their matter in ways akin to hunter gatherers, both in collecting and preparation for use and eating. I also grow plants for use and collect unusual species. These things are an intimate connection with the country landscapes I have mainly lived in since I was seven years old other than my eight years in London. I discovered that my day to day life and my art practice are inescapably interlocked with walking the landscape around me.

The unexpected loss of my previous dog Matty in 2005 made me realise that part of the enormous impact of being without her was the lack of daily walking local paths. I will described how such a simple activity affects my creative life.

Close observation of minute detail of the natural environment on these walks gives me a sense of continuity and contact with the changing seasons and growth. English footpaths have an ancient history of being walked for a purpose as a network linking habitation through the countryside. My walks give a physical rhythm to my daily existence and are a deep

source of sustenance that feeds my artwork. I will include brief examples of how they relate so closely to my artmaking processes.

My journal describes my observation process on an early spring morning:

*...a leaf - perhaps beech - rich brown, flutters up from the ground as if with the wind, up and over the first strand of the barbed wire fence. But it is flowing quickly and lightly like a creature under water in a quick fluid movement. The brief view is over as it has gone in less than a second. What is it . . . so tiny . . . a wren? Why would it be on the ground . . .? The next couple of mornings I see this minute rich brown, leaf-shaped thing flowing up and over this wire so quickly from the ground into the thicket behind. It is so fast I cannot make out any detail to establish its identity. Could it be nest-building? It seems early. A week later I see it in a slightly different spot for a fraction longer. It is a wren - its characteristic perky tail and a hint of jerkiness in its movements when not flying. How fascinating that in flight it could be swimming under water. . . 23.2.06*

The daily physical contact with the weather never ceases to amaze me as the seasons unfold with the changing scenery of the same footpaths:

*... the warmth of summer nights at dusk watching bats fly, swooping close after a cloud of insects set against the backdrop of lights scattered below; a field of long grass I pass in autumn becomes completely enmeshed with a fine covering of spiders' webs shining with dew in morning sun; the low sun in early winter picks out the farm below as it emerges from the vapour of thick milky mists; later torrential storms send a river down the footpaths washing sand and mud down to the road below; struggling up the incline through the mud now turning yellow, into the rods of rain, we are forced to turn round and go home. 2006*

### A secret abundance

I am driven to make things from these substances and matter and to produce functional objects. For my ceramics I dig local clays, burn plants and tree branches for ash, collect sand and mud. For my material practices I collect plants, berries, seeds, barks and iron for dyes. I use plant and animal fibres for spinning, knitting, felting and weaving. The slow labour involved in the processing and the close attention to detail is similar to the rhythm of my

physical involvement and observation processes in my daily walks. The finished object becomes part of daily life again.

Some of these attitudes, such as an obsessive attitude to these materials have been associated with ideas of 'authenticity' in the world of British crafts (see Harrod 1999), leading to a sense of an elect in the sense of being chosen and special. I am not, however, wishing to imply with my term 'secret' in the title of this chapter, that one has to be 'allowed access to the Truth of Materials' (de Waal 2004: 29). De Waal describes an anxiety about the materials of clay being linked to their lowly status - 'messy, inchoate, primal, sensual' as well as being beset by cliché, citing the 'Potter's Wheel' interlude between TV programmes with its image of hands forming an emerging shape from a great mass of inert, wet clay. My intention for the term refers to my own very personal experience that actually relates to a primitive anxiety about survival, both physical and bodily, and identity. It describes the feeling of reassurance I receive of being immersed in the landscapes I have described. The abundance I sense, that may not be immediately apparent, is that it must be carefully sought. It reassures me that I can find what I need if necessary to sustain myself - I would be able to live in this environment and find what I need to exist. This I believe is what ancient inhabitants would have tuned into aeons before me, providing a sense of continuity.

There are other ways of looking at landscapes. Landscape as a 'troubled aesthetic' has much more disturbing images, for instance of painful politics, tainted industrial landscapes or the romantic explorer innocently looking at colonisable land but becoming someone much more insidious (Rohr 2005). Now there is an increasingly shared awareness of potential crisis. Rohr suggests that the terminology might be more aptly termed 'landscape stroke environment' and points to the danger of nostalgically celebrating a waning rural past with its associated cultural minefields and calls urgently for contemporary definitions and visions of landscape (2005).

My response to the landscape or environment that surrounds me is about my relationship to it and how it shapes me. Whilst I am interested in industrial landscapes and have used them

in my art practice in the past, I am particularly inspired by not only seeing and being in a natural environment but also direct interaction with its matter.

## Workmanship

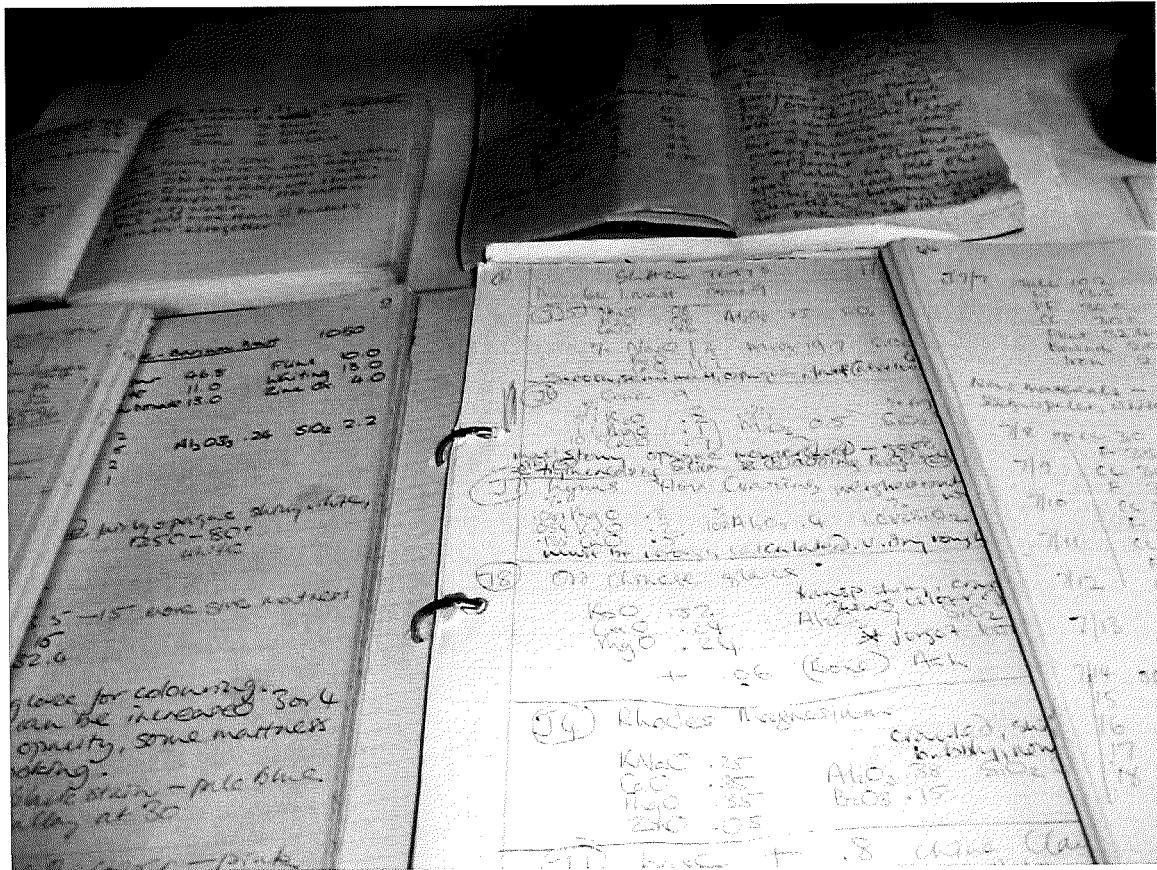


Figure 3.41

The other aspect that inspires me when making an object is to do with the thinking process that takes place at the heart of its making. My notebooks as a potter are concrete evidence of this. These were either for documentation (for instance, kiln logs or glaze tests, see Fig 3.41) or generative (for instance, sketching, see Fig 3.42). This type of distinction about the type of thinking that takes place during the artmaking process is not generally considered in art psychotherapy, neither is the continuum of the process over time involving these aspects of creating something.



Figure 3.42

Pye (1978) talks about time in relation to visual art and describes the process of looking as a progression and succession of images even though experienced as simultaneous. As a woodturner and furniture maker he saw workmanship at the heart of making. His essays investigate function and its relation to form, exploring the priority of physical components and technique. He also examines the aesthetics of the complexities of workmanship, arguing that design is an art as well as 'merely' problem solving. Margrie remarks on his 'radical, systematic analysis of the implications of process' (1993:18). One particular concept is that of the 'workmanship of risk'. Unlike the workmanship of 'certainty' needed in mass production relating to a system, that of risk relates to individuals where every new object is a new beginning and a risk (see Pye 1968). This challenge is what engages me in the making process and what makes the newness so enthralling. He also emphasises that the process of looking produces a world that is far from what actually exists as our perceptions are influenced by the train of associations that 'flits through our mind at some level below consciousness' (Pye 1968:125).

Pye's experience of 'contemplative vision' (1968:154) is also significant to my making process. After an initial stage of cursory examination, there is a following one of repeated revision of the eye. A third stage involves dwelling on each feature in turn with a deliberate intent and fixed line of sight that takes in each feature while simultaneously remaining aware of all

the parts in the eye's peripheral field. So the whole context remains visible at the same time as the succession of acutely seen features. He says that this appreciation of temporal distribution in visual art, such as the actual spatial distribution of different parts is dependent on memory. This is also described by Gilroy (2008) when recounting her intense experience of looking a Piero della Francesca painting. She refers to the 'Telling Time' exhibition at the National Gallery (Sturgis 2001) that involved the audience in showing how this process happened.

What Pye and Gilroy describe about vision confirms my experience when engaged in the making process. I would add the sensation of touching an object to the process of seeing the whole with this 'contemplative vision'. This has a profound effect on memory and associations. The intensity I experience is of being completely focused on the materials and process - a total absorption and to a silent land, as described by Woolf (*op cit*).

Although the results of my passionate engagement with earthly materials are in an essentially Modernist style aiming for simple and clear expression, utility and abstraction (Stair 2003), it can however, be more finely tuned to include other influences and interests. Being steeped in the past, crafts may seem to have nothing to do with Modernism or Post-Modernism but Greenhalgh (2002) argues that it depends on how you understand the term 'crafts', adding that there are many links, shared practices and beliefs. From my illustrated account it can be seen that the different sites where my art practice have taken place have had a deep impact on what I produce. This has important implications for clinical practice and its methodologies for discovering meaning from the images produced by clients. The original context in which I grew up and the influences of childhood are clearly highly significant too. Writing this account has made me realise what a profound influence my parents and childhood upbringing had, directly linking to my art practice. It is of its time, one where making and mending things was a necessity that had an ethos associated with earlier historical influences. A strong sense of the richness of materials was imbued in me by my parents and by my home environment. There is a strong continuity which I find reassuring, perhaps because it is carrying on my parents' memory and presence into my daily life (Bowlby 1991:243). However, there are influences from all the other periods of my life

with the sites of my art practice clearly impacting on whatever I produce, finding their expression in my artwork not only at the time but also much later. Art psychotherapy training and my own therapy brought their own influences, and the Henderson enabled me to start developing my ideas that had the seeds planted when I was practicing as a potter. Different aspects will be examined in the sections that follow.

In the next Chapter 3.2 *Reunion (of broken parts)* I will consider my art practice as it developed during the research period, running in tandem with my material practices described above. It had a profound and surprising effect upon me in that I had a sense of rediscovering my identity as a potter. I also found that I had a living archive of my art practice. This was a shift in how I viewed my artwork which I came see as part of a continuum. In the next section I will describe what happened.

# DART THREE - MY ART PRACTICE

## P finding a living archive - sites of practice and their impact

### 3.2 Reunion (of broken parts) - Algebra Arabic *al-jabr*: a topology of my archive in and outside the group.

*The distant past is usually fragmentary, requiring the spectator to imaginatively reconstruct the fragment within given facts.* Wood Conroy (1994:51)

#### 3.2.1 Topology<sup>1</sup> of my archive

In the previous chapter I examined the profound influences on my art practice and how they have had a deep impact on what I produce in the present. In this chapter I will describe in a narrative account how I used visual arts practices to examine three periods of my artmaking during the research. An interlinked exploration of the significance of the materials that I was using at the time in my art psychotherapy group is discussed in relation to relevant literature which leads to constructing an interpretation. My argument is that my different art practices form interconnections with my art psychotherapy group in unexpected ways.

The three periods of art practice (in February 2003, June 2003 and January 2004) that I am going to describe are significant because they are linked to a process where I became consciously aware of unconscious aspects of my creative activities. I will describe the process as it arose and the integrative procedure that took place that relates to life stage negotiations and my sense of identity. How these surface and threaten becomes very significant in the therapeutic situation. I propose that this text echoes the creative processes of the art psychotherapy environment offering similarities that can be

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<sup>1</sup> **topology** n. study of geometrical properties unaffected by continuous change of shape or size, branch of mathematics concerned with continuity. Oxford English Dictionary, Revised Third Edition

considered for the purposes of this research. I am including how I felt as subjectivity is key to understanding the personal material that I explore. Illustrations are included of the objects described, and of visual displays. I also include excerpts from field research notes describing the context of the work and suggesting further connections.

### **A prelude - unpacking and revisiting**

In 2001 I started unpacking boxes in my new studio from my last pottery workshop which was established in 1979. My tutorials for the research took place as studio visits with visual displays as part of the research for discussion. Looking at Fig 3.43, taken in the studio as I started to unpack, makes me think of a stage set waiting for something to happen - reminiscent of the art psychotherapy environment set up by the therapist - a holding space that can allow creativity to take place.

The unpacking carried on slowly over several years, initially unobtrusively in the background, as can be seen from the image. It then began to develop a life of its own, eventually becoming a transducer suffused with meaning and memories. It allowed a rediscovery of my identity as a potter. How I conceptualised my art practice changed radically as a result. I am arguing that my approach in my group allows a similar process to happen where an activity involving intense engagement with art media can become a receiving device that also conveys related waves or influences on a deep level, back and forwards within the group, and that this can allow change to happen.

In February 2003 two tapestries I made in my art psychotherapy group, and two enamels I made in a weekend workshop at Peter's Barn Gallery, Sussex were the subject of a studio visit and tutorial by Janis Jefferies (see Figs 3.44, 3.45).

Figure 3.43





Figure 3.44



Figure 3.45

The following journal extract relates to them:

*... it is a time of change, a turning point. I have lost most of my study leave and financial support for the research. I have been thinking about moving on for some time and now seems the right time ...*

*We go up to my studio, through the slush in the vegetable garden, past the dripping water of thawing snow that is leaking through the transparent roof outside the door.*

*I have put up four things. The two enamels were renditions of the coded sketches of group members' movements round a table. I had drawn them with my eyes closed in order to empty my mind and achieve the same spontaneity with which I usually drew these diagrams in my therapist's notes. I had been inspired by the enamelling workshop when I made them, finding it an exciting process, drawing into the powder, building up layers with successive firings, then withdrawing the copper plates whilst still molten. Janis thought the medium suited what I was trying to do with surface qualities that emphasised the lines and movements of the drawings.*

*She felt they were more successful than the two tapestries where the wool and cotton were too soft. She thought linen and silk would achieve similar hard surface qualities to the enamels with a tautness and sheen. She noted that I worked better with hard materials and should use single threads for a finer weave, keeping small scale for a while, working in series.*

February 2003.

This aspect of my use of materials now seems critical. The following draws on my research notes at the time examining my thought processes relating to these materials.

Before this, I had not actively explored the significance of soft materials for the group, or myself. I went on to finish a third tapestry in the group and, despite the tutorial, it was similarly soft. I wondered what was happening. Somehow I couldn't bring myself to change to harder surface qualities, it seemed difficult to stop... Also, there was little choice of hard fibres in the art psychotherapy room - why was I not providing them? Although I and the members did bring in other materials, carrying on with these soft tapestries (they took several months each) seemed inevitable. Although Janis' observations seemed right, it was as if I needed to go on weaving in this way as if recording and conveying in thread something

important with the softness, thereby continuing a nuance with the materials in the life of the group. I sensed weaving with hard, shiny thread in the group would be completely different for me and the group members. Intuitively, I sensed harder surfaced fibres would jar. Therapeutically, I needed a conceptual formulation for why I should change the materials but I could not find such evidence.

My thought processes above illustrate how subtle aspects probably of deep impact might be conveyed and received to and from the group members through art media as an aspect of countertransference in relation to group dynamics. Wood Conroy's reading of materials as an artist working in tapestry draws on a background in archaeology:

The knowledge I have from working in museums and on sites is a visual and tactile knowledge, not a verbal one, based on the ability of the eye to distinguish a multitude of subtleties in the surface of the ground, on the fingers to sense a variety of surface and 'feel' that exist separately to descriptions of them. Such infinite categorisations of touch and vision may be 'like' a language, but they are not verbal (Wood Conroy 1994:53).

I would suggest my experience of weaving in the group and my inability to change a fundamental aspect of it seemed bound up in some way with visual and tactile aspects of the group's life and process. I didn't have words to describe it but it appears as if important qualities were being conveyed to me and the group members in a form of documentation. I will come back to consider further this use of materials in the group at the end of the chapter.

Four months later in June 2003 the arrangement I made for the next studio visit was again of my artwork inside and outside the group. The three small mixed fibre tapestries (see Fig 3.46) I had finished in the group were pinned on the wall. They examined where land and sky meet holding symbolic associations relating to the group. As suggested, I felt they were almost like a tape recording or note taking but also conveying something.



Figure 3.46



A xerox print showed enlarged text from my therapist's notes - my handwriting painted over with a medium using rusty iron water (see Fig 3.47). Made out of the group, like a sheet of metal, the text piece seems to have the sheen and reference to hardness that was absent in the tapestries (see Fig 3.46). Its use of iron oxide links to ceramics, and like the two enamels described previously, refers to the group with extracts photocopied from my written notes.

Figure 3.47

Underneath on a table was a group of fired clay objects: three raku pieces - two bowls and a white dog made at work on an art practice day; and two pieces made in the group: a rectangular, open topped box (tomb like) and an abstract sculpture of carved, fired and painted clay with four horizontal holes (see Fig 3.48).



Figure 3.48



Figure 3.49

The similar making processes of raku and enamelling involves an exciting confrontation with extreme heat by withdrawing molten objects from a red hot kiln at the moment of chemical

change. Both techniques are seductive and intense requiring fast decision-making with almost instant results contrasting dramatically with the usual long drawn out procedures in ceramics and textiles where waiting is prominent. This also contrasted with the work I was doing in the group. My two raku bowls with a bluey green glaze and the metallic sheen of copper oxide (see Fig 3.49) were blackened through being plunged in leaves.

The white dog was a portrait of my dog Matty (see Fig 3.50). The qualities I was trying to convey had not reached words. As a 'rescued' dog when we first had her, Matty had been lost and was found scarred and thin. Perhaps used for hunting, she had become quite wild, seemed unused to a house or have any sense of coming back if let off the lead.

The tomb-like box had hard, straight edges except for one end made of pieces left over from the other sides, referring to standing stones placed in the landscape or later picked out for use in building tombs and houses. The other small clay sculpture had similar iconic references and was hard edged with diagonal slanting strokes painted in pastel colours that might be found on plaster walls.

Now I see all these objects, even those made outside the group, as a linked form of documentation of the group process. They seemed to be part of a deep interaction simultaneously reacting and feeding back to the members, suggesting that everything that we brought to the group and were experiencing was manifesting itself in the art production.



Figure 3.50

Underneath this table I had laid out groups of objects I had been unpacking (in my notes I have added they were 21 years old). Their inclusion represents a sudden awareness of their significance. There were over fifty sprig moulds, (biscuit fired clay I made by pressing in plants, fruits and seeds) and fired examples of sprigs (see Fig 3.51). I have described my use of them in the previous chapter 3.1. I had also included glaze tests from various



Figure 3.51

periods including where 'I left off' to train as an art psychotherapist (these were for an electric kiln with an oxidised firing and included coloured clay tests for inlay). These later tests were significant in showing my realisation that it might be difficult to do reduced firings in the future, trying to find glazes for a simpler type of kiln.

Sprig moulds were traditionally used for producing decoration and ornament in ceramics. I used them like this and loved the making process I had devised to produce very fine detail that reproduced the natural environment around me. The fired examples remind me of the intense involvement of taking the cast, how would the new but similar form look in clay and later when glazed? The transformation into the soft smoothness of the clay fascinated me. Further changed by firing they became hard and indestructible.

Glaze tests were another obsession. All my firings containing a number of glaze tests and sometimes a lot. The details relating to each coded tile was entered in a book. In my revisiting I was taken aback to realise the amount of time and energy put into this aspect of my work as a potter. The sheer amount of documentation in this empirical research I had carried out meant I could pick it up where I had left off.

## Fragments

A dawning realisation is written in my notes: *A 'reunion' of broken pieces . . .* Actually, it was my reunion with *these* broken pieces in a very concrete sense. Breaking up or cutting sheets of clay made the clay tiles for the glaze tests. I was shocked. Could my title for the dissertation have unconsciously referred to these fragments from my past? I had originally intended it to refer to the artmaking process in art psychotherapy as well as the integration of the therapist's art practice with her clinical practice. But now it seemed like a premonition. I had also written:

*Archaeology/curated: mapping a type of field.*

I realised that the lengthy unpacking I had been carrying out could also be thought of as an installation. It had its own purpose that I suddenly became consciously aware of. Up until that moment I had been merely physically unpacking the stuff with only a very dim awareness of any significance. I realised that the unpacking *was* my art practice and my placing of it in the room was a creative process in its own right. The sudden conceptual leap was accompanied by a feeling of it all coming together. This was a whole not a collection of disparate objects. The chapter titles and language of codes chosen years earlier in the research already held this possibility. Everything seemed to be falling into place.

It was a time of change. The following week I gave in my notice at work after twenty years in the NHS. In retrospect, it seems I was rejoining where 'I left off' by unpacking these broken bits of fired clay.

In the studio visit we talked about documenting this art practice for the research and discussed relevant literature. I would look at the ideas of others after some of this was taken further and digested. Andy Gilroy asked me if I was discarding work in this process of unpacking? Yes, I had thrown out most of the work I had done on the art psychotherapy training - work done quickly. It no longer felt significant. Time and labour seem an issue in art psychotherapy and in textiles and ceramics. Could sustaining work over a period in art psychotherapy be a 'therapeutic' factor? In textiles labour is privileged (see Parker and Pollock 1981:61); one can labour over something that was done in a mere twenty minutes in a sketchbook. 'Edge to edge' - once set it has to be completed and the 'history is declared' in

every stitch. This could explain my experience that I was recording the group and also the difficulty in changing fibres when weaving in the group, the softness relating to the particular group dynamics. In art psychotherapy spontaneity in artmaking can be privileged as the 'Royal Road to the Unconscious' as an equivalent to the basic rule of free association by patients in psychoanalysis. In my art psychotherapy training experiential group we made spontaneous images that were completed in one session and then discussed. But in clinical practice there is a danger that such an approach could be understood by the clients as using the art for discussion with the therapist, undermining the artmaking process itself and placing an emphasis on words and talking (see Skaife and Huet 1998a, 1998b; Skaife 1990, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2008, Skaife and Jones 2009). In my own approach I have tried to maximise engagement with the art materials by encouraging developing artwork over time. I recounted two clients in my group saying that doing the artwork (that is engaging in *sustained* artwork) had made them look at the world.

Six months passed and I left my job where I had been for eleven years. Strangely, another job arose and one that I very much wanted in an academic environment at Goldsmiths where I had worked on and off for many years. It started before leaving my NHS work so I was leaving and starting simultaneously - a period of transition. It was as if the unpacking had been a preparation for change. However, looking back at these things was to activate disturbing memories.

Revisiting the objects of my practice as a potter resulted in a plan to make a more deliberate arrangement that I will go on to describe.

### **Curating**

In January 2004 I curated the objects I had been 'unpacking' in a visual display in my studio (see Figs 3.52, 3.53). The arrangement I made could be seen to be reminiscent of the work of Cornell who refers to 'voyaging' through encounters with old engravings, photographs, books and suchlike (see Hartigan 1980). My own voyage in making the display proved to be an exploration of time and memory and of exploring the knowledge contained in the objects that had been packed away for over twenty years.



Figure 3.52



Figure 3.53

#### Another reunion

I decided to make a mapping of the artefacts and documents - which Janis described as a 'topology of my archive'. I focused on objects relating to my practice as a potter, aiming for categorisations that were visual by nature with references to archaeological methods drawn from anthropology.

The first day I had set aside to make the display I was unable to actually do much in the studio. Maybe I was preparing. Nothing seemed to be happening. I was aware of a reluctance and unwillingness to start, unlike the excited anticipation I had experienced at other times when starting work in the studio. On some level I was aware that I would be unable to avoid uncovering sensitive personal material in the heuristic process I had chosen to enter into, with memories such as those illustrated by the exhibition *Textures of Memory* (see Chapter

2.1). The studio seemed full. Mounded up. I felt uneasy. How was I going to do this? Where could it all go? There were tables and other furniture, it looked chaotic - probably a physical manifestation of my state of mind. There needed to be a sorting and tidying to clear a space and achieve some sense of order.

That summer I had collected my electric (potter's) wheel from a friend in Oxford who had had it for many years. I had made it for myself when I trained. It was now here with me. I tentatively plugged it in and tried the pedal. Amazingly it still worked. My plans for the future involved making ceramics again. Life could be very different. My wheel in this studio seemed very significant - it represented my previous profession before becoming an art psychotherapist. It dawned on me that a significant part of my identity was as a potter. As a major tool of my trade my wheel stood for this as a symbol. This was another reunion, a reconnecting.

On the second day in my studio it was very cold. I was irritable. I had the heaters on full. It only began to warm up by the evening. I started moving stuff around. I walked the heavier pieces of furniture laboriously around on their corners, having to move what felt like mountains of objects off them in order to shift things around. I felt pressurised and a tension. As I would encourage my clients who were wavering at engagement with the materials, I felt I had to trust the process I had started, that I could create something even though, at this stage, there seemed to be nothing or just chaos. I tried to envisage a display of objects that I would like to use and find interesting for further study. This was the arrangement I aimed for. I referred back to this image in my mind at times. It involved qualities that I knew I would find interesting. I was glad of faint glimpses of a sense of anticipation beginning to emerge at times. The radio helped and was soothing. The room began to look a bit different by the evening.

On the third day, although there was some apprehension, I felt better. I was enjoying aspects of what was happening by now, I felt pieces were beginning to fall into place and come together. I dusted away the cobwebs, hoovered things and read the old newspapers used for packing. I was happy to greet some of the objects I was finding, like old friends. I

had created space in the room and the furniture now provided a satisfying framework. But the disturbing aspects that I have mentioned were still to surprise me. I started arranging the objects, placing them on paper, moving them around. There were notebooks which included three volumes of accounts of glaze tests that were all coded, with accompanying books that provided keys and properties to the tests (see Fig 3.54).

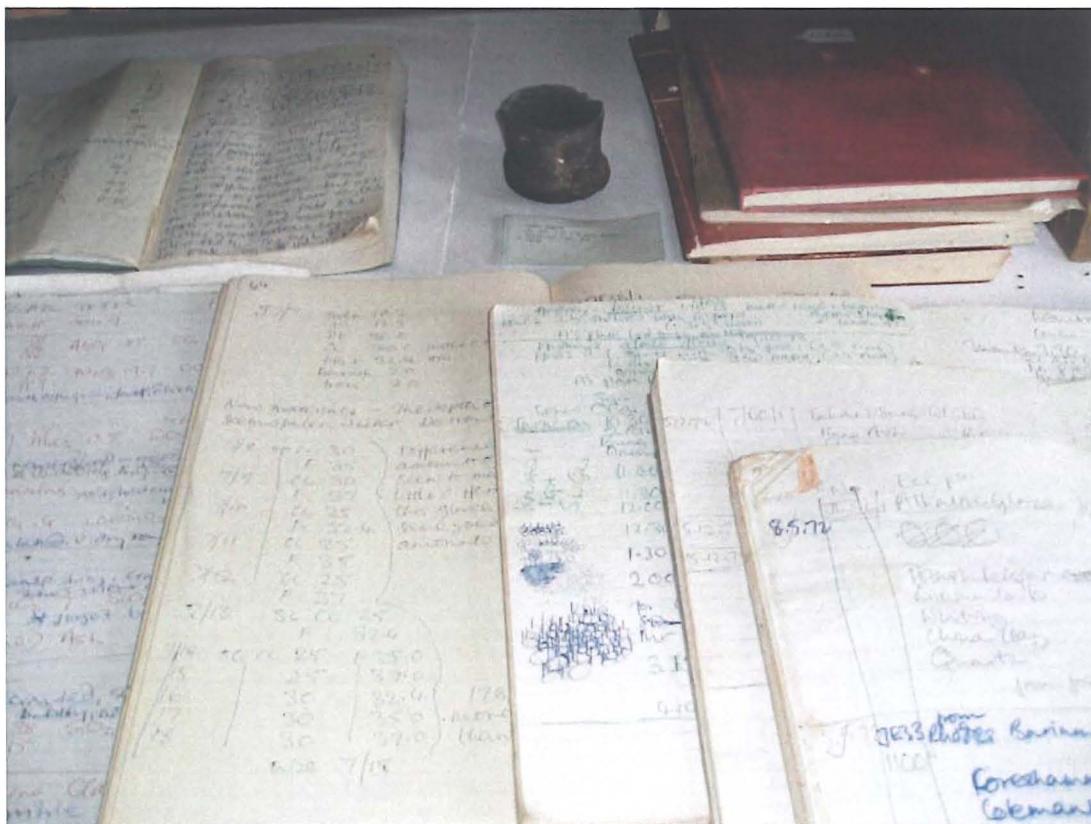


Figure 3.54

This was systematic investigation. Other notebooks and journals included many drawings, diagrams and photos. There were address books, order books, firing logs and descriptions of work in progress. There were portfolios of my artwork; tools (see Fig 3.55); actual glaze tests; pots; moulds; glaze materials and clay. Much of this was over twenty years old, and some much older. As I started reading the many notebooks and documents and looking at them I was disturbed by an emerging history of events. There were accounts of conversations and situations I had completely forgotten. I did not actually want to

remember some of it. Past relationships and loss was re-evoked. Doors were opening that had been shut and which I did not particularly want to reopen.



Figure 3.55

### Broken pieces

I carried on arranging and rearranging, grouping things together that seemed to belong or to visually enhance the staging. Using type drawers, I put glaze tests together by site and type of kiln atmosphere used for their firing (see Fig 3.56). Their placement refers to the title of the thesis and this chapter. *Algebra*<sup>2</sup> is from the Arabic *al-jabr* that translates as 'the reunion of broken parts' that now refers to the whole research process.

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<sup>2</sup> The branch of mathematics that uses letters to represent numbers and quantities in formulae and equations (*The Oxford Compact English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 1996).



Figure 3.56

There was a distinct relationship between the emerging archive and the systematic investigation involved in my textile practices, particularly spinning and knitting where the original whole is broken down to tiny pieces to be reformed through for instance, stitch or weave. In the groupings of notebooks I helped the eye to organise the information by using pages with dates. They were also mostly categorised by function. I included the photo that introduces the previous chapter, looked at through an old magnifier (see Fig 3.57) - my eye reflected in a handheld mirror, looking back at the viewer, emphasising the eye



Figure 3.57

intent on looking at all this. The early biro drawing of a circuit board that is the dissertation's frontispiece, done while at school, seemed to anticipate or reflect my current interests in how everything links up. On one table I made an arrangement of different kinds of tools (see Fig 3.58) according to specific activities, ranging from the development of childhood art interests through my time as a potter to the current day.



Figure 3.58

I found it uncanny to see the chalky traces of pale faded blue clay on the throwing tools that showed I was making porcelain just before I packed them away (see Fig 3.58). Those traces show the exact type of porcelain body, and the manufacturer. Startled, as I held them, touching them, I was transported back to that time and to the inherent associations that are another layer of information. The tools were embedded with specific knowledge and information. Handling them reactivated the knowledge through the memory of their use. In this room there was a huge amount of information, like the exhibition that will be described in Chapter 4.3 *Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group*. This seemed akin to archaeology.

I also used two-dimensional work to illustrate the emerging themes (see Fig 3.59). Some were put amongst the notebooks and some were hung above the display, providing another layer. A lithograph was included that I had done at art college when I was seventeen. Visual

structures in this reappeared in different periods, spanning decades. One watercolour echoed the stony fragments of the glaze tests. An ink drawing depicting invisible 'members' of a psychotherapy group brought in to the discussion by actual members (see Agazarin and Peters 1989) seemed to describe those who felt uninvited here in my studio but nevertheless seemed to be there.



Figure 3.59

### Archaeology of selves

Looking at the finished display in the next studio visit, string theory, loops, nets and webs were referred to in thinking about the non-linear aspect of the arrangement. Traces of past practices were being considered to inform the present and future directions. My recollections of the tutorial and the typed notes of the discussion by Janis Jefferies are drawn on here.

The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford (see Fig 3.60) seemed particularly apt in referring to the staging I had constructed, and the potential of thinking about an archaeology of self or selves as manifested in my arrangement of artefacts (see Fig 3.52).



Figure 3.60

As a favourite museum I marvel at its ethnographic and archaeological collections. Ordinary, typical items are all mixed up with rare and beautiful objects, texts and photographs crammed into showcases and every other available space (Cousins 1993). They seem overcrowded but have the purpose of comparison in sequence and series that include earliest times to present day excluding mass production (Blackwood 1991), aiming to show human ideas solving the problems

relating to survival and the need for shelter and food. Its Victorian character, evidenced in methods such as those critiqued by Dion (see Wettengl 2003) and Hiller (2000) and described in the next section 3.2.2, is retained. It can be looked on variously: as 'a monument to colonialism filled with loot properly belonging to other people. It is a de-contextualised jumble', or '... a glorious treasure trove of the unexpected, the beautiful and the intriguing' (Cousins 1993:).

The staging of my work in the studio was a reordering of pieces of knowledge from the past into a new order. The complexity of autobiographical reflection was discussed, as indicated in the codes, lists, journals and formulae, mapped out in my studio like the arrangements to

be found in the Pitt Rivers, but as signs drawn from past life and experiences now being reconsidered. Considerable shifting, dusting and sorting of material had taken place and now a dredging up and over of the making process was bringing it together. Andy Gilroy remarked on an evoked poignancy.

### **Meandering**

These are traces of material evidence as an archive which I have tried to examine. Layers of the invisible, meandering with their own logic. The non-rational aspect of the arrangement has its own internal logic that adds up in its own strange way (see O'Reilly and Haynes 2004). The circuit board drawing in biro from school days was considered a useful conceptual image for the written part of the project. The visible connections to loops and networks gives a sense of a non-linear path but with connectivity to a range of issues and ideas to be raised in the writing that was to follow, now in its final form in this chapter.

### **3.2.2 Reflections**

I will discuss the initial discoveries that I extracted from my description above about the integrative process that occurred during the three periods of my art practice, and which will contribute to the final reflections of my thesis (see Chapter 5.1). I will go on to discuss relevant theory, leading to the idea of an interpretation of my use of soft materials in the group described at the beginning of this chapter.

Central to my argument is that *sustained*, self-initiated artmaking over time is a therapeutic factor. Time, duration and engagement with the process seems critical to the process. The period I have examined in this study took place over a year and there had been a lengthy preparatory phase. The emergent histories brought together past and present aspects of my art practice into a continuum.

An art based, studio approach is indicated for developing a complex language of art forms with craft emerging as a significant connection. A full range of media, tools, methods, equipment, materials and environment is required for an expressive and exploratory creative

process that may be generative, or by contrast documentative. It can involve many forms - art based, codes, formulae, mapping, systematic investigation and include words, symbols and visual images, sensation, rhythm and sounds, raw materials, fabrics, textiles, tools, technology, personal collections and nostalgic trivia.

I am surprised at the connectivity; there are links everywhere. For instance, the stoney fragments of the glaze tests are also repeated in the watercolours, or the similar systematic empirical research approach found in different activities. An examination of the materiality of those fragments, traces and signs produced what can be thought of as an archaeology of selves (Wood Conroy 1994). Archives contain knowledge. The sifting and sorting was an exploration of my past which I entered into for research purposes. Not only does it provides an argument for clients bringing in their own choice of materials and objects into the therapeutic environment (this is discouraged by many therapists), it suggests *everything* clients have made, collected and valued in their *entire* lives is relevant. Unconscious knowledge is invisible, so forgetting is often significant and remembering forgotten things can be painful. Personal losses and the loss of a previous way of life became painfully apparent through my examination of my art. However, I chose this process which highlights the importance of informed choice in therapeutic procedures<sup>3</sup>.

#### To dig oneself up

The unpacking I did in my studio and the examination of my histories through those objects brought home to me the pervasiveness of my identity as a potter. I had kept these tools and implements from my past as I had always intended to carry on with those practices. However, the 'break' turned out to be somewhat longer than I had anticipated. I wonder how many other art psychotherapists have a similar experience? Actually, I realised that it was not a break in a linear sense, but a metamorphosis in the sense of a change of form. My art

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<sup>3</sup> In psychotherapeutic work, informed consent involves very careful assessment and discussion with the client to consider any risks based on evidence from the assessment process, a client's history, any previous therapy and clinical reports from all contacts with mental health services. If psychodynamic therapy is then considered, it is explained to the client that learning more about oneself from such exploration may help their problems but it may not; there is no guarantee and it may well bring up painful memories.

practice as a studio potter centred on making a living through my ceramics for use. As an art psychotherapist it developed over time into a participatory art practice that included curating and a shared, expressive and exploratory artmaking with clients.

My anxious reluctance to enter into the process is important to note as there are parallels for clients entering therapy, and also the disturbance I experienced at uncovering buried memories. Wood Conroy (1994) describes archaeology as a metaphor with the self as a site in her own arts practice and how to 'dig oneself up'. She uncovered terror about what might be found as there is no control in what archaeology reveals. 'Archaeology excavates the unimagined and brings it into consciousness' (1994: abstract).

Positive aspects of examining objects from the past involve the possibility of reordering key issues in an integration process as I experienced. Ades describes how Cornell reconstituted the past through fragments that are like souvenirs of an imaginary voyage (1980:39). Cornell made collages, constructions and experimental films using painstakingly collected and preserved objects and memorabilia for his own cabinet de curiosités (McShine 1980). Like other more contemporary artists such as Dion and Hirst, he was inspired, by the Cabinets of Curiosities of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, also known as Wunderkammern, or cabinets of wonder that were the personal and idiosyncratic collections of individual, wealthy owners of rare, marvellous and odd natural and manmade objects intended to provoke curiosity and wonder (see Mauriès 2002). The raw materials for Cornell's work ranged from nostalgic paraphernalia like stuffed birds, games and toys to twigs and driftwood, postage stamps, charts and maps. His careful use of these preserved and curated objects makes them into emblems which depend as much on absence as on the presence of the object. The associations or missing presences fill the imagination (Ratcliff 1980:43), piecing together fragments into distilled images that are a confrontation between past and present (McShine 1980). Cornell's own diaries refer to 'constellations' as a way of describing his experiments in going over past experiences and picking out particular points for presentation (Ades 1980:33). These terms which include voyaging, also seem relevant to aspects of my group.

Of relevance here is Hiller writing that artists probably function 'by simultaneously enacting the reciprocal roles of curator and subject, therapist and client'. She describes 'collecting objects, orchestrating relationships, and inventing fluid taxonomies, while not excluding myself from them' (2000: *Afterword*. n.p.). Her installation at the Freud Museum in 1994 aimed to combine words and pictures without privileging either. The collection she made out of 'rubbish, discards, fragments, trivia and reproductions' carried an aura of memory that hints at meaning and was intended to be a kind of index of sites of disruption or conflict relating to the complications arising for her about Freud's archive of art and artefacts as heritage.

Dion's installations inspired by *Cabinets of Curiosities* (op. cit.) are also seen as critiquing the collecting and ordering ideas behind the 'memory apparatuses for collective knowledge' - by using the same processes of archaeology and empirical science. He collects and archives, arranges and compares them. The results are humourous, ironic and allegorical reflections examining art, science and natural history interfaces. By trying to make the objects 'speak', complex acts of interpretation create images of history and natural history that are culturally based, the authority of which has been questioned since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Baur and Berg 2003:10). Dion criticises and questions such forms of knowledge production and power factors with his systematised experiments (Wettengl 2003).

I will go to focus on particular themes relating to ways of understanding the production and reception of such artefacts that are significant for art psychotherapy clinical practice.

### **The site and a sense of place**

The objects that I unearthed in my studio originated from my practice as a potter and my western European training during a particular period of history. As such, the pots I made with these tools and equipment can be seen as cultural productions, drawing attention to the social determining processes involved (Wolff 1993:137). Wolff argues that the work is seen as the product of social, ideological and economic factors as the practice of a located individual embedded in broader social and political processes and institutions (1993:139).

Wood Conroy too considers the impact of the 'site' and an understanding of a sense of place

as fundamental (1994:3). In the therapeutic situation meaning has at times become more narrowly located in the intrapersonal and interpersonal spheres. The context or provenance in which an object is made is immensely complex and relevant to its meaning which greatly broadens out the field of exploration.

### **Objects in a context**

Wood Conroy's connection between 'the archaeological discipline of placing objects in a context, and ways of contextualising contemporary art or craft objects' (1994:14) originates in her original training in archaeological and anthropological systems of categorisation and observation. She particularly emphasises the complexity of the multilayered aspect of the whole set of circumstances:

*Meaning is constructed by a host of other elements, rather than just the intention of the artist, who really does reflect his/her unconscious assumptions and set of social circumstances* (Wood Conroy 1994:15).

A particular style of work needs to have the historical analysis of its concrete situation to consider its transformative potential (Wolff 1993:140). This widens the meanings of images by examining social and cultural connections. So for instance, the influence of Morris and Ruskin can be found in my work as a studio potter. My training was heavily influenced by Bernard Leach (see Leach 1940) reflecting the later part of the Arts and Crafts movement trying to unite art and life in deliberate attempts at re-creating rural communities whilst embracing modernity, showing an interaction of the contemporary and the historic (De Waal 2005:43).

### **Objects as active agents**

A linear view of human development is not possible as cultures and influences overlap (Wood Conroy 1994; O'Reilly and Haynes 2004). This allows the meandering of my display to have a logic of its own. Wood Conroy refers to objects as 'active agents in constituting human relationships . . . emblems of relationship within societies' (1994:32). She refers, for instance, to how the form and manufacture of tools can alter, showing sudden changes in the social, symbolic and aesthetic needs of the toolmakers. This was evident in the groups of

tools in my display belonging to different periods and sites of my art practice. However, to make a living a crafts person or artist has to relate to capitalism where the productions, relying on an art or craft market, have to be regarded, perhaps uncomfortably, as merchandise (Wolff 1993:18). As such they are subject to complex processes involved in buying and selling that are affected by shifts in knowledge and by cultural dimensions. Their social history, for instance, is too complicated to be deduced simply from changes in technology - 'ways of knowing, judging, trading, and buying are harder to change than ideologies about guilds, prices or production' (Appadurai 1986:46). Consideration of value and demand are central to understanding such changes and these are often social and political (see Renfrew 1986).

### **Diversity of possible meanings**

The idea of a diversity of possible meanings of an object avoids an 'objective' reading where the self-referentiality of the object infers it is whole and filled with its own meaning. This supports the notion that ideas are subjective, with no 'true' meaning or knowledge, each viewer bringing their own conditioning. Consequently the maker finds out what is meant by an object once it is made rather than deciding beforehand what will be expressed (Wood Conroy 1994) as I am doing in this chapter. This is a crucial aspect to incorporate into clinical practical in order to be inclusive of all cultures.

### **Self reflexivity and cultural reception**

The analysis of the meaning an object within its context can involve 'crossings and connections with history, literature and sociology' (Wood Conroy 1994:46). The self-reflexivity of the investigator is part of the investigation. As Wolff points out, cultural codes, including language, are dense with complex meaning systems and countless sets of permutations and connotations, rendering any reading an interpretation determined by our own perspective and position - '*who reads it or sees it and how*' (1993: 97). She describes this as the cultural reception of an object. This widens the reading of an object, artefacts and artwork produced by clients in art psychotherapy. It is inclusive as it places the work in the context of time and space - when and where something has been made. By applying this

to the self-reflexivity of the therapist, past cultural influences can be included rather than solely emotional and psychological ones.

### The voice of the object's materiality

The visuality of artefacts as well as their textuality can be emphasised: '*Looking at the fragments of the distant past is a primary source of knowledge*' (Wood Conroy 1994:49) with vision forming its own system of references. To give a voice to the objects' materiality requires close scrutiny of image, form, technique, medium and textual references interlaced with contexts of history and custom, and learning to see almost indecipherable visual criteria that enable artefacts to be understood. Learning to touch and see is a visual and tactile knowledge, not a verbal one (Wood Conroy 1994:53). I have examined the materiality of fragments from my past in this chapter which I will now take further.

### The language of materials and form

I will return to the prelude of this chapter where I explored my use of materials in my group. I will make an interpretation bearing in mind the above discussion and include relevant literature.



I was making small tapestry weavings in the group. 'The hold of tapestry is elusive, perhaps based in the sense of rhythm and progression of the weaving, a time of reflection, as if the mind's wanderings were being inserted into the fabric and made substantial by the movement of the hands' (Wood Conroy 1994:281).

This description suggests aspects of the medium that would be well suited for using in an art psychotherapy group: 'the sense of rhythm and progression . . .'; a time of reflection . . .'; as if the

Figure 3.61

mind's wanderings were being inserted into the fabric. . .'. This seems to relate to the sense of documentation I have noted. There is more to the use of such media and techniques that is relevant to the reading of my tapestry making in the group.

European languages, for instance, are shown to have developed with craft processes. Barber's (1991) analysis of the layers of meaning attached to complex concepts arising out of precise contexts of the ancient craft processes of spinning and weaving emphasises the detailed complexity of qualities that might be conveyed through my tapestry and my problem changing fibres. It can be seen that the subtlety of the meanings derived from the fibre was probably reflecting and 'inserting into the fabric', aspects of the emotional life of the group at the time - something 'soft, fluffy and warm', maybe even 'wavering . . .'. The maternal connotations are striking. Given the cohesion of the group and my impending plans for ending it (described in chapter 4.2), there are now indications why it might have been difficult to change to strong, hard, shiny fibres at this time.

Because of the slowness of its construction, tapestry is seen as being about place, and a continuous commitment in a place (Wood Conroy 1994). This can also explain my use of tapestry at this time of ending the group - for the structure it gave me, the sessions and the group members during this difficult period. It is reassuring to feel it also showed my commitment. Perhaps this was what the Henderson residents enjoyed when they laughed and joked with me about the length of time I took over my nine month rug (described in chapter 3.1). In my art psychotherapy group during this research I made four tapestries consecutively (all soft) ending with the smallest that was finer and used more textured stitches, woven with thin, hard linen warp threads that kept breaking (see Fig 3.61).

Continual attempts at mending them ended with a few threads that were not sewn in when the group ended. I left them like that as a record. There were 'loose ends' in the group, which may have been unavoidable as the ending was not their choice, despite extensive planning involving the members. Endings are not always tidy and complete.

So this is not a silent land, looking more deeply. However, I still have the sense of a silent place when I enter into the process of using textile materials. It seems this is what is happening inside me. The idea of the deeply entwined nature of textile processes in the roots of language and behaviour is reinforced with another aspect, one that is a possible 'ritual' activity that could 'mitigate disconnectedness through its intrinsic interconnected structure' (Wood Conroy 1994:284). My experience of weaving in the group is confirmed by this suggestion in that I found it calmed and contained my anxiety at the disturbance and distress clients inevitably carried into the group even when not actively spoken about, putting me into a state where I could observe and absorb what was happening on a detailed level, as well as taking part in conversations, whilst simultaneously deeply engaged with the weaving process. Many people coming into an art psychotherapy group have lost or have been unable to maintain basic social networks and are in extreme need to join or rejoin others in some form of relationship. I have found that very often this possibility starts to happen with a sense of place developing alongside an attachment to the room. I can imagine that my weaving in the group could also provide a sense of continuity in its slow construction of fabric using the small grid structure of warp and beaten down weft threads in an unobtrusive rhythm punctuated by the regular dull thuds and ringing of the implements being used.

In this chapter I have provided an example of using art practice as research in my studio during a particular period of the research. Complex interactions were illustrated between my various art practices and my art psychotherapy group indicating how subtle and profound aspects can be transmitted and received manifesting themselves in the art production. Through the process of exploring the materiality of personal archival material an integrative reordering took place. I also developed understanding of the significance of my use of materials in my art psychotherapy group that suggested my art as therapist in the group could be seen as a significant form of documentation of the group's life whilst certain aspects simultaneously conveyed commitment and continuity that could mitigate disconnectedness. In Part Four I will investigate such aspects further in the creative art processes of my clinical practice. In the first chapter 4.1 I will present my art psychotherapy group.

# PART FOUR - THE GROUP

## The Matrix - studio-based clinical practice

### 4.1 An integrative approach

I have put forward an approach to making art in a studio environment that emphasises reordering rather than uncovering, and which I propose is facilitated by the interaction with the therapist's carefully considered artmaking. In Part Four of my project, I will examine the influence of my personal art practice on the therapeutic process of my art psychotherapy group. In the first chapter 4.1 I introduce the context, my perspective and the group. I consider the work of other practitioners in order to position my own approach and discuss theoretical issues relating to working with people who have severe problems. In chapter 4.2 an illustrated narrative explores the group's artmaking over five years in a visually-based case study. The final chapter 4.3 investigates the process of curating a display of archival material relating to four years of the group's life.

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

I use a number of terms to describe the population of clients that I worked with in the group ('severe and complex mental health problems'; 'severe mental health problems'; and 'long term mental health problems'<sup>1</sup>). The terms have a sociological ideology and are deliberately broad and shared by many psychodynamic therapies to avoid defining patient populations using diagnostic criteria (see DoH 2001a; Mental Health Foundation 2009). I am attempting to critique medical terminology by avoiding use of diagnoses (see Dudley 2004) and labels which, although used by many staff in the NHS, has implications for all those involved regarding the underlying assumptions of medicine. The historical connection to physical illness doesn't transpose easily to mental health or therapy as it infers a passive

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<sup>1</sup> These terms refer to major groups of disorders, including enduring mental health problems sometimes described as mental illness, that are defined by the international and American psychiatric systems of classification, DSM IV and ICD-10 (1992).

attitude to receiving 'treatment' like medication. Turner-Crowson and Wallcraft describe recent development in this country of the Recovery Model that contributes to changing views about the orientation of mental health services for people with severe diagnoses. They discuss the impact of the problems associated with the medical model used in mental health. Many 'survivors' of psychiatric services report that 'receiving a psychiatric label has been severely detrimental to their efforts to lead a worthwhile and enjoyable life and contribute to others' (2002). The Recovery approach gained impetus as social inclusion was seen to be inadequately supported by services and wider society. Each individual's potential for recovery is emphasised through developing hope, establishing a positive identity, taking responsibility, and building a meaningful life (Shepherd, Boardman and Slade 2008). Some NHS regions and Trusts are implementing the approach which is endorsed by policy from the Department of Health (DoH 2001b; DH 2006; DH 2007) and other influential bodies (RCP/SCIE/CSIP 2007).

#### **4.1.2 Context and setting**

The history of my group and the studio approach I developed is situated within art psychotherapy theory and practice with this client group that has developed significantly over more than 70 years. Wood describes three main periods in the history of art psychotherapy practice in the UK with clients in acute psychotic states (1997). In the large psychiatric institutions in the 1930s through to the 1950s there was an emphasis by art psychotherapists on strong creative expression and respectful containment. Between the 1960s and 1970s tensions developed in psychiatry and in the context of the anti-psychiatry movement, the art psychotherapy studio seemed to provide an 'asylum within an asylum'. However in the 1980s through to the 1990s as clients moved away from the large asylums to live in the community, different models were needed by art psychotherapists to contain and work with their patients (Wood 1997). Consequently, as I found, the context of therapy needed to be considered on a number of levels. My post in the NHS Trust where I developed my group was funded through the closing of the local asylum. There was a very different environment and ethos from my previous job at the Henderson Hospital, and I had to adapt the therapeutic frame to the new socio-political context (Wood 1997, 2000a). Politics and

policy changes resulted in the loss of the spacious studio environments that were found in the asylums with significant implications for the most seriously disturbed client groups: studios have both real and symbolic qualities for fostering creativity (Wood 2000b). It was a challenge I was determined to rise to.

### **My professional and clinical perspective**

The influences on my approach to working with art psychotherapy groups probably stem from my past. I would speculate that as an only child often playing on my own, my later interest in group analysis was fuelled by the creativity I experienced in particular working relationships in young adulthood (see chapter 3.1). For instance, learning to make pots with fellow students during the Harrow studio pottery training was a rich experience. Later, working as a potter alongside my furniture maker friends in Devon sustained me at a difficult time in my life and I delighted in our regular daily contact. Collaborative pieces and exhibiting (see chapter 3.1, Fig 3.22) resulted. Working as technician in the Warneford Hospital pottery brought groups of people wanting to make things out of clay. Although I did not feel lonely as a child, as being on my own was my 'norm', it may have unconsciously sensitized me to a sense of isolation in clients and how this could be alleviated by group membership.

### **Groups**

My interest in group dynamics flourished and developed with my own experiential learning as a group member. These experiences, as mentioned in chapter 3.1, included the OT staff support group facilitated by group psychotherapist Sidney Block, and the Institute of Group Analysis Introductory Course that I joined the same year in Oxford, where I became intrigued by the intensity of small and large group processes and the group conductors' lack of intervention. Embarking on the Goldsmiths' art psychotherapy training course, I was interested to take part in both verbal psychotherapy and art psychotherapy groups. With the support of detailed supervision I started to put into practice my ideas about art and group analysis. On placement I set up and ran two inpatient groups, one for people with alcohol problems and the other for people who had spent most of their life in a long-stay psychiatric hospital. The latter group was the beginning of my studio approach informed by

group analytic principles. We sat round a table in a 'circle' and the group members seemed to embrace sustained, self-initiated artmaking with little intervention by myself as 'conductor' other than attending to boundaries and responding to any verbal communication that was offered. The vulnerability and withdrawn nature of the group members impressed upon me the importance of developing a highly sensitive approach to working with such long term and severe problems, as well as the benefits of artmaking as a means of expression and communication when conversation was limited. I took additional group analytic training in 1992 that confirmed these impressions. The year long weekly course entitled Psychotherapy with Severely Disturbed Patients was run by Murray Cox, then Consultant Psychotherapist at Broadmoor high-security psychiatric hospital. His ideas influenced this thesis and are described in the next chapter 4.2.

My fascination with groups became focused on the power and potential of the concept of the matrix that lies at the heart of group analysis. This became the foundation theoretical concept in my research for understanding how art can be transformative in an art psychotherapy group. I will go on to introduce Foulkes' (1948) concept.

### **Group analysis**

Group analysis is a once-a-week 'form of psychotherapy by the group, of the group, including its conductor' (Foulkes 1975:3). It started in England when Foulkes began to practice in Exeter in 1938 after leaving Germany as a German-Jewish psychoanalyst in 1933 (Pines 2009). Pines (2009) sets Foulkes' work in the context of European ideas at the time. These included the emphasis of German philosophers on the study of the mind being based on the whole person in the context of 'objective reality', or culture. Pines likens Dilthey's (1923) concept of how the individual is permeated by sociohistorical reality with Foulkes' ideas of transpersonal processes permeating people like a magnetic field. Additionally, the great instability and turbulence of the French political system and rapid industrialisation led to the Solidarism movement that attempted to fill the perceived social and psychological space between the state and the individual. The resulting ideas about solidarity and reciprocal ties, an in-between space of culture and interconnectness, are seen by Pines to suggest Foulkes' social network and matrix of interrelationships (2009:10).

Group analysis is a method that pays much attention to the social dimension (Scholz 2003). Pines describes how Foulkes and Anthony (1965) acknowledge the influence of Kurt Lewin's work on group analytic psychotherapy with 'the idea of the group as a dynamic whole operating in a social field' (Pines 1983:266). Although there was a shift at the time in psychodynamic thought away from the study of the isolated individual, the influence of society and the family was brought into the foreground by Foulkes from the background position in which it was then regarded within psychoanalysis (Pines 1983:267). Scholz describes Foulkes' innovation, like Freud, starting with the method: the couch became the circle, and the rule of free association became free floating discussion. The change in theory was considering the group process as an ongoing conversation and that anything brought up by a group member was interpreted and commented on by all participants. There was seen to be a 'set of common unconscious meanings under construction by communication, of which every individual is part of with special contributions' (Scholz 2003:549). How is unconscious material communicated and understood in such a group?

### **The matrix**

Foulkes based his theoretical frame on the concept of the 'matrix', borrowing the term from neurobiologist Kurt Goldstein, who had been one of his teachers (Scholz 2003:549). It was construed by Foulkes as the web of communication and relationship, conscious and unconscious, taking place between any group of people, with the potential to move and develop, becoming increasingly dynamic with closer acquaintance over time. There was the implication of slowness needed for change to take place (2003:551). Stacey elaborates by suggesting this process is self-organising, where complex narrative themes refer back to themselves in a circular fashion, continually triggering patterns that replicate and reproduce with small differences eventually becoming amplified into major changes (2000:513). Stacey suggests this interaction creates 'a new phenomenon, a suprapersonal psychic system' that is 'perpetually constructing the future' (2001:222) in 'potentially transformative ways' (2001:238).

The therapist represents the analytic attitude in the group, maintaining the group analytic situation and orienting this to the total group as a whole (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:28), rather than focusing on individuals. Responsible for 'dynamic administration', the conductor takes care of the interface of the group situation, guarding and defining boundaries, and the therapeutic space. The role of the group conductor is also as a participant in the construction of themes and facilitator of communication, particularly when the free-flowing communication loses its complexity and becomes stuck or located in one member (Stacey 2001:237). The members' contributions are used in preference to the conductor's, helping the members become active participants in the group maturation process (Pines 1983:278). Foulkes saw the therapist having a receptive and passive attitude, listening to the group as a whole, and understanding the patterns that develop. The group 'decides' what is to be 'admitted and left out of its discourse', developing a unique culture and working with the consequences (Pines 1983:281). In this way, the matrix is formed, which with maturation, extends the range of communication and understanding of all group members.

Foulkes describes a 'progressive integration' inherently pulled towards a socially determined norm (Pines 1983:272). Destructive or aggressive tendencies that disturb interpersonal relationships and communication tend not to be sanctioned by group members as they are group disruptive. Adjustment in a therapeutic group is seen to be social adjustment and is understood to develop each group member's creative individuality and potential and their 'capacity for full emotional participation and relationships' (Pines 1983:272). This emphasis on the interaction *between* people rather than on the individual mind is suggested by Douglas to distinguish group analysis from the dyadic relationship of psychoanalysis, although there is shared ground such as concerns with relational space and the here-and-now (2002:90).

Douglas describes a 'visual, metaphoric' use of language (2002:100) which seems particularly relevant to this research. Group analysis is envisaged as an artistic mode of creation in its 'creation of a shared language' (Douglas 2002:101):

The true therapist has, I believe, a creative function - in a way like an artist, in a way like a scientist... I have sometimes compared this function to that of a poet, especially in conducting a group (Foulkes 1990:279).

The process and transitive nature of images forming in the group matrix is described by Navridis (2006). Passing from one person to another, they appear to function as transitional objects as described by Winnicott (1971). It is suggested that the whole group constructs the interaction and unconscious communication through particular images to express what it believes about itself, which is understood as an unconscious group fantasy. The images are seen as belonging to 'narrative clusters' and to be important to the group and its process. Complex, in-depth communication is involved with 'multiple interactions and intersecting projections, introjections and identifications of its members' (Navridis 2006:372). The construction of such images and themes evolving from the expression of 'associative chains' at a metaphorical level is seen as one of the most productive and creative functions in therapeutic groups (Navridis 2006:366):

It is through these imaginary images and stories that the groups speak of themselves, or with themselves, in the indirect although poetic manner of metaphor and metonymy (Navridis 2006:372).

Each individual interacts, producing feelings and responses in everyone in the group. Each resonates to the theme in a personal way, evoking themes in others in a continual circular process (Stacey 2000:507). The chains of unconscious links are seen to hold the group together (MacDonald 2002:327). A sense of rhythm develops, a 'patterning'. Tensions rise and fall away, opposing views are expressed, all within a 'constantly shifting figure/ground constellation' (MacDonald 2002:330). MacDonald describes the possibility of a pleasurable dimension, as well as acceptance and nourishment and sees these as facilitating the 'Foulksian network' (2002:331). The aim is seen to be encouraging the shifts in patterns of the nonverbal conversation, introducing new 'voices' and greater variety into what had been private individual 'repetitive silent conversations of mental distress' (Stacey 2001:238).

As my group experience developed, I sensed that seeing the group therapy space as a 'field of imagination' where the 'creation of meaning' is through a 'shared network which Foulkes calls the matrix' (MacDonald 2002:323) seemed to hold enormous potential for thinking about making art in art psychotherapy groups.

My first post after art psychotherapy training was at the Henderson Hospital Therapeutic Community between 1983 and 1992 (see also chapter 3.1). It was a unique opportunity to learn about well established group psychotherapy and therapeutic community approaches in the treatment of severe problems, in this case personality disorder, and to consider art psychotherapy in relation to these. I loved the Henderson's approach with its emphasis on parity. I researched the development of art psychotherapy there and set up substantial studio and ceramics facilities (see Mahony 1992b). I went on to join a large NHS Trust in 1992 on the outskirts of London where the research took place. As Deputy Manager of a new community mental health centre, it was a marvelous challenge to set up services with the Manager based on psychodynamic principles and to build a new, cohesive team of staff. I set up art facilities within the building and provided art psychotherapy for specific client groups using brief and ongoing models for both groups and individuals. It was great fun and we were proud of its success.

I went on to develop Trust-wide art psychotherapy services based on clinical priorities and most impact creating a number of new posts and becoming Professional Head for the Trust in 1998 until I left in 2003. I was based in the Psychological Therapies Service of one of three Sector Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT's) where I was also Head Art Therapist for the Borough. Working within the National Service Framework for Mental Health (DoH 1999), other key documents and policies informed my work (for example, Parry and Richardson 1996; DoH 2000, 2001a, 2004; NICE 2002). In 2000 I set up a community outpatient studio with ceramics facilities.

As Professional Head I was responsible for the strategic development and professional structure of the Art Psychotherapy Services, including Clinical Governance, Clinical Effectiveness and Continuing Professional Development (CPD), in all inpatient and outpatient areas in the Trust (Adult and Older Adult Mental Health; Specialist and Forensic Services; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Learning Disability Services). The role involved coordinating, teaching, monitoring and research functions and being responsible for

the delivery of safe, effective and high quality services. As part of this work I set up, obtained funding and managed an initiative to develop Clinical Guidelines for work with a specific client group. Dr Andrea Gilroy was employed as Consultant to facilitate the workshops for the art psychotherapists in the Trust working in mental health with adults with severe and long term problems. It was an ambitious project and a unique and stimulating opportunity to collectively study the knowledge base of our profession in a key area of art psychotherapy practice and consider these theories in relation to our local models (see Brooker et al 2007). I was also on the lead team for the Kings Fund *Healing Environment* project in the Trust. I carried out a review of activity and established that average caseloads of the art psychotherapy Service showed particularly high levels of severity of problems experienced by clients compared with other disciplines (see Mahony 2009). I was very pleased to introduce personal art practice into the Service which we took part in together several times a year as part of CPD.

Increasing evidence of the importance of psychological therapies strengthened our Service's position as one that emphasised choice and equal access (National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health 2002; DoH 2001a) as well as creative activities (see for instance, Faulkner 1997; Faulkner and Layzell 2000). So did the clinical priorities for the Trust and for the Service which were clients with severe and complex problems and acute inpatients.

Regarding my own clinical practice, I had expertise in groups gained from nine years experience of group psychotherapy and therapeutic community methods; eight years of ongoing outpatient psychotherapy groups where I had been co-therapist or conductor. Training included one year part-time courses with the Institute of Group Analysis (IGA) in Group Work and Family Therapy in 1980; and Psychotherapy with Severely Disturbed Patients in 1991. Mainly, I committed myself to further training in art psychotherapy (Advanced Diploma and MA at Goldsmiths, University of London).

My art psychotherapy caseload consisted of individuals and groups with some generic assessments for psychological therapy. The changes within the public sector now restricted the viability of long-term work as described by Wood requiring different parameters and

approaches to therapy as well as considering economic implications (1997). Most individual work was therefore brief (up to a year) with the option of long term follow, except where there was good reason for longer therapy. However, I found this model to be very effective for individuals with long-term problems. The group I developed offered one of the few local opportunities for ongoing therapy, and to enter a psychodynamic therapy group soon after discharge from the acute ward. Art psychotherapy is one of the few psychodynamic therapies available for people with severe problems.

My specialisation in developing models for bringing about positive change in the lives of adults who have experienced severe and complex mental health difficulties culminated in this research. I believe the role of the art psychotherapist's own art practice in relation to such a group is a central issue for the discipline.

#### **4.1.3 The Group**

I will introduce the group. Here I am laying the groundwork for the issues that are at the heart of the material that will be explored in more depth as I proceed with this chapter.

Referrals for the group were taken from the psychological therapies team and the CMHT. Women predominated in the group, consistent with mental health out-patient appointments (see Bird 1999). Most were from a white background. Group members may have had a number of admissions throughout their lives. Their histories included childhood sexual abuse; domestic violence; substance misuse; complicated grief reactions; eating disorders; relationship and emotional problems; phobias and compulsions. A number of people had major psychiatric diagnoses including clinical depression; personality disorder; schizophrenia and bipolar conditions; several had been described as severely agoraphobic; a number were described as borderline.

I had set up the NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group eight years prior to the beginning of this research so it had a well-established culture. The model I developed was informed by group analysis and the principles of Foulkes (see 1964) and Yalom (1970). It was an

ongoing, 'slow open' group (see Foulkes and Anthony 1965:65) where members join and leave slowly over a long period, taking place weekly for two and a half hours, for up to seven people who had experienced severe and complex mental health problems and who wanted to learn more about themselves and others. Usually prospective members wanted to understand why they might have had their problems and how they might cope better in the future. This was done through making their own art and discussions with each other. I made art alongside members. Members stayed for as long as they needed, which could be for several months or a number of years. It seemed to me that their improvement was related to their engagement with the art materials.

### **Setting**

Sharing facilities was Trust policy which led to the group moving several times. It started in the pottery room run by occupational therapists in the local psychiatric unit. This was far from ideal as the group was a community treatment facility intended as a step on from hospital and aimed at preventing relapse. There were frequent interruptions by inpatients (often very disturbed) hoping to join an activity. Disturbance and distress in the corridor spilled over from the acute wards. Members who had experience of an inpatient admission said it brought it all back.

For a short while we moved to the new art room in the new acute unit built when the old psychiatric unit was demolished. Although there were less drawbacks, the pristine, modern, custom-built art room had a curving glass (albeit sand-blasted) brick wall where people congregated outside in the sun to smoke and chat under the open windows. 'A goldfish bowl' remarked one member! The group were very pleased to move to the first community art room. This was a studio in the garden of a small mental health unit set in a residential area. A few problems were negotiated, such as sharing with Woodwork (sawdust) and Physiotherapy (mats). The room proved very successful. The advantages were that it was private, calm and reasonably spacious: members could arrive and leave through a back gate without meeting anyone; they remarked on the quietness; it was possible to spread out when making work without encroaching on others. Most importantly there were no interruptions.

### **Developing my approach**

My approach was developed from practice written about previously (Mahony 1992b). In this chapter, I explored the two different kinds of art psychotherapy groups that I conducted at the Henderson Hospital Therapeutic Community (see chapter 3.1). At the time I wrote the paper, tracing the historical influences on the development of art psychotherapy at the unit, I considered the more overtly psychotherapeutically oriented group to be more desirable, derived from the models of my training. In this analytic group there was focus on talking; it started with discussion, there was an hour making art and it finished with an hour talking (and no tea). In the art work group, on the other hand, the focus was on making art (for an hour and a half); there was no discussion at the start, and it concluded with discussion about how people got on with their artmaking (half an hour with tea). Also significant was my role: in the art work group I did my own art work alongside members, offering parity. In the analytic group I did no artwork offering, I felt, the opportunity for the development of transference. Eventually, I began to consider the possibility that in the Henderson art work group, people were doing work of more personal significance than in the analytic art psychotherapy group. Interestingly, in the paper, I describe the 'studio-like situation' (1992b:63) of the work group and talk enthusiastically about the sociodynamic functions. Certainly, it was a more enjoyable experience for myself and appeared to be for everyone else, but at the time the work groups were not considered psychotherapy either by myself or my colleagues. Finally, by the time I came to leave, I was beginning to concede to myself that a deeper psychotherapy seemed to be happening in the work group than in the analytic group. But could this be when we were enjoying ourselves? This did not tie up with the usual image of psychotherapy.

Another issue highlighted by this comparison is that of self-disclosure by the therapist when doing their own artwork in a group. My paper outlines the key points:

In a situation like a work group, art therapists need to feel secure enough in themselves and their creative processes to expose themselves in their own artwork; also to feel free enough to be creative, whilst still being a key figure who has responsibility for, and has to maintain an awareness of, that group and its process. It is also

important in this type of situation for the art therapist to be aware of and familiar with their own personal imagery and how this may be resonating with the group (Mahony 1992b:64).

Further work that I did for my MA in Art Psychotherapy helped develop my thinking about models, technique and style with regard to different client groups. A literature review (Mahony and Waller 1992) examined how British and American art psychotherapists work with people who have drug and alcohol problems. It revealed that the majority did not seem to be relating their technique to their theoretical ideas. Discussion of countertransference responses to the client group suggested these may influence the model that is used.

My research into the absence of art psychotherapy in alcohol services in this country (Mahony 1994) analysed text produced from open-ended questions in a questionnaire that sought to identify the assumptions behind treatment methods and attitudes towards art psychotherapy in alcohol services. I investigated (Mahony 1994) workers' perceptions of art psychotherapy with reference to art used as a therapeutic activity and related these to its absence in alcohol services. The underlying view of many respondents was that the benefits and relevance of art psychotherapy in alcohol services were mainly art used as 'education' but they perceived it to be a form of psychotherapy. I concluded that this may account for the widespread use of art activities in alcohol services and the lack of art psychotherapy.

When I left the Henderson and started my new post I wanted to use aspects of the 'sociodynamic' model (as it was called there) adjusted to an outpatient group in the community. In this job, I tried out, very gradually, certain aspects of this model in discussion with my art psychotherapy group members and it gradually evolved into the approach described below.

The art psychotherapy service aims encapsulated government policy and key issues for working with the most vulnerable clients. These were also the aims for my group. I wanted to provide a psychotherapeutic intervention for the most vulnerable clients that was particularly suited to managing severe and complex problems. It would reduce risk of suicide

and psychiatric re-admission; and be an effective, high quality service that was safe and accessible. It should offer continuity of care, be empowering, optimistic, promote independence and be non-discriminatory.

The model I developed will be discussed in greater depth in relation to the literature but in order to give a sense of the complexity and significance of seemingly small aspects of the dynamically structured boundaries of an art psychotherapy group as they relate to a 'model', I will discuss an example.

I gradually increased the length of the group from an hour and a half to two and a half hours. I adjusted the balance of time spent on artmaking and talking to focus on artmaking. A psychodynamic group can intensify extreme disturbance or distress through exposure or exploration, so the length of it is critical. An outpatient group does not have the support or containment of an institution so the frame of mind members leave in at the end is also crucial, before they go home. One of the main forms of containment for a group, making it 'safe', is to keep to the time boundaries, so changing them has to be considered very carefully as it will have repercussions. Fairly early on in the group's life, when it was still an hour and a half long, members were saying how much they enjoyed the group (positive transference) and joking that they would like it to 'go on all day'. I had been thinking about the idea of lengthening the group for some time. In group analytic terms this was the opportunity I had been looking for: the idea had come from the members. We discussed it and agreed to make the group half an hour longer and to review it. As the idea was voiced by group members with a democratic decision, they felt involved and empowered, strengthening the group cohesion. Most of the aims of the group referred to previously were addressed by this intervention.

### **My Studio Based Model**

Group analytic principles provided the theoretical framework for the model I developed (see McNeilly 1984; 1987) but modified for working with serious disturbance in a community setting. It was an ongoing group in a studio environment taking place weekly for two and a half hours. The clear, dynamically structured boundaries focused on complex artmaking ( $1\frac{3}{4}$

hours making:  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour discussion) that was sustained over weeks or much longer. My side-by-side stance as a therapist (Greenwood and Layton 1987) offered parity and privacy in making art alongside the members. My style was relaxed and transparent. The discussion with tea focused on artmaking not content and meaning. Engagement with self-initiated artwork was maximized whenever possible, including making work to take away. I explained that the purpose was to find the most helpful way of using the art materials. I encouraged translation of the process to life outside the group and advised staying with the artmaking rather than talking.

I maintained clear time boundaries to reduce anxiety and focus on the art. Tables were arranged in the middle of the room so that sitting around them loosely created a 'circle'. I started my artwork immediately, sometimes unpacking the kiln. Members got out their work and art materials as soon as they arrived, often asking each other how they were. Sometimes they chatted and laughed and sometimes a serious discussion started straight away, particularly if something had happened during the week. Sometimes it was silent. Usually it was silent half way through when engagement with the artwork seemed at its height. Work might be made to take home or for someone outside of the group; members knew they could make private work which would stay in the room. I photographed the work at the end of most sessions and would bring the photos back for them to see. Everyone was extremely interested to look back at work in this way, as it developed, enhancing engagement with artmaking.

I would take part in any talking during artmaking while doing my own artwork. This took many forms, including textiles and ceramics, multiples or series, such as cards or small, roughly cast clay containers. Like the group members, the things I made stayed in the room until finished when I usually took them home. Members sometimes asked me about my work or commented on aspects of it. I sometimes drew attention to links in our artmaking but only with regard to their formal qualities.

After clearing up we would return to where we had been sitting, with tea. While looking at the work still on the table or on a table easel, discussion focused on how people got on

rather than speculating, analysing or interpreting what the content might mean. Talking about a piece of work might take the form of description or interchange about techniques and materials. Sometimes people volunteered interpretations about meaning but I didn't encourage this. If someone got upset, I might ask if the discussion was helping. My focus was on concrete, practical elements of the process and how this might relate to their outside lives. For instance, I often asked what had helped (or not) in sessions, and how might this translate to their lives outside. I asked their opinion on all aspects that related to the group and each other and made clinical decisions based on such discussion. The group usually became a 'safe haven' for people. I would suggest this could be repeated outside.

My style aimed to be relaxed, informal and fairly transparent. I made jokes and tried to be warm. I was aiming for the experience to be a 'good' one and enjoyable, based on the belief that it is the degree of investment in the artwork that is the main therapeutic factor.

Considering the levels of distress, I was impressed with the outcomes of the group. One person said on leaving that it had changed her life. A number of people left feeling much better. Usually this meant a reduction of disturbance caused by 'symptoms', but even where there were still symptoms there was usually an improved ability to cope with them and with the associated feelings, including an acceptance that the difficulties were part of being human rather than an 'illness'. Many people came into the group with the understanding that they had an illness as a result of their contact with the psychiatric system (see Mental Health Foundation (2009). Usually the person leaving had found a new direction in their life and several said that they felt it was unlikely that they would need mental health services in the future. Those who described feeling better on leaving had showed a high level of engagement with the artmaking process. Two people agreed with each other that the artwork helped them look at the world in a way that they had not done before.

I will now discuss relevant literature in order to situate my approach.

#### **4.1.4 Art psychotherapy groups**

Research into art psychotherapy groups with adults in this country (Dudley, Gilroy and Skaife 2000; Gilroy 1995; Greenwood and Layton 1987, 1991; Liebmann 1981; Nowell-Hall 1987; Saotome 1998) is limited. Although art psychotherapy has a long history of groupwork, including models for working with clients with long term mental health problems, the literature is sparse (Skaife and Huet 1998).

I will outline art psychotherapy group models in terms of the 'relationship of pictures to words or verbal interaction within them' (Skaife and Huet 1998:10) and then go on to discuss them in relation to the literature and my own approach.

**The Studio Based Model** gives prominence to artmaking but verbal interaction mainly takes place separately between therapist and individuals (Skaife and Huet 1998). Derived from the Studio Based Open Group of the large psychiatric hospitals (Saotome 1998), it is seen as the 'traditional' form of art psychotherapy practice (Case and Dalley 1992; Waller 1991) emphasising containment through the art room (see Adamson 1984; Charlton 1984; Thomson 1989; Warsi 1978; Von Zweigbergk and Armstrong 2004). More recently it has been developed to include such features (Satome 1998) and to incorporate more obvious psychodynamic practice (see for instance, Deco 1998; Killick 1997), especially with people who are experiencing psychotic states (Killick 1993, 1997, 2000).

**Theme Centred Groups** mainly focus the artwork on understanding individual's problems and place the conductor in the role of leader (Skaife and Huet 1998). Such techniques are used for working with particular client groups (for example, Rust 1987; Thornton 1990; Soglia 1994; Charlton 1984; Liebmann 1986) and in teaching (Rosen and Mayro 1995; Waller 1993; Gilroy 1995; Swan-Foster et al 2001). Liebmann's (1986) manual of art activities as therapy in groups caused a storm of criticism including the view that introduced themes are overly controlling and can uncover unconscious material too quickly (McNeilly 1984). However, it

was compiled from interviews with over forty art therapists and showed that large numbers used such techniques.

**Group Interactive and Group Analytic models** (for example, McNeilly 1984, 1987, 1990, 2006; Waller 1993; Skaife 1990) understand artmaking as part of a group's dynamic. The 'non-directive' or group analytic art psychotherapy approach has no topic and the group analyses itself. Group interactions are focused on rather than individuals. Waller's interactive model is informed by group psychotherapies (including Yalom 1985; Bloch and Crouch 1985; Agazarin and Peters 1989), systems theory and interactive or interpersonal approaches to psychotherapy and can be adapted to suit a wide range of client groups, both long and short-term groups.

Several strands of this approach have been explored (Skaife 1995, 2000, 2001; Skaife and Huet 1998b) including the tension practitioners see arising between image-making and verbal interaction in art psychotherapy groups (for example, Case and Dalley 1992; McNeilly 1990; Skaife 1995; Skaife and Huet 1998b).

### **My own approach**

My model was studio based and gave prominence to artmaking but unlike other studio approaches, paid great attention to group analytic principles and group dynamics. The studio space had a layout of tables so that everyone could see each other in a circle. I was mainly 'undirective' but active at times in terms of the management of boundaries and levels of interaction. My interventions held the group as a whole in mind with the aim that the group analyses itself which I would facilitate as a 'conductor'. I saw allowing tension to develop between talking and artmaking as counter therapeutic with this client group, so dynamically informed time structures were built in that everyone knew from the start. Everyone started making art right from the beginning of the session, talking at the same time. The discussion at the end focused on how people got on with making their art and allowed for verbal resolution of any issues that the session might have raised. The main focus was on maximising engagement with the art media.

I will now go on to describe the characteristics of studio approaches in more detail.

### **Studio approaches**

In the United States, studio based approaches are often differentiated from art psychotherapy (for example, Malchiodi 1995; Henley 1995; Timm-Bottos 1995; McNiff 1995; Wix 1995; McGraw 1995; Allen 1988, 1995a and Gerritsen 1995). I call my own studio approach art psychotherapy because it facilitated an in-depth experience with the creative art process and made it clear that it was psychotherapy<sup>2</sup>. In my experience, the term 'art therapy' can be misunderstood as a diversionary activity.

As mentioned, in the UK studio approaches resembling the one I developed evolved from the 'open group' of long-stay psychiatric hospitals. Art was regarded as the medium of treatment (Case and Dalley 1992) and their characteristics eventually became more formalised (Waller and Dalley 1992). Practitioners see many advantages offered by studio approaches when working with people who have had long-term problems including flexibility of interaction and withdrawal (Deco 1998; Killick 1995), low intensity (Wood 1996) but focused work (Saotome 1998), in a 'containing' space (Wood 1997) where feeling safe, like a 'sanctuary' (Killick 1997; 2000), can provide constancy (Wood 2000b) and where the group-as-a-whole is emphasised in a holding environment (Deco 1998). Informality is advocated (see Saotome 1998; Greenwood and Layton 1991). Several authors refer to therapists making art alongside the clients (for example, Greenwood and Layton 1987; Charlton 1984) which is described as motivating (Allen 1995a) and offering parity (Mahony 1992b; Gill 1999; Greenwood and Layton 1987).

The art studio environment is increasingly discussed (for instance, Henley 1995; Killick 2000; Malchiodi 1995) and I will describe several themes.

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<sup>2</sup> Psychotherapy: the treatment of mental disorder by psychological means. The Oxford English Dictionary, 1996.

Therapeutic space in terms of place is seen as a crucial aspect of this approach to working with people who have had severe and long term mental health problems (Malchiodi 1995; Moon, C. 2002). For instance, the feeling of terror that may underlie the experience of psychosis indicates a particular need for containment and boundaries which can be conveyed by such surroundings (Wood 1997). The studio space can be a creative stimulus - a 'vessel' for the artistic process (McNiff 1995) which can affect the relationships within it (Killick 2000; Case and Dalley 1992). For instance, in this type of room privacy is possible which is thought to foster creativity and the capacity to be absorbed (Wood 2000b; Nowell Hall 1987). In such an environment, returning to find everything as it was left (Henley 1995:188) offers the 'possibility of reworking and development' providing constancy (Wood 2000b: 41) and such a secure and reliable setting is also thought to strengthen psychological boundaries (Greenwood and Layton 1987).

The length of therapy is also considered critical with this model and should be for as long as each client needs (Wood 1996; Lewis 1990). The combination of more time, few or no directives and the studio environment are thought to encourage an in-depth artmaking experience (Malchiodi 1995). However, it seems that a particular style and technique is needed by the therapist. A relaxed atmosphere, with humour and even satire (Greenwood and Layton 1991) is seen as important. It is necessary to be more tolerant of irregularities in boundaries by the members than other client groups (Lewis 1990) but as therapist one must remain 'scrupulous' in maintaining them oneself (Wood 1996:43; Lewis 1990).

Killick (1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000) in particular, has theorised practice with people experiencing acute psychosis. Her approach focused on the inner processes of development of the individual in an open studio hospital setting, but with no mention of the group dynamics. Creative and symbolic processes are described as enabling the potential for ego functions to develop (Killick 1991). A studio environment with a minimum of intrusion is paramount and is seen as an intervention in itself with individual designated space for each client to leave work out to return to again and again. The images are conceptualised as 'sealed vessels' that represent a reliable symbolic container to which the art psychotherapist has no access without the client's active wish (Killick 1991). Described as an

analytical art psychotherapy setting, her approach is informed by psychoanalytical theory and is understood as a pathway out of 'desymbolised' states (Killick 1995). The person is continuously invited into relationship and they can experiment with experiences of linking at their own pace, with the room acting as a concrete, containing space.

By contrast, the 'Studio Upstairs' (see Gill 1999) has a very different emphasis to Killick's approach with a philosophy informed by the ideas of R.D. Laing (1960). It is a therapeutic community for psychologically vulnerable people where they can develop their artistic expression. Relatedness and a sense of place is emphasised and artists and art psychotherapists make art alongside other community members. The centre became recognised as an alternative to statutory services for people diagnosed with 'mental illness' and a number of centres opened across the country.

Some practitioners consider the art psychotherapist's artmaking in such a studio group as an intervention in itself (Henley 1995). It provides modelling behaviour, equality (Mahony 1992b; Gill 1999; Greenwood and Layton 1987; Moon, C. 2002), privacy (Haeseler 1989) and is thought to be motivating (Allen 1995a). However, its impact on clients must be monitored (Brooker et al 2007) for countertherapeutic form, content or style (Henley 1995); transference and countertransference (Mahony 1992b).

Only one art psychotherapist writes about this client group in an outpatient setting (Greenwood and Layton 1987, 1991). These authors (an art psychotherapist and a psychiatrist) emphasise a less intense approach that encourages the development of defenses and sublimation in the artwork (Green wood and Layton 1987). They suggest that humour can make the unbearable seem bearable and make it easier for both client and therapist to show their vulnerabilities (Greenwood and Layton 1991). Greenwood and Layton's (1987) group for people who have suffered from major psychiatric disorders cautiously use themes that arise from within the group, rather than decided by the therapist beforehand. They describe a 'side-by-side' approach with the therapists doing their own artwork. Their view that humour and a relaxed, informal style is helpful when there is serious pathology (1991) is a reoccurring theme in the literature.

Killick and Greenwood (1995) wrote jointly about their research as they saw similarities in processes and outcomes in their work with people who have experienced psychosis. The main elements of their jointly formulated model of practice are: to foster the development of a language within the artwork which mediates between concrete and symbolic thinking; to create clear and dynamically structured boundaries so that negotiation of these provide therapeutic contact; to avoid referring to content and meaning and only respond to formal elements of relating; projected material is held within the relationship, the art process and countertransference; and experimentation, exploration and creative play with the offered experiences are maximised (Killick and Greenwood 1995:114).

The review has illustrated how the art psychotherapy approaches that were provided for the most disturbed clients in the asylums have been modified for community and other settings. I will go on to consider theoretical issues arising from this situation.

#### **4.1.5 Working with very disturbed clients in art psychotherapy**

An important aspect of practice for my research is the difficulties of facilitating the creative process when working with severe disturbance. For people like the members in my outpatient group with severe and complex mental health problems, particular issues need to be carefully considered regarding the psychotherapeutic approach that is used. Some techniques and ideas can be inappropriate and counter therapeutic for this client group. A noticeable number of authors in the UK art psychotherapy literature theorise the creative process in art psychotherapy and extreme states with reference to psychoanalytical theory (for example, (Killick 1991, 1995, 1996, 2000; Mann 1991, 1997; Cooper 1999; Greenwood 1994, 2000; Killick and Greenwood 1995; Greenwood and Layton 1987; Sara 1998). However, the ideas and techniques of psychoanalysis were originally designed for the clients of private practice with very different problems and needs. This presents significant difficulties when applying such ideas to other clients groups, particular those who are very vulnerable. Mann (1997) for example, says artmaking itself can be used defensively as a

resistance against change and creativity believing it is essential to explore this in order to move on from what he understands as a tension between regression and progression. An intervention of this kind is problematic in that such a psychoanalytic approach needs radical adaptation for fragile clients (see Brooker et al 2007; Karkou and Sanderson 2006; Killick 1996; Killick and Greenwood 1995; Lydiatt 1971; Wood 1997, 2000a). For instance, when working with clients who are psychotic it is considered important to avoid interpretations or referring to content and meaning, and instead to focus on the formal elements of the therapeutic relationship (Brooker et al 2007; Killick and Greenwood 1995). In other words, exploration can be counter therapeutic.

There can be very difficult dilemmas for the therapist when working with this client group making an appropriate approach critical, and supervision, reviews and monitoring procedures essential to the process. Greenwood (2000), for instance, warns that clients who have suffered extreme 'prolonged and repeated trauma' could experience the art psychotherapy setting, the use of the artmaking process and the therapeutic relationship as a re-enactment of those experiences. She refers to Rosenfeld's concept of destructive narcissism describing how a deadly force inside the patient becomes more threatening when they begin to rely on the analyst. I suggest that this illustrates how transference-based models can be inappropriate when working with severe problems. Countertransference issues are discussed by Greenwood where the terror of the client's experience can activate feelings of powerlessness or a state of fright in the therapist. In such extreme cases the author argues that communication is experienced as potentially life-threatening (2000).

Working with severe disturbance clearly requires particular considerations. Lachman-Chapin's (1979, 1983) interactive technique 'the artist as clinician', described in Chapter 1.1 addresses particular aspects. Based on Kohut's (1971) work on narcissism, the approach was developed for schizophrenic and borderline patients and focuses on the artwork. However, unlike most psychoanalytical theory, this model sees confrontation and interpretation as unnecessary or unwise (Lachman-Chapin 1979:6) and offers very specific techniques for these situations.

Authors from related fields who consider schizophrenia and group therapy support this view. Themes of increased activity by the conductor predominate (see for instance, Battegay 1977; Standish & Semrad 1951; Yalom 1983, 1985; Mahony 1981). Low intensity psychotherapy maintained over prolonged periods is recommended (Roth and Fonagy 1995), avoiding intensive work during acute phases (Parry and Richardson 1996:103), backed up by routine follow up or reviews to reassess the continuing mental health needs of the patient (DoH 2001a:43). This latter point is a facility I offered my clients which I found to be important for consolidating the work they had done which does not seem to be discussed by other art psychotherapists.

Yalom (1985) describes key features of working with psychodynamic approaches and severe disturbance in group psychotherapy. The benefits of inpatient therapy groups that he outlines are particularly relevant to my group members who were often experiencing similar levels of acute distress, desperation and demoralisation when arriving in the group. Other similarities include the long-term nature of the problems; a similar need to manage disturbance in the therapeutic setting; and varied diagnoses, with some members having a history of psychosis although not actively suicidal or psychotic. Yalom suggests that the benefits derived from such groups include enhancing the ability to relate to others by focusing on the relationships. This augments the support group members can receive from one another (1985:34). However, he emphasises that the type of group is of enormous importance as the 'traditional' group therapy approach (see for instance, Yalom 1975; Whitaker and Lieberman 1964; Mullen and Rosenbaum 1962) was designed for neurotic outpatients and may actually be counter therapeutic with more severe disturbance (1985:33). In particular, he quotes the consensus in the research literature on the necessity of a focus on 'sealing over' for psychotic patients rather than one of disclosing material as in a 'traditional' approach (1985:32). Such clients do well in a supportive group that is reality- or activity-oriented, and undemanding. He found the same results in the literature on group therapy in day centres where aiming for insight and evoking affect was contraindicated (see Linn et al 1979).

### **Containment**

Containment is a dominant theme in the art psychotherapy literature on working with people experiencing severe mental health difficulties and is considered extremely important. What exactly does this mean? Authors draw on Bion's concept (1962) to mean a space which the client experiences as an emotionally safe place (eg Greenwood and Layton 1987, 1991; Killick 1997; Seth-Smith 1997 cited in Brooker et al 2007). It was a term that had negative connotations for service users (see Brooker et al 2007:31). I would suggest that within its umbrella is actually a framework of techniques for working with this client group as suggested by Yalom. This is borne out in the literature.

Practitioners see containment to be provided in a number of ways, particularly through the physical environment of space and materials (Greenwood 2000) which acts as a containing device as referred to previously (see for instance, Killick 2000; Henley 1985; Wood 2000a and b, 1999); and the relationship with the therapist using all transactions occurring in the setting (Killick 1991). The therapist is recommended to maintain a quiet presence with a respectful manner (Wood 1997). Artmaking by the therapist is thought to lessen the intensity of the transference relationship, making it more bearable for the patient to be in the room with the therapist (Morter 1997) and to increase equality (Greenwood & Layton 1987; see also chapter 4.2). The picture or image is conceptualised as a receptacle for non-verbal aspects of the maker enabling the expression and embodiment of meaning (Seth-Smith 1997).

In this literature review particular features of a studio approach have been highlighted including artmaking in the group by the therapist; the importance of a relaxed atmosphere; the possibilities that are offered for experiences of relationship; the therapist waiting for the client to give access to their work; and the importance of 'place', the environment and the room. I have referred to focusing on the artmaking rather than encouraging disclosure which is confirmed by the group psychotherapy research with this client group that describes how a sealing over is needed. This is confirmed by several art psychotherapy authors and there is a reference to sealed vessels.

There are some aspects that have arisen in the review that are problematic. Yalom's ideas state that insight-oriented group therapy may be counter therapeutic and that there is strong evidence that different diagnostic groups require different forms of therapy. Unfortunately, other than Deco (1998) who refers to Yalom's 'sealing' over, there is little discussion in the UK art psychotherapy literature of the group psychotherapy research literature about forms of therapy for this client group which have well established principles. Killick's approach emphasises relationship - with the room, the art and the therapist - but appears to ignore the development of relationships over a long period with other clients that Yalom emphasises is helpful. Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic models of therapy may not be helpful with this client group (DoH 2002:10; Adams 2001 referred to in chapter 1.1). However, in recent years in the UK, art psychotherapy with people who have severe mental health difficulties has been informed by psychoanalytic theory (Brooker et al 2007:20). On the other hand, practitioners have theorised convincing frameworks for working with such clients and great emphasis has been placed particularly on the concept of containment. This term links comfortably with the idea of a studio environment and would seem to offer an explanation for the importance of such a space when working with severe problems. I would suggest this is why practitioners find the term so important.

In this chapter I have presented my art psychotherapy group and located my therapeutic approach within relevant literature. I would suggest that making art in a studio environment offers many advantages to people with a history of severe mental health problems as it has the potential to embody meaning, particularly where there is a non-interventionist approach. I will now go on to explore the role of my artmaking in the creative art process of my group.

# PART FOUR - THE GROUP:

## Studio-based clinical practice - The Matrix

### 4.2 Co-creators in combined practices: a visually-based case study

#### 4.2.1 Introduction

My artmaking alongside group members is the key stone of my studio approach to working with clients who have severe problems. The narrative that follows describes a visual exploration of photographs taken of the development of the group's artmaking over a five year period during the PhD research project. A discussion of the main themes is contextualised with relevant literature and my final reflections conclude the study.

In order to consider the effects of the therapy I have examined my therapist's notes for what the group members said about helpful or unhelpful aspects, limitations of the group, and indicators regarding prognosis. Therapist bias and transference are of course an issue but I tried to record as faithfully as possible these aspects including their words in my notes at the time. These are included in the narrative.

#### The photographs

Banks suggests that photographs are discrete representations produced by a specific intentionality and that each has significance because it is 'one in an infinitude of possible manifestations' (2001:7). An audience can bear in mind the context of the photograph as well as its content and the way that content is presented, showing that our interpretation is not fixed (2001:11). Below is a brief description of how I came to take the photos and their place in the social relations and life of the group. Other contextual information is included in order to give the fullest reading of the group's image production that the photos represent. Banks succinctly describes their multivocality being able to 'communicate multiple narratives' (2001:15).

I felt it was important to record the group's artmaking as it developed over many months (and even years) and when finished, much of it was taken home. Photography seemed an interesting facility for the group members who agreed when I consulted them, and it soon became an established practice which I would discuss with prospective members. No one objected. I brought the photos back regularly and everyone became intrigued to look back at what was happening, spending some time looking at them, passing them around and discussing them with exclamations of surprise and interest. The photos showed aspects of the work, or stages that had been forgotten, providing a new way of seeing things and demonstrating the value I placed on the creative work that was taking place. It became an effective way of maximising engagement with the media and the creative process. Banks (2001:96) and Kopytin (2004) confirm the usefulness of photographs as being able to elicit memory, discussion and new understanding.

I took a few photographs of all the work together at the end of most sessions. The objects were arranged pragmatically to fit the frame as tightly as possible and so that everything could clearly be seen. I wanted to record the collective development of the work. Periodically, I would take a full-frame photograph of a finished object or one at a significant stage.

This case study is not like a 'traditional case study' that describes a group, the clients, their histories and their artworks in an attempt to make meaning. My approach has been to take an overview of the artmaking process in order to gain a better understanding of the role of my art practice in the creative life of the group. Therefore I examine the artmaking a year at a time. Some personal material of clients and my own is added where relevant but details are changed so they are not personally identifiable.

### **My methods**

The case study is visually driven. I made two files for each year – one for my therapist's notes of each session and one file for all the photographs, which I examined first. I described what I saw and made an ekphrasis (see Panofsky 1972). The narrative was initially

written using the images only. The notes were used to fill out any information needed to make sense of the visual impression and to separate the visual and linguistic modes, highlighting any disparities. These later 'reflections' are added into the text in italics.

As a form of art historical artwriting in a classical tradition (see Carrier 1987, 1991; Elkins 2000; Gilroy 2006:94), ekphrasis involves a narrative description of an image for the absent reader. Carrier describes how postmodernist art historical writing aspires to objectivity while acknowledging the problem of subjectivity in interpretation - analysing artwork in relation to society rather than 'underplaying differences in favour of some deeper unity over time' as emphasised in modernist approaches (1996:402). In order to avoid the approach being merely content-based I have taken into account material form and its relationship to the particular social context (Banks 2001:51).

My approach to organising the photographs produced a sequential narrative overall as it seemed important to follow the chronological making process of the group in the initial stages. Selected photographs illustrate the text. I have also latterly clustered some of the photographs together into order to illustrate a theme. I would however, describe the work as a series even though the images can also be seen to be self-contained in their own right (Banks 2001:23).

Language itself produces associations. Words are symbols that are decoded by the reader or listener. My method was inspired by Mark Slater's seminar *Practical Writing Skills for Artists*, which I attended in 2002 through Empowering The Artists in Brighton. He said that writing about art should be as simple and clear as possible. By using active verbs with short syllables it is possible to communicate immediately to the reader. He explained that inflating the language takes its power away with too many adjectives and over visualisation. By using concrete nouns I hope to keep their power to put a clear image in the mind of the reader, and by so doing be more visual. This method also relates to Gergen's ideas about 'voice' (see chapter 1.3). The tenses vary as I will also be including my memories of the sessions and artmaking.

### **Bounds of the group**

The group started in March 1995, closing and starting again with short breaks and new members a few times during its life, as will be seen. This clinical practice was the focus for developing my methods for working with people in a fragile emotional state. These deliberations became formalised when I registered as an MPhil/PhD student at Goldsmiths in September 1999. As this event probably affected the group's artmaking process, the narrative starts at the beginning of this year. I wrote a research proposal during the year, so my thinking was already changing. The end of the group came in 2003 when I left my job with the Trust. This five year period during the research provides the parameters for my case study.

### **Group members**

The group was 'heterogeneous' (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:66); that is members had different diagnoses and disturbances but in this case all had severe or complex, long term mental health problems. Further detail about individuals will be added as necessary. All recognisable material is changed.

### **Ethical issues**

I have permission to use photographs of the clients' work; this was discussed with them at the beginning of their therapy, although not for use in a dissertation. For this reason the images of their work in my photographs were altered so they were not recognisable as the original art work but still retained characteristics relevant to the case study. Once the examination was over, the clients' work was removed from the photographs in the thesis as they cannot be available to the wider public. These issues have been explored in the methodological section (Chapter 1.2).

## **4.2.2 Co-creators in combined practices**

### **Year One, 1999**

**Fitting together and a fragile monster; holding together; looking and being looked at; animals, miniatures and idylls; separating and repeating**

At the beginning of this first year there were six members. The group took place in the acute unit OT art room. A messy and cluttered workshop ambience probably affected the artmaking. Artwork was left around in heaps and disturbing images were put up on the wall. Fired and unfired pots were crowded together, conveying a rather uncared-for feeling. More positively, I felt unconstrained by this messiness.



Figure 4.1

Looking at the photos of my work from that year, an impression persists of squareness with overtones of fitting together and separating. In January I made a shallow square dish from marbled slabs of white and red clay. I also started rough mould making using plaster and latex (see Fig 4.1) in order to make small square pots, slip casting these in series over several years. I made a contrasting series of small rounded burnished scoops. The group members also made small clay objects at this time, except for a man who was painting an estuary with white houses. Sailing boats at anchor were added later and a light, fresh and breezy sky with a distant view of hills. Then in March a low wall developed containing the water but at the same time cutting the viewer off from it.

In clay there were three spherical candle sticks; a miniature bowl of fruit; a spoon-rest; small containers; a bigger press-moulded dish; tiles with impressed repeat patterns; and two clay figures.

One was a dramatic skeletal structure of clay pressed on a metal armature (see Fig 4.2). It looked monstrous and threatening with a long tail, two running legs, bending forward with vestigial arms and semi-human head. It swayed as if alive and bits of clay cracked and fell off as it dried. Because of its fragility it was stored on a top shelf where it peered down over the art room. The maker wanted to build up a body on top of the skeleton but no one could help in the weekly struggles with this figure.



Fig 4.2

Despite the sadness of seeing more clay had broken off each week, I felt it was important not to intervene, that the process needed space. I knew (and the group members did not) that a significant loss had precipitated the client's referral to the group. By contrast, the other accompanying female figure by the same person was in a full flowing gown with deep

folds, arms wrapped high around. As if dancing, the head is lyrically bent to one side glancing down.



Figure 4.3

*In February I have noted the group felt very cohesive. Two people are new and one person plans to leave, going suddenly in March. overshadowing the group was the sudden death of a group member from cancer the previous year in July 1998. She had been inspired by the group and was very committed.*

The female figure is glazed deep red in March. The spoon rest now says 'spoons'. A tender, sculpted portrait of a spotted dog with a long nose has a damaged ear. A small clay container returns from home holding a paper pot plant, reminiscent of offices. The same member also paints a miniature clay fire place at home with a glowing coal fire. Another spotted creature emerges, half fat caterpillar and half snake. I cast two square pots.

There is some painting and drawing. The harbour wall now borders a cobbled path; a Mediterranean landscape has a church and a hot yellow sky; and there is a Monet-inspired canal bridge painting.

A new member starts. He freely makes two messy and formless, heavy objects in wet clay; one is roughly spherical and the other slightly hollowed out as if to grind together. He bangs them together forcefully. Another member experiments at home with firing their tile in a bonfire. It breaks in pieces and is glued back together again. Two clay masks grimace or smile. I am messily slip casting.

In April the candlesticks have matching saucers, each glazed a different colour; and an egg separator and a miniature arm chair are made. The inside of a delicate fluted dish is dramatically painted black with pale spots, but the decoration is lost in firing. This person also makes two penguins who lean together bowing their heads towards each other affectionately, looking inseparable (see Fig 4.4).



Figure 4.4

The two people making these clay objects have become close friends and I make a rare interpretation, saying perhaps it was them. They laugh.

There is also an embryonic seal-like shape with no eyes. I make bigger cast dishes; draw a handled knitted bag; and embroider in miniature, sewing directly through the black page of a small book made to document the group (see Figs 4.5, 4.6).



Figure 4.5

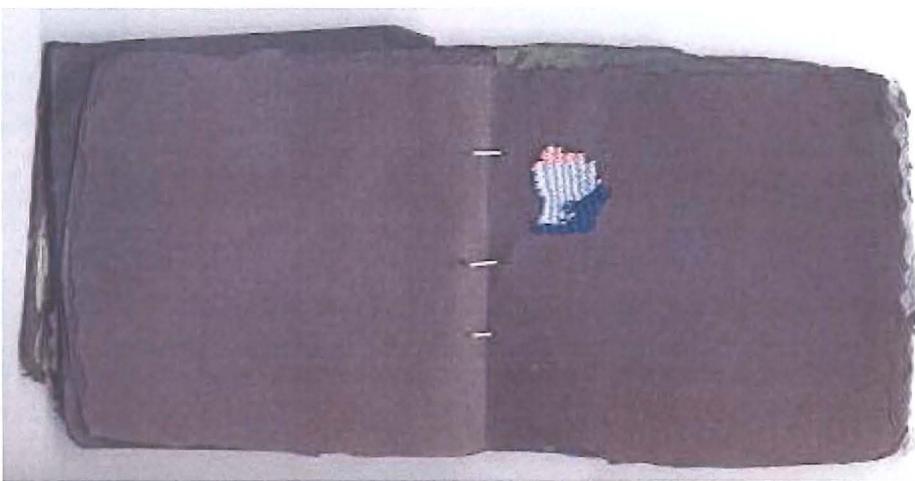
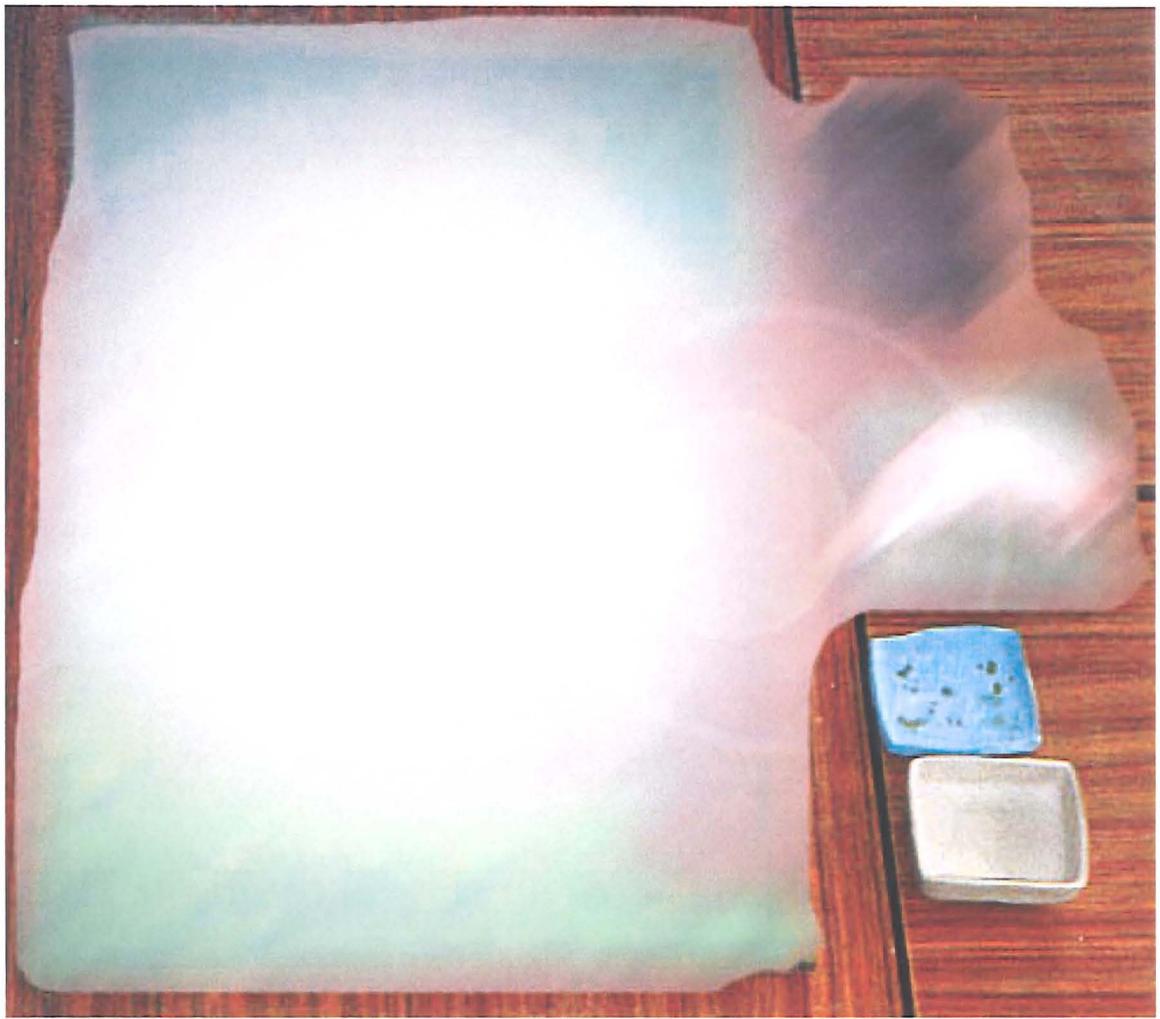


Figure 4.6

In May (see Fig 4.7) the embryonic shape is given eyes. A striking picture of deer starts on black paper using pastels. Framed by a large tree, diagonal shafts of sunlight penetrate a dark forest. One deer is close up, staring unafraid at the viewer and standing among yellow flowers in lush grass.



**Figure 4.7**

*The embryonic piece was described as 'foetal'. The deer were taken from a book but the forest at twilight is associated with a significant memory.*

The egg separator, now glazed green and yellow is taken home and reported to 'work'. My cast dishes become wider and flatter. A clay tree trunk, very similar to that in the deer picture, is made. The candle holder series continues in black and the arm chair is now pink.

In June the work is noticeably small and there is not much of it which seems reflected in my small painting of a newly germinated field of wheat. Parallel rows of tiny green shoots follow the shape of the ploughed hill dark from rain (see Fig 4.8). I then sewed green cotton shoots directly into the black paper, cutting them to size.

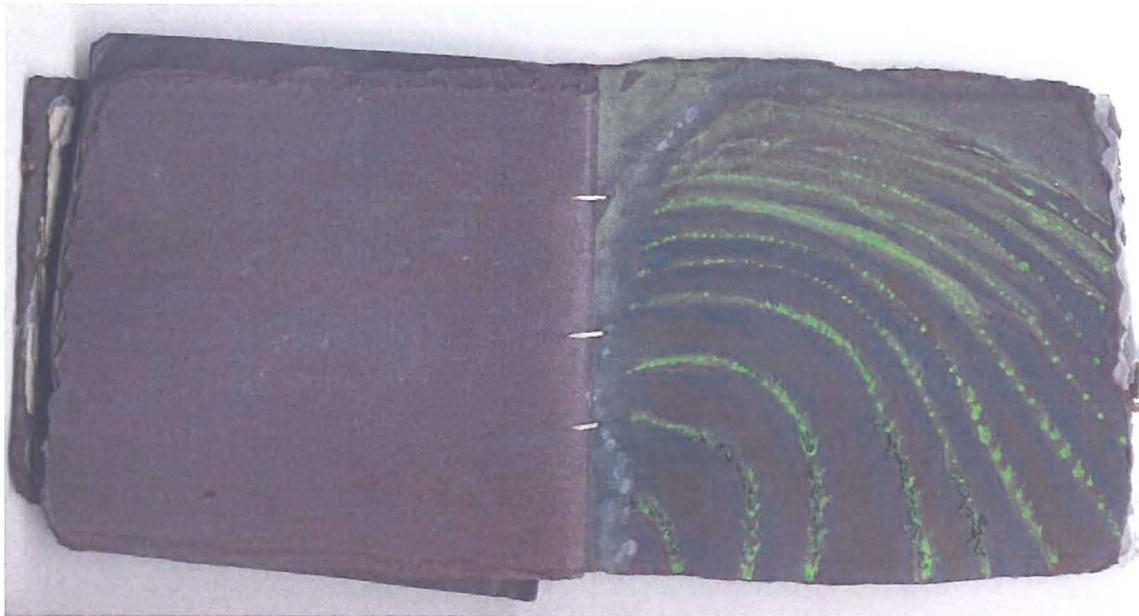


Figure 4.8

Then an ambitiously decorated plate appears and I start embroidering a face (see Chapter 4.3). There are just two eyes. I knew this could be seen as me looking at the group but it felt appropriate. Later a dolphin is drawn and a picture frame made in clay.

*In June group members make the interpretations that they are making animals and idyllic places, and the reassembled cracked pieces are like their experience of putting things back together again.*

In July dolphin sketches become clay models with the later addition of waves. A slumbering figure leans against the clay tree trunk. A small sheep lying down has a decorated blanket (*I think of Bible images*). The elaborate plate is glazed and decorated, my embroidered eyes have added features and a startling mask is painted with a classical background landscape (see Fig 4.9).

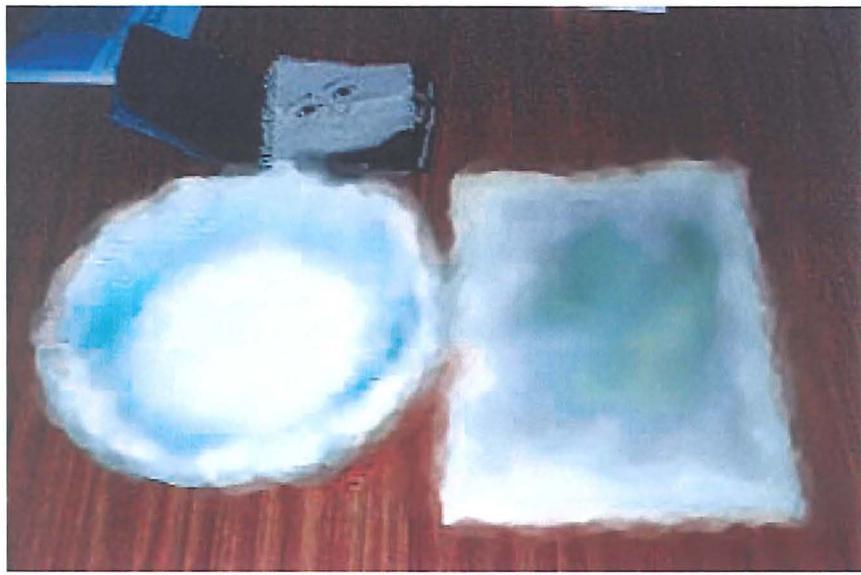


Figure 4.9

*Spotted things, tiny miniature objects, colour, shapes and themes resonate. The sheep has 'a coat of many colours', confirming my association (see Fig 4.10).*



Figure 4.10

*There has been a period of tension in the group associated with the new person who made the two heavy objects and later left. A member says they want the group to be peaceful and a 'safe haven', not filled with 'dissension' and argument. They would not come if it was 'contentious'. At the end of July a dolphin blows up in the kiln; the pieces are wanted. The mask was about not showing true feelings.*

In August I cast dishes. A second mask is painted next to the first. My face has a mouth (see Fig 4.11). A clay dolphin rises above waves (see Fig 4.12).



Figure 4.11



Figure 4.12

*Partners and mothers are talked about for the first time. In the artwork everyone experiments with something new. The member wanting the 'safe haven' in July points out that 'people talk in their own time'. There is talk of intimacy.*

In September I throw a clumsy looking pot on the kick wheel for the first time (see Fig 4.13).



Figure 4.13

But others try the wheel and several thrown pots are made with much laughter, and fired. In October, following the firing of the sheep, a small elephant with a blanket is made. The two animals look soft, vulnerable and cared for. More ceramics include a clay mask; a Wedgwood-inspired oval plaque with an impressed shell border enclosing two jumping fish; three horse shaped fridge magnets; and I make a thick square dish, cutting shapes out of the soft clay with a knife, aiming to retain its clayness. My face embroidery now has all its features (see Fig. 4.14)

Figure 4.14



*Using the wheel involves teaching. The acute unit is closing. We discuss moving to the new building. I noted that the two animals' decorated blankets are associated with ceremony and make them special. Difficulties of expressing anger are discussed.*

In November, the first piece of knitting is done in the group. I cast a tiny dish. Work is glazed (see Fig 4.15).



**Figure 4.15**

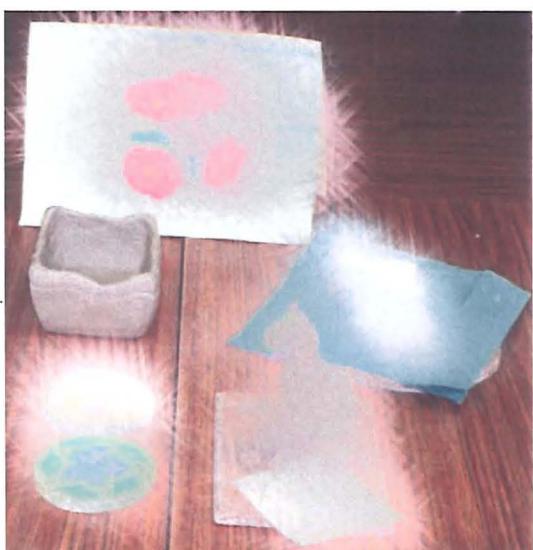
*Stigma is discussed related to knitting ('women's work') and to attending the acute unit. Knitting starts after this when I introduce knitting needles and mention bringing in a loom. As the move approaches, huddling together is noted as an interpretation by members. Parents and children are also talked about and ways of managing symptoms. A member has a planned leaving and there is talk of 'recovering'.*

In this first year, a monster overlooked the group. There were messy repeated experiments with visual and structural exploration of lost and ideal relationships including the beginnings of material practices and difficulties integrating new members.

## Year Two, 2000

Changing environments and shoes, material practices, more miniatures and animals, faults, smallness and awe

In January a delicate watercolour of roses is painted. I paint an animal ballet I had seen on television that had been choreographed in a barn. In clay there are more tiles; a small cat; a swan; and a tiny decorated and heeled shoe (see Fig 4.16, 4.17). Integrating a 'fault' in a vase starts that will go on through the year. I make another solid pot trying to express clayness; and slip cast and press mould two oven dishes.



*There has been serious physical illness amongst members, but later they mention feeling emotionally better. There is an air of hope and thinking about future possibilities.*

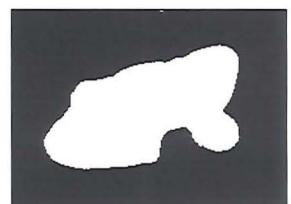


Figure 4.17

Figure 4.16

In February the wheel is used, glazing continues and a constrained feeling is conveyed by two images: picture of a depressed looking man in a cell, and a tree with minimal leaves has branches pushing to the outer edges of the page (see Figs 4.18, 4.19).



Figure 4.18



Figure 4.19

*The seriousness of their mental health problems is explored. The artwork is described as helpful for self esteem. Group sessions are enjoyed so much they want them to be longer. One member suggests having an exhibition, uncannily echoing research plans the previous week for me to put on an exhibition at Goldsmiths. We plan the move to the new building. Group sessions will be half an hour longer (making them  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours). We will make an exhibition there. The absorption that is experienced with the artwork and the closeness with each other is not felt outside, where they feel depressed. On the spur of the moment, we go to see the new room in the middle of a group, leaving a note on the door.*

In May there is the first painting of the Millennium Dome; another of a setting sun; and I press-mould and cast dishes (see Fig 4.20). Pooh bear and an Aga feature on tiles. A dolphin survives the kiln, riding on waves.

*The old room is described as 'like an old slipper'. The lack of anonymous entry at the new unit and other reservations are discussed. The members find a three week break difficult, but three do artwork at home.*

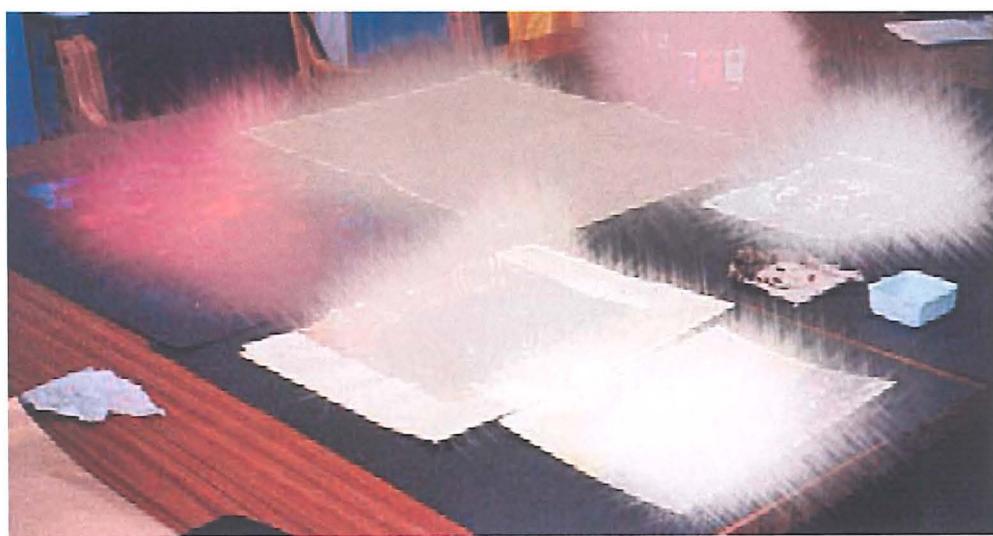


Figure 4.20

We move to the new acute unit - a very different environment. Modern surroundings of whiteness and stainless steel include the curved, sandblasted glass brick wall. But people come to lean against it. Their conversation enters the open windows of our hot room where the air conditioning does not work.

A second Millennium Dome appears: both images have amazed people looking at it, arms stretched out in awe (see Figs 4.21, 4.22).

Figure 4.21



Tiny model furniture (not in clay) also appear (bedside table with candle, alarm clock, pencils and minute notebooks) with carefully drawn room plans.

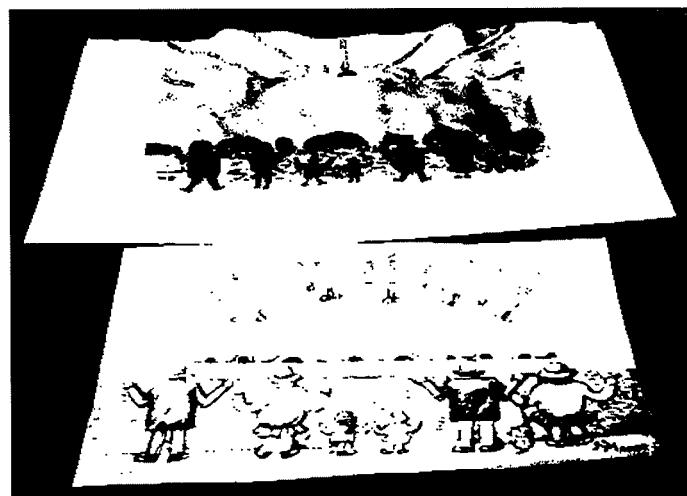
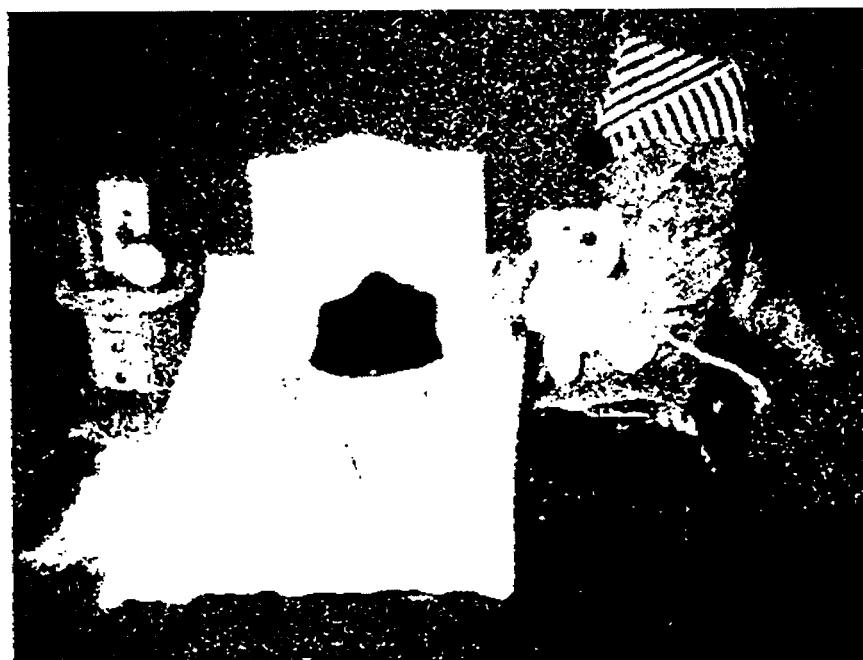


Figure 4.22

*'The people are welcoming it' (the Dome). The miniature furniture started initially in clay two years ago after I made a clay model house. Their maker feels 'childish' but is encouraged by the group. Room difficulties and travelling problems exacerbate members' symptoms. The group feels shaky. There is a regretted disclosure and a confession that two members are meeting outside, breaking the boundaries.*



In June teddy bears are brought in, staged in themed rooms made by the owner who describes 'dressing' them (see Fig 4.23).

Figure 4.23

In all the artwork,

colours, shapes and marks are strikingly resonant (see for instance, Fig 4.24).



Figure 4.24

I make a chalice and the 'fault' vase is ready for firing again. A farmstead amongst trees and hills is painted. Smoke rises straight upwards from two chimneys into a clear blue sky and yellow corn is ripening.

*A member feels ready to leave and return to work. Her severe symptoms are under control. The group wants to start making art at the start of sessions as discussion at the beginning seems to change tack and is not returned to. The move was more difficult than anticipated and several feel overwhelmed by housing and bereavement difficulties.*

In July animals are carefully drawn from magazines. Miniature items burgeon for teddy bears and their clothing includes silky dresses and nets (see Fig 4.25). My embroidered face has a background. A detailed drawing of a tall ship in front of ancient buildings is started.



Figure 4.25

*The possibility of moving to a community setting is jumped at by the group. It is 'too clinical' here. Travelling is difficult and seeing acutely distressed people is disturbing. The member's planned leaving takes place and she wants her artwork. The group tells her she has become more confident.*

In August a strange small head of a cat is modelled (see Fig 4.25, 4.26). Its vast, round, open mouth calls or wails. I depict the group in clay which they find interesting: a cluster of coral-like curvy shapes emerge out of a small container. I also make castellated containers reminiscent of churches or tombs. By September the ship is finished; there is a third Millennium Dome image; and a bear appears in her marriage dress.



Figure 4.26

*The cat is a 'little monster asking for his breakfast' influenced by Munch's 'Scream' (and the environment?).*

*A new member attends only one session.*

*In October we move to the new setting. The group really likes the residential setting and its quietness as a 'studio' built in the garden with a private back gate. The person who made the disclosure, however, does not get there and drops out of the group.*

As planned we make our own private exhibition of work going back several years (see Fig 4.27).

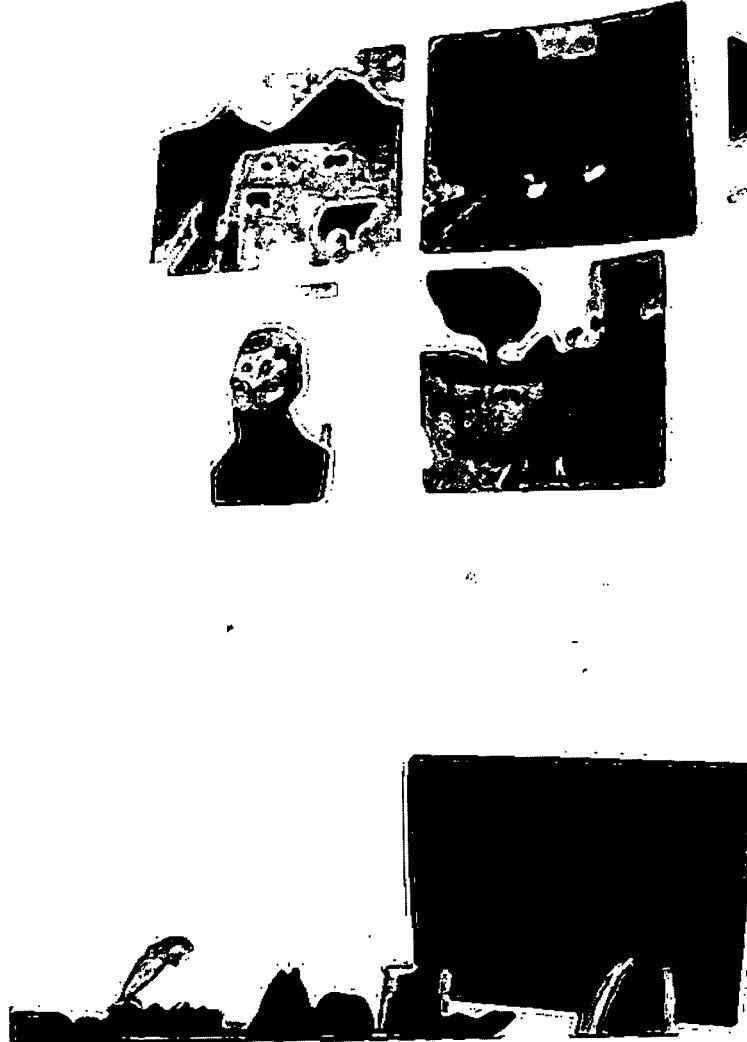


Figure 4.27

*Although interested in looking back, one person finds it very distressing afterwards. Seeing work made when she first started in the group brought back all the feelings. However, they felt trying different materials had given them confidence and realised what was made related to thoughts, feelings and states of mind.*

I knit a small piece and weave for the first time in the group: tapestry on a card. Someone else starts crotchet. The Millennium Dome painter tries a new style. The image is highly stylised: two people gaze in awe at three pyramid shapes (volcanoes). A background of both day and night has two suns and two moons; the middle ground is three terraced houses and a garden with formalised trees. This member also starts a drawing of objects that have a highly symbolic quality: a tap, lamp, vase of flowers, rowing boat, fork, key, a knife on a plate, a fish on a plate, and a tombstone with kneeling figure. The tall ship is now ready to set sail (see Fig 4.28).



Figure 4.28

*This person feels much better and plans to leave. He feels it has been about finding acceptance of his life. His friendship with another man from the group (they met outside and broke the boundaries) has been particularly important.*

The spacious new setting invites spreading out. In December I start a series of cards: two mixed media pieces of blue, painted diagonals with wax crayon scribbles are cut up and mounted by eye (see Fig 4.29).



Figure 4.29

There is bigger knitting and a needlecase. A Barbie doll is 'dressed' with tiny clothes along with a teddy bear who wears exotic satin (see Fig 4.30). A new member's image of two fairies resonates with the doll (see Fig 4.31).

Figure 4.30

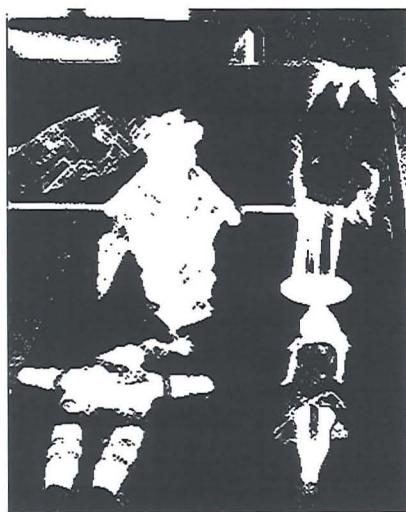


Figure 4.31



*The cards are oceanic. The members' absorption stops them thinking about their problems. It is realised that the teddies link to a core problem; and the volcanoes are about possible emigration.*

There was a little monster this year. Two moves proved problematic, the new environments becoming auguries for losing people and awe. Material practices became established exploring core problems and symptoms.

### Year Three, 2001

A family group: teddies, humanoids, slithery creatures. Diaspora, my bereavement, endings and a new beginning

In January four disparate landscapes painted on one piece of paper relate to my finished cards in colour and content. The needlecase and knitting progress.

*A new member cannot get to the group on time: lateness is a life long problem.*

*When the group has to start even earlier, they leave.*

A wide, strong vase is drawn in February, holding painted flowers and foliage. There is knitting that seems for a baby, looking special as do my cards on gold paper (see Fig 4.32).

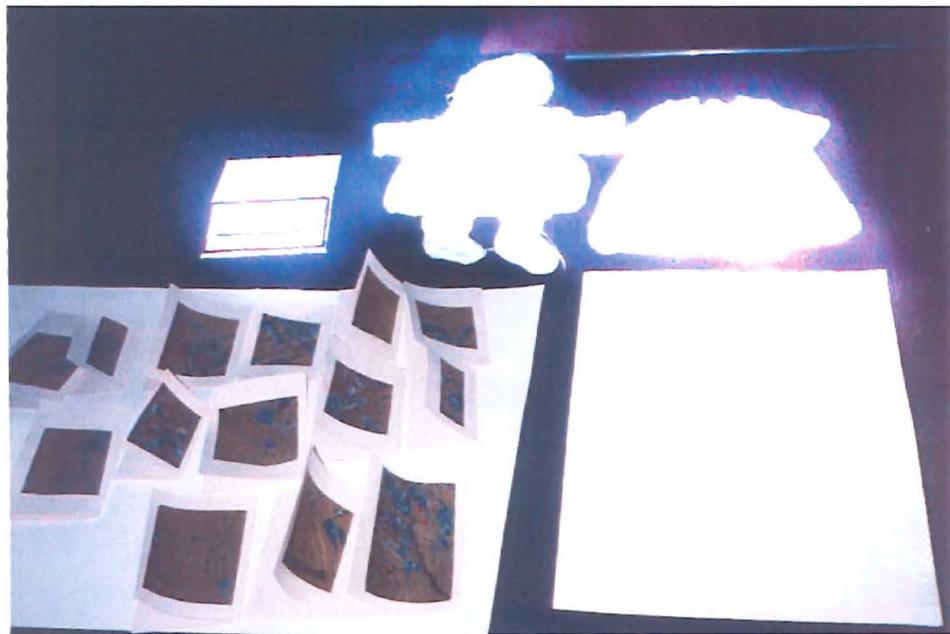


Figure 4.32

*There are now two group members and me - uncomfortable numbers, like a 'family'.*

The vase image is finished in March. There are series of clay beads; my test tiles; and two smiling faces - a sun and a moon (*the two special members?*). A large clay snail appears in April, I finish my tapestry, and there are more knitted baby clothes (see Fig 4.33).

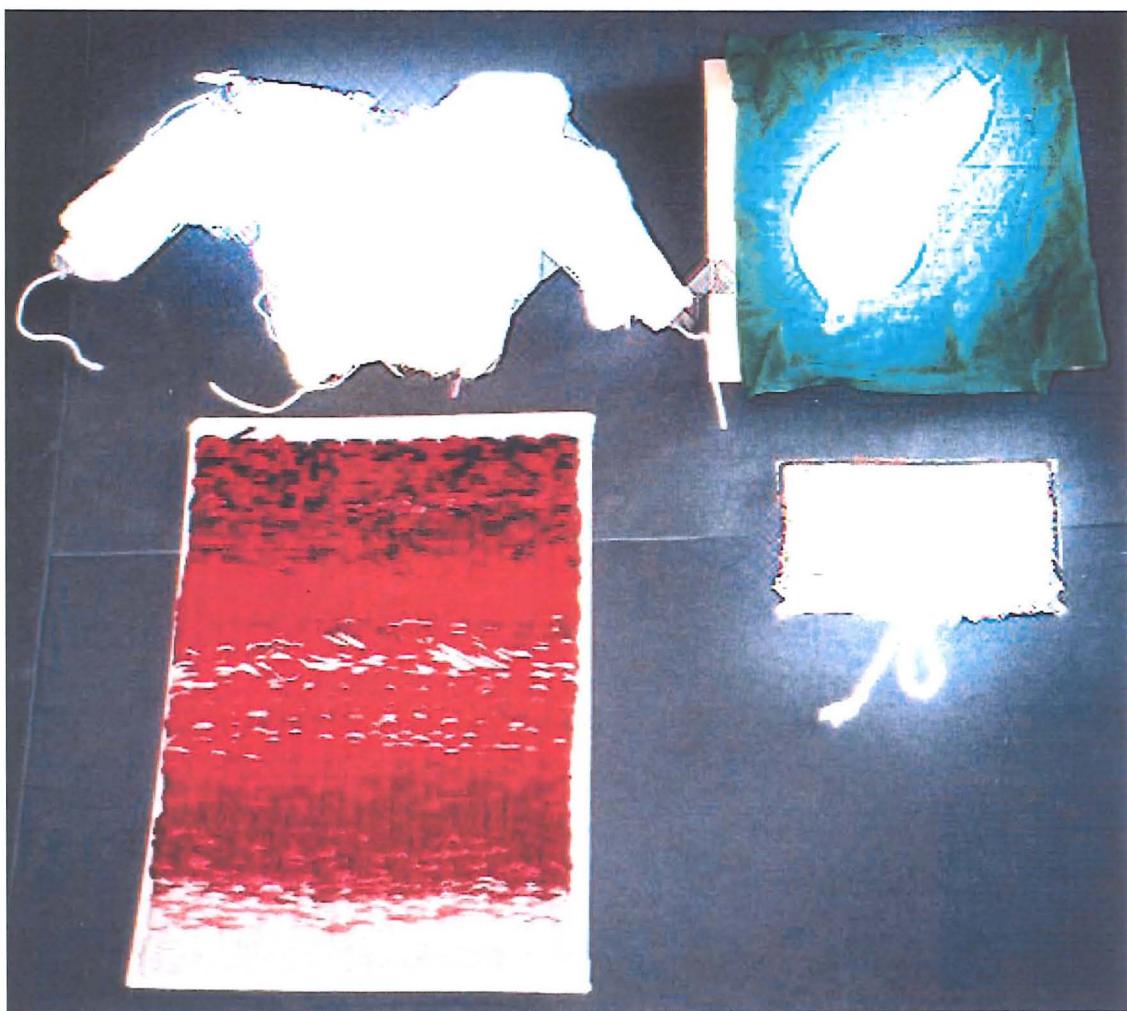


Figure 4.33

*It is a doll's layette, but may be sent to a premature baby unit - a link is made by the person who made it. Sewing features with a second needlecase, noting that there is no sewing machine. Sewing and knitting is found to help difficult early mornings. They are both feeling better. However, their partners are feeling worse. It is described as a 'peaceful' room. They discuss their fears of leaving this intimate situation.*

*The group is difficult to maintain with absences. But teddies are being 'commissioned', and are linked as 'transitional objects' to agoraphobic symptoms. The reason for not going out is realised: this person does not know what to say to people about what has happened. Workshop space is made at home for material practices. Symptoms are abating, there are plans for this member to leave.*

In May I make two more books: a whiting out experiment, and pages of drawn knitting, linking to the research. Lino cut prints of bears proliferate in black on white. In June they become less oppressive in yellow but disturbance is manifest in a surreal drawing of a square figure with a cabbage head in a frilled skirt, dwarfed by large broom (see Fig 4.34).



*Boredom overtakes me as I look at the photos. I wonder why. Leaving, friendship and loss are discussed. New members were due to start but don't. Partners' problems get worse.*

Figure 4.34

In June three small bears dressed in a policeman, nurse and chef's uniforms, look rather cross (see Fig 4.35).



Figure 4.35

A softer bear appears in checked shirt and blue trousers. I make more tiles, and start another tapestry to join to the previous one. Predominantly red moving into dark blue, it looks clumsy. A drawing of boots and shoes starts. The square body and head of a tiny bear is sewn.

*Lengthy absences are planned by one person. A new member starts. I have a close family bereavement that, unknown to me, is told to the group by a staff member. Knowing my emotional state must affect the group, and probably too, the long difficulties leading up to the loss of my father.*



Figure 4.36

In July the disturbing imagery intensifies. The new person makes an image of an electricity pylon in deep blues and purples, towering over the viewer and flanked alarmingly by two rectangular shapes that soar out of the picture. The distorted angles are moving in a rather sickening way reminiscent of vertigo (see Fig 4.36).

Other jarring paintings have been made. The shoe picture is now a quaint watercolour of three shelves of brightly coloured shoes and boots. However, I think of tragic cultural associations with the painter's early traumas and diasporas (see Fig.37).

*In my therapist's notes there is no sense of disturbance or boredom regarding the images. The jarring colours are seen as vibrant. The new member is feeling better. The kiln is fired for the first time. The shoes connect to comfort. This person is having a month's break abroad with a view to emigrating. Rejoining the group will be discussed with me on her return. Another person could join in September, but now two plan to leave: the new member has a new job. We decide to end the group in October with optional follow up appointments.*

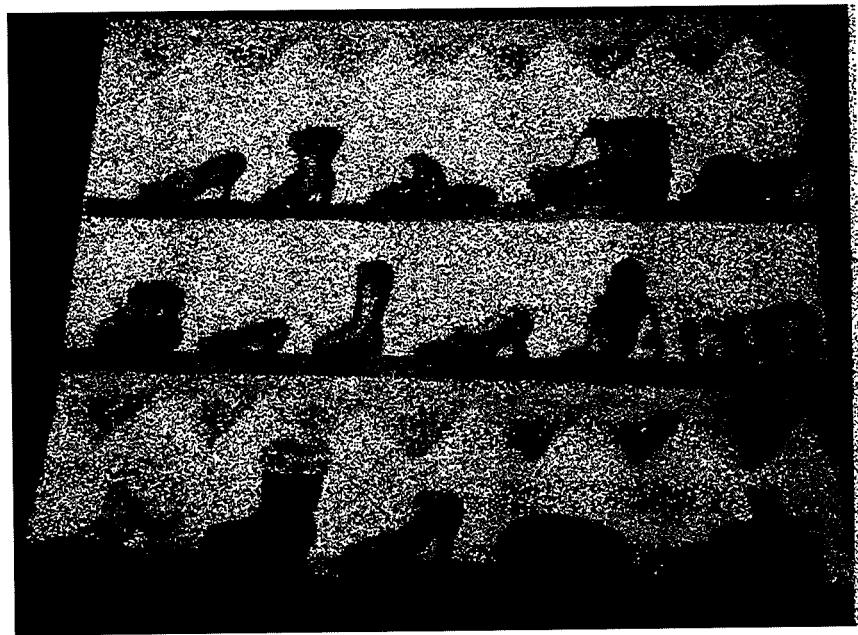


Figure 4.37

In September these images carry on. I finish the second half of the tapestry that I am unhappy with. Then, a bright green watercolour frog appears with gleaming red eyes, holding on to a reed (see Fig 4.38).

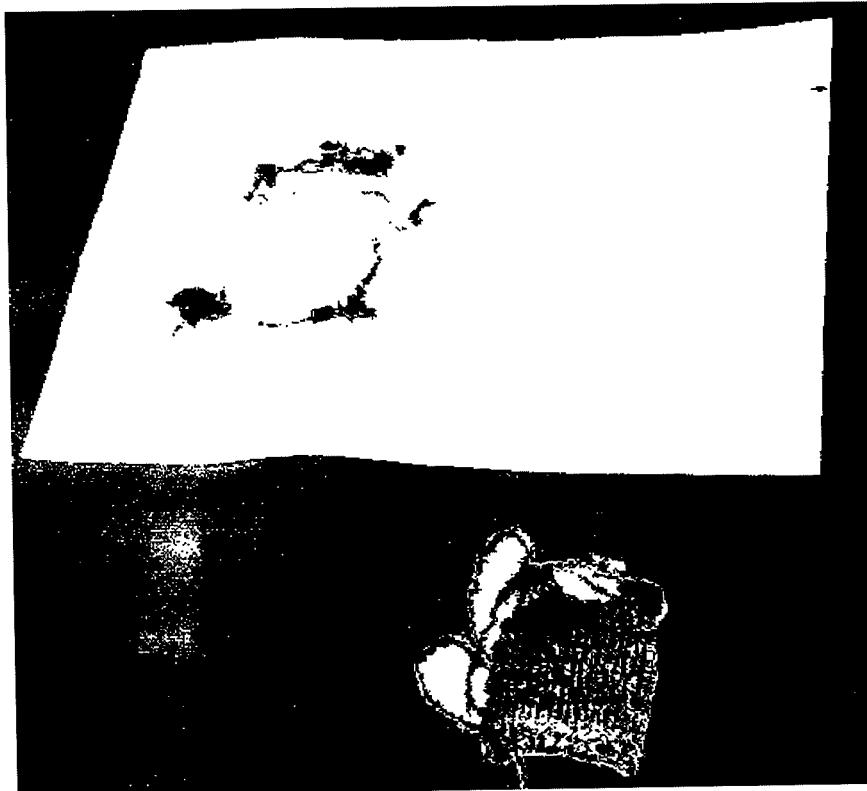


Figure 4.38

A clay frog is also made, and a seahorse sketched.

*In the penultimate group a member reviews her work.*

*Another will phone for a follow up appointment if needed. The group helped because it was so relaxed, 'laid back' with no pressure: 'I could work at my own pace'. In the last group there are warm goodbyes. Members take away their work.*

At the end of October a new group starts with three women. There are no photos of the first and second session due to practical difficulties. However, a water feature was made in clay, and a man's head associated with nightmares; a killer whale's tail was painted; there was cross stitch; and I wove. In the third session pale 'fitting together' shapes are drawn. I make a clay box with three sections out of thin, insubstantial slabs which they called my 'Trouble Box' ('for theirs' - they laugh) (see Fig 4.39).

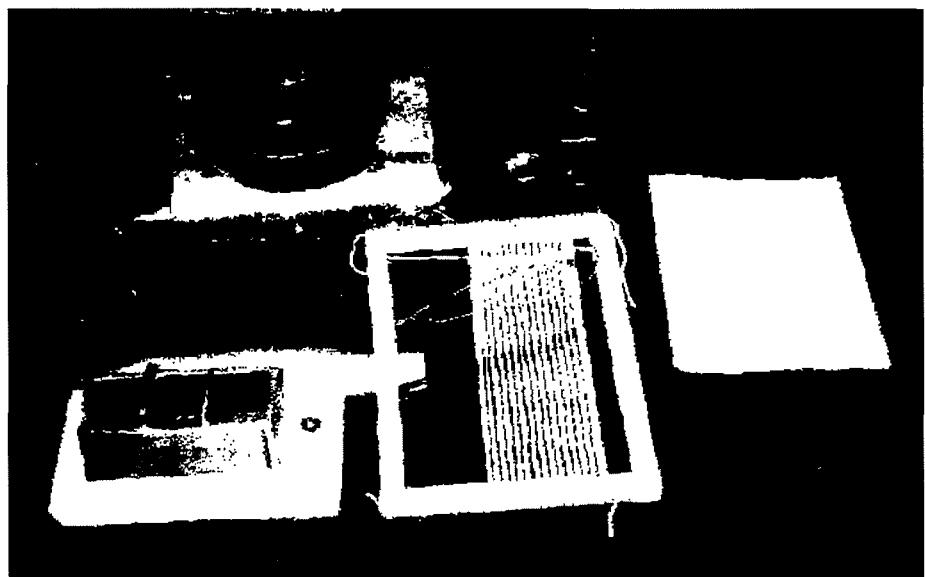


Figure 4.39

In December I weave and they are interested when I say it is 'tentative, probably because it is a new group'. I make folders for them.

The year was very difficult with my own bereavement known to the members and barely viable numbers with underlying disturbance. Notwithstanding, therapeutic change took place. Planned and successful endings made way for a new group's beginning.

## Year Four, 2002

Twos and grief, closed in-ness and closeness, sheltered spaces and open flatness, flowers and leaves, water and landscapes, difference

In January six vivid poinsettias are painted as flat red shapes with added yellow stamens. I weave on a loom for the first time. The tapestry explores where land meets sky, gradual colour mixing moves slowly upwards from deep green towards the horizon. The fitting together shapes become softly warm and harmonious. Several paintings feature water: a field and pond have obscured and fenced sections; a beach scene has rocks; and there is a shore with mountains. In clay, two conjoint torsos stare at each other featurelessly; while the features of the head started in October are carefully modelled (see Fig 4.40). An image of an unearthly floating door with stairs emerges.



*Three of us use magenta and there are lots of mountains. Members have been in physical pain over Christmas. One person is feeling better and moving to the sea: she has found the group very helpful, no longer needing 'perfect' artwork. There is experimentation with materials and a member shows us their work. In February a*

Figure 4.40 man joins, much to the excitement of the women who burst into the room.



Pairs multiply and engagement increases. The clay couple now share the same thin arm. Heavily smoothed and phallic, the lack of features and fixity is disturbing (see Fig 4.41).

Figure 4.41

My weaving gets paler with raised stitches, added magenta and sky blue, reaching the horizon. Paintings and drawings include a beach scene with purple sky, turquoise sea and two children holding hands next to a sandcastle with two flags; two snow scenes, one showing a skiing village with ski lift, church and two pairs of skis; and another with a watery sun and sharp white peaks glimpsing water behind; a weeping tree has fresh looking green branches flowing downwards and a water colour of a hedged flower garden starts (see Figs 4.42, 4.43). The poinsettias have leaves.

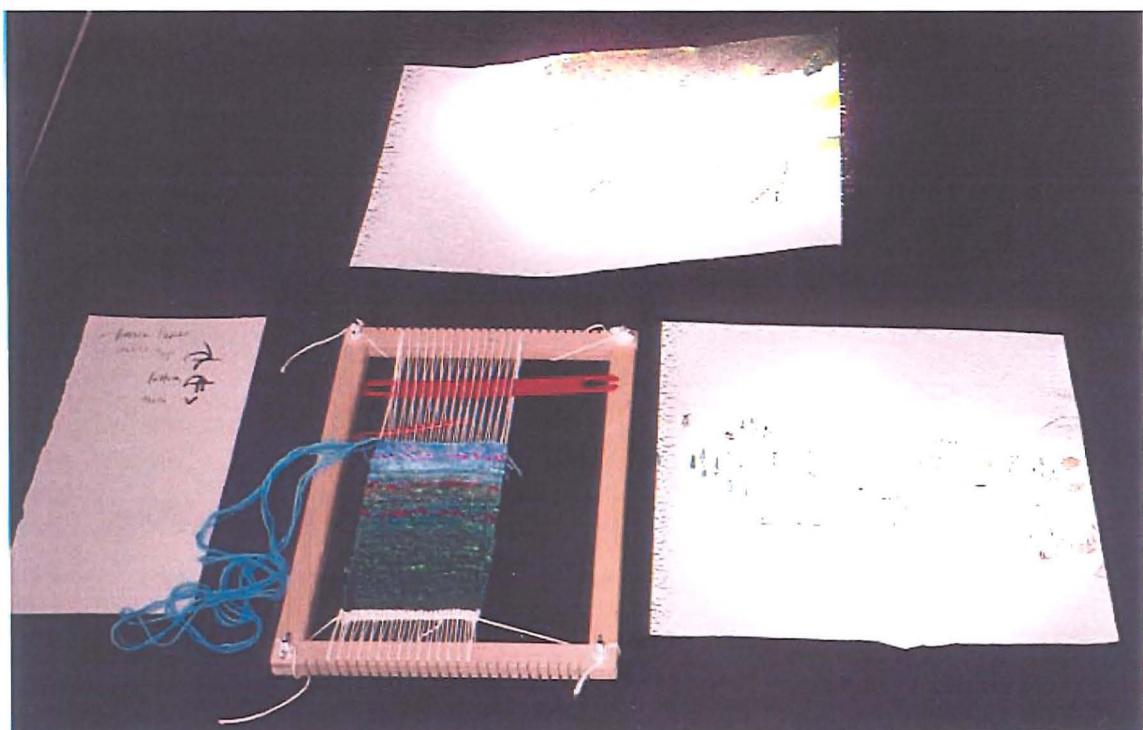


Figure 4.42

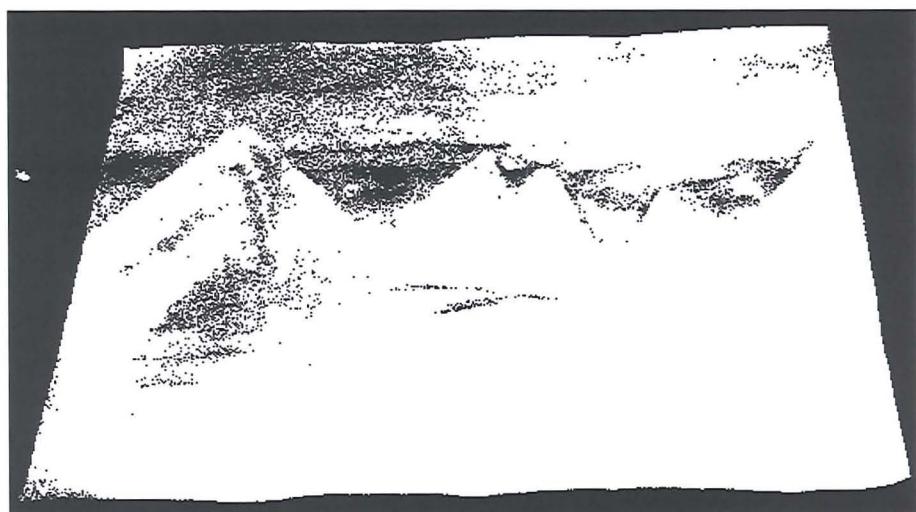
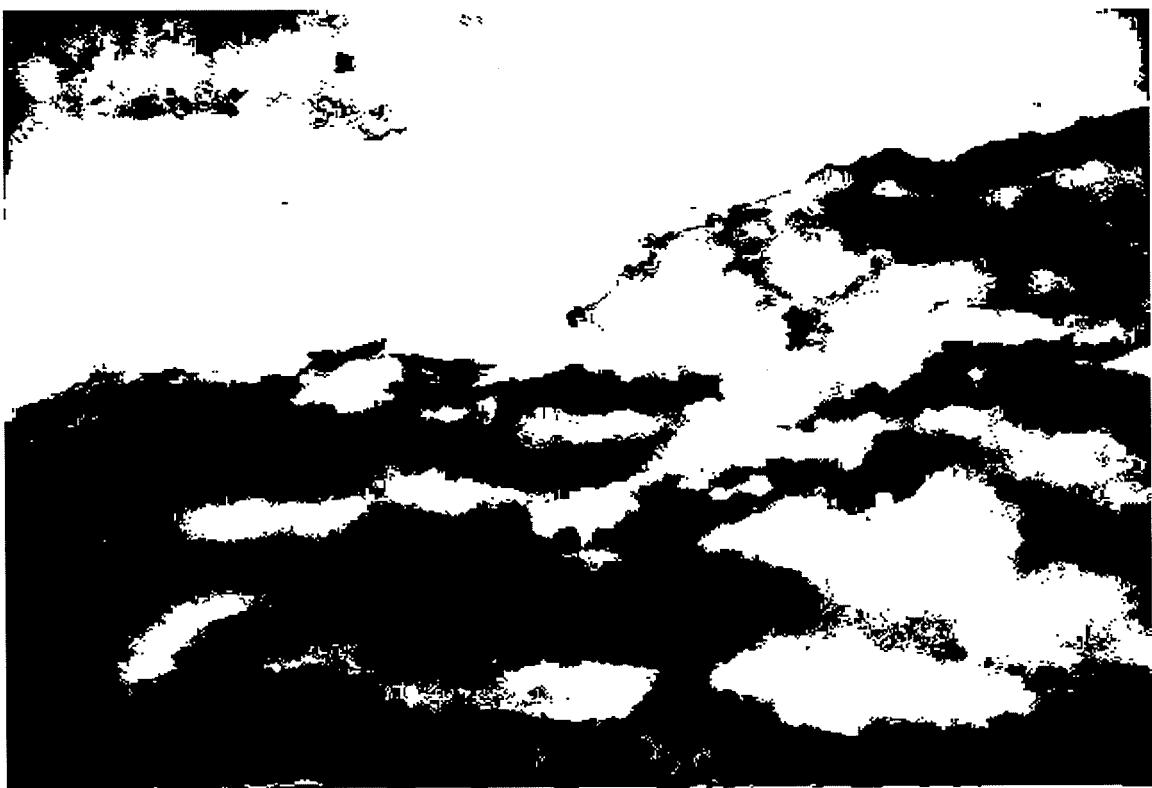


Figure 4.43

*We have the first glaze firing. There is grief for a partner. Panic attacks are talked about and the safety of home. An impending break in March brings discussion of mothers' unpredictability, but artwork is being thought about outside the group. The member leaving is very positive about the group and what she has learnt about herself. She reviews her work and takes some. The new person is also positive: they can concentrate, get absorbed and look forward to it.*

In April the hedged garden is aburst with flowers and closely cut topiary. A moorland scene starts. I glaze my castellated boxes. There are two seascapes: one of a tiny ship riding a huge swell of watery turbulence with seagulls and cliffs (see Fig 4.44); and a lighthouse on rocks in a sheltered bay that has a small boat pulled up on the beach below white, grass covered cliffs (see Fig 4.45).



**Figure 4.44**

In clay a Mexican sleeps under a large hat; and I make another rectangular box with walls which again look too thin; and a clumsy standing structure.

*A member leaves unexpectedly. The sheltered bay hints at this rocky patch where the group is shaky with absences, reflected by my thin clay slabs. There is more grief for a partner.*

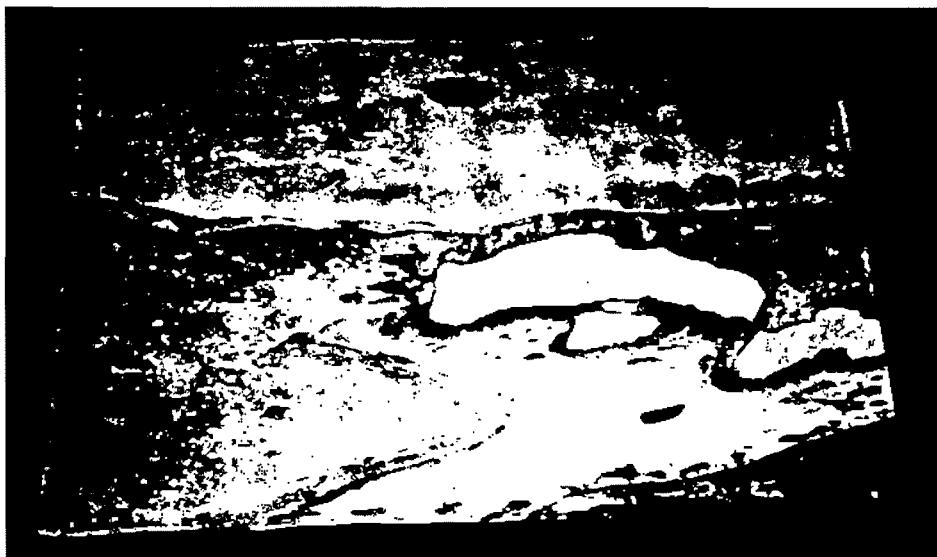


Figure 4.45

In May there is a difficult session when a new member joins. Looking at the photos, their image is oppressive: a large closed-in image in coloured chalk on black paper gives a birds-eye view of a wooded area, path, river and bridge. Back gardens and identical houses are flanked by a road (see Fig 4.46).

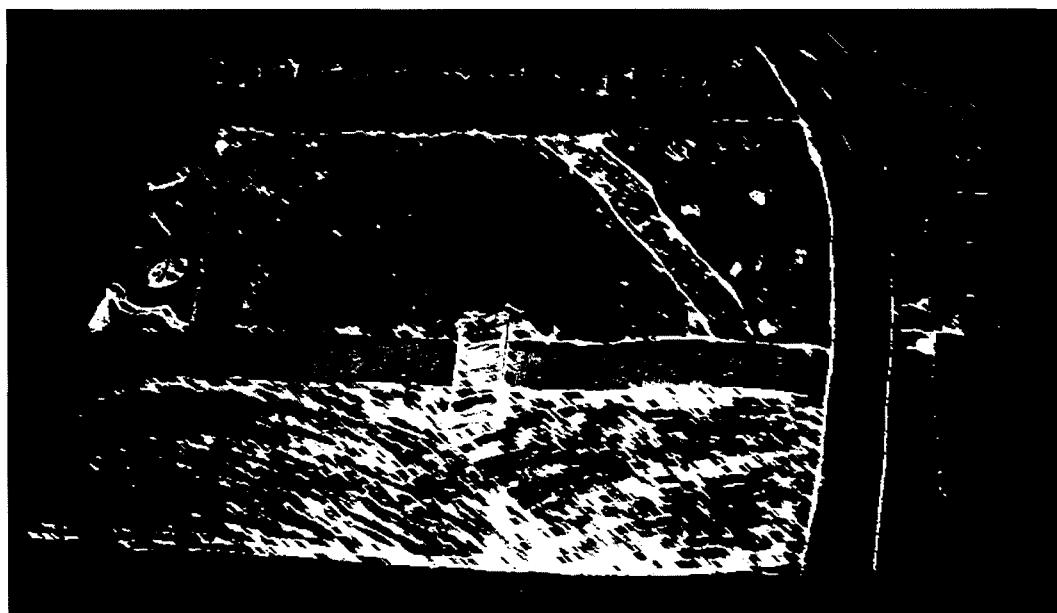


Figure 4.46

There are also landscapes; and an image of a building on stilts. Unidentifiable clay things are wrapped up in plastic (see Fig 4.47).



Figure 4.47

*They are all there. Despite advice, the new person dominates the group, plunging into talking about the image that is the 'root cause' of all their symptoms. It is 'too much' for everyone. The new member felt calm doing the artwork but then couldn't stop remembering when starting to talk. It frightens the group.*

In June a naked clay figure lies on its side; my weaving is almost finished; and there is a still life of two flowers in a vase; the Mexican is fired and is jaunty in a yellow hat and red trousers.

*There are bad side effects from medication. Sketching starts at home and is found calming. Grief is talked about, a lack of structure in daily life and cross-cultural issues at home. Two people feel better.*

By July the building on stilts is a working place with fishing boats pulled up on the shore (see Fig 4.48).



Figure 4.48

A drawing shows a kitchen window view of an enclosed lawn.

*With impending breaks the support group members get from each other is talked about. Medication still causes problems. There will be another new member.*

In August the new member starts embroidery on hessian, working downwards from the top. I have started another tapestry of a horizon, working upwards. The enclosed lawn has formal arrangements in pairs - evergreens in tubs, vases and pots and on the window sill, two small handled baskets.

*The new member is very distressed, but the person who had a similar experience (in May) has found a way of calming themselves with the art. Another member describes 'it focuses you'. In the artwork there are sheltered spaces. I bring in a book on weaving and raise the subject of medication. Community Psychiatric Nurses and services are talked about.*

In September a striking design of flowers and leaves is painted with small, rhythmical brush strokes. An image of an apple and trees is drawn; and a landscape with a large tree in the foreground. My weaving lightens, moving slowly upwards.

In October I make a wide, flat dish with fluted edges and a flattened wall vase in clay. Two images have culturally specific references: the embroidery has a sun in a hot sky of deep reds and blues; and a church with two other buildings amongst autumnal trees is of eastern European architecture. There are two pictures of boats: one has a wooden planked jetty with two people fishing in a sheltered bay; the other is of two sailing boats, one half out of view, and a rowing boat at low tide with distant white houses and hills.

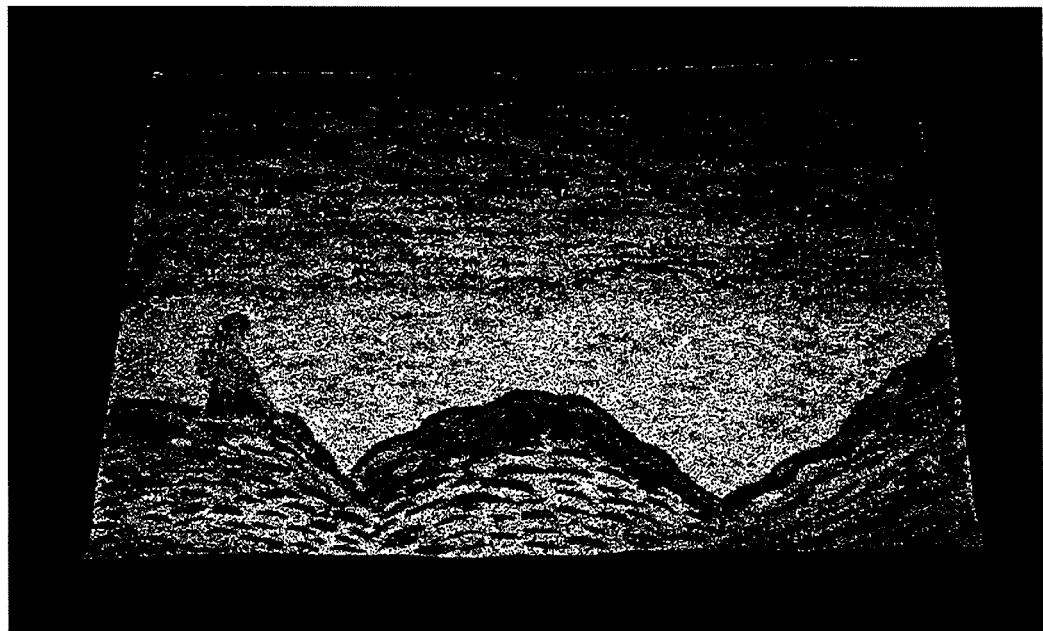
*The church is copied from a pastels box ('using imagination triggers memories'). The painter of boats jokes about there being two people in his work for the first time. Sewing at home takes place, and the group is said to offer 'security'.*

The apple picture is finished. It is lyrical with movement and glows with warmth in red, purple and yellow (see Fig 4.49).



Figure 4.49

A woman with long blonde hair is painted, who sits on a rock looking out to sea at a yellow sunset (see Fig 4.50). Unusual, repeated brush strokes rhythmically move across the page, describing the contours.



**Figure 4.50**

*This is what she visualises to calm herself. These two images are by the two members who had been so distressed when starting.*

Later I make another wide flat dish, but slightly squarer (See Fig 4.51).

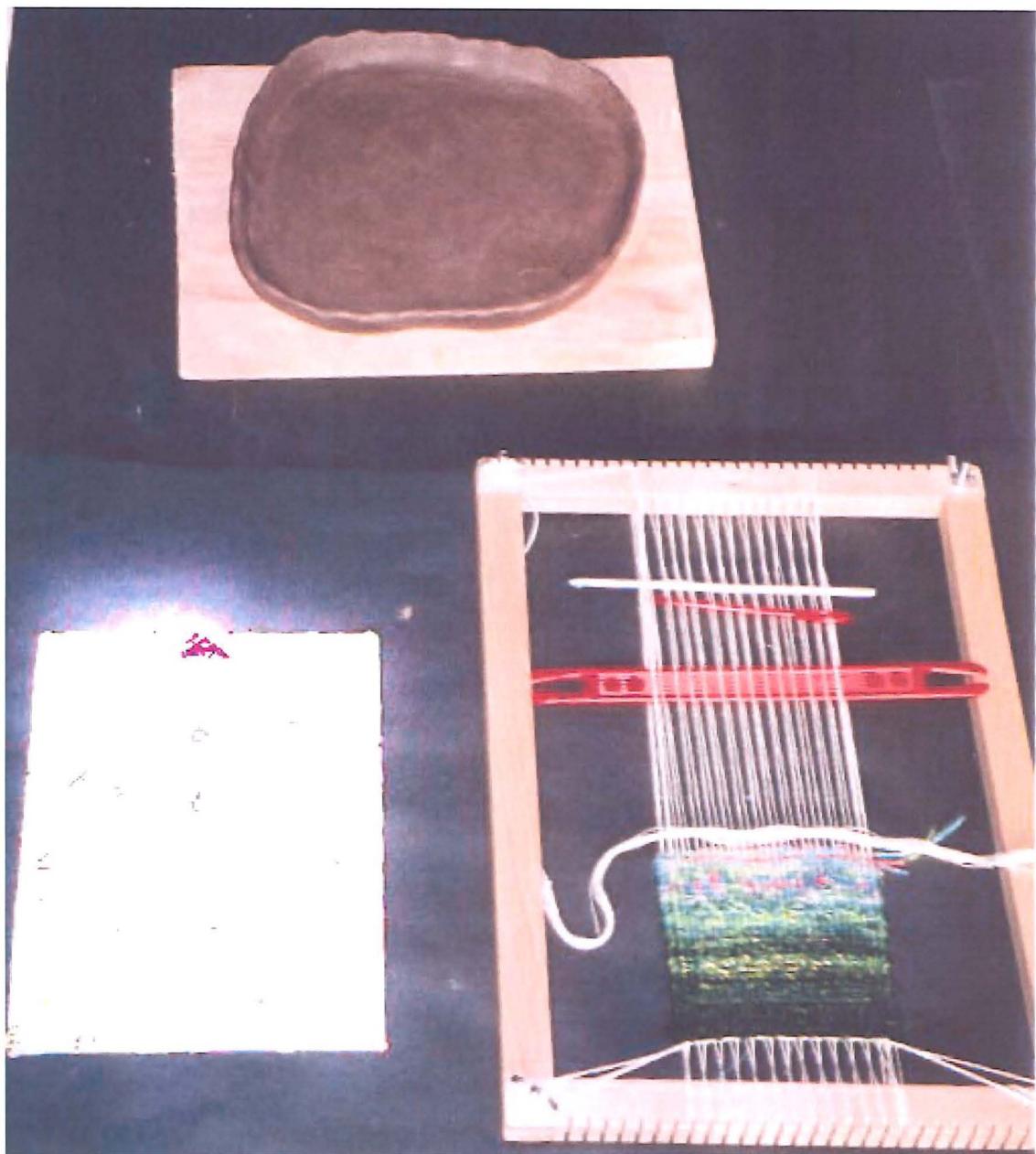


Figure 4.51

Two images of Christmas trees appear; one a lino cut and the other, in chalk on black paper, is a disturbing image of two little girls with teddy bears sitting under a large tree with orange decorations. A painting of a stone bridge over a river has a passing place in the middle (see Fig 4.52).



Figure 4.52



Figure 4.53

A large A1 image of an enclosed, deeply-wooded scene is framed by two trees bending towards one another in the foreground, their roots and overhead branches mingle and join. In the middle a pool is edged with reeds and flowers (see Fig 4.53).

In structure it is strikingly like one of the first images of the year, the unseparable couple, but this is fluid, rich and inviting.

*The wooded glade relaxes her. I start a method in my notes for recording the artwork more systematically. The members also try new things and discuss 'how they used to feel'. The stone bridge painter uses charcoal for the first time and is 'messy'.*

There are two open, watery seascapes in November, one at night with a thin silvery moon and two breakwaters. The sun in the embroidery is bigger with pale pinks and blues. My weaving works upward from the horizon with pale blues. A kite is painted. It is being blown steeply across the page under a triangular cloud, held by a child with a scarf.

*The kite, taken from a children's book, reminds her of happy childhood memories. In another person medication has 'caused a relapse'. There is a depressed feeling in the group.*

In December glazing takes place. An alert clay mouse appears. There are two culturally specific landscapes: one of a black adult and child, standing closely together looking at a horizon of pinks and lavenders; the other with an English church, houses and a heavy gate.

*A new person will be joining. This prompts a member to leave beforehand. The others worry she is not ready but I feel she has other priorities and may have done enough for now. Two people say the artwork has made them look at things around them in a new way, for instance, how the light falls on the landscape and trees.*

In year four, mountains and water featured as well as pairs and grief. Two members joined in very distressed states but came to find the artwork and group helpful: closed-in experience opened out, echoed by my pots.

## Year Five, 2003

Landscapes, locations, safe dwellings and working places; parts, threes, and endings; reds and hues, humans, an alien, a night monster and the moon.

The series of working landscapes gathers momentum in January. A harbour has a large fuel storage drum but there are hazardous rocks and a lighthouse (see Fig 4.54).



Figure 4.54

A second reclining female figure is made in clay. My tapestry is finished and the embroidery is stitched around the sun.

*It is an African sky. Drawing and painting takes place at home. Christmas was difficult for most; there are medication problems and depression, but jokes as well (the clay figure: 'a day on Zispin!'). Two people have physical investigations. A letter arrives from the person who left in December asking for her work: the group changed her life and how she looks at things. She is sorry for pouring out such sadness. Leaving the group is discussed. It is a calm group. The naked female figure is trying to sleep. The new person stays for only one session when dying is discussed.*

In February a painting of irises is started. I warp a loom. An image of a canal boat will become another busy working scene, as well as a partly obscured large ship moored at a jetty. The embroidery is stitched below the sun in deep reds shot with pink. This member also starts drawing a house which is architectural in its detail. Four watercolours show

farmland; ploughed earth; and two are of water and hills. A wire structure is made, shaped like a helmet (see Fig 4.55).



**Figure 4.55**

*Panic attacks are discussed. Safe havens of harbours are evident but the images suggest there is preparation for high seas. They talk about the absorption of making art, which is also taking place at home and an art class has been joined. They feel to blame for the person who didn't join.*

*In March I request a medication review for a member. The helmet has turned into a dinosaur's head (see Fig 4.56).*

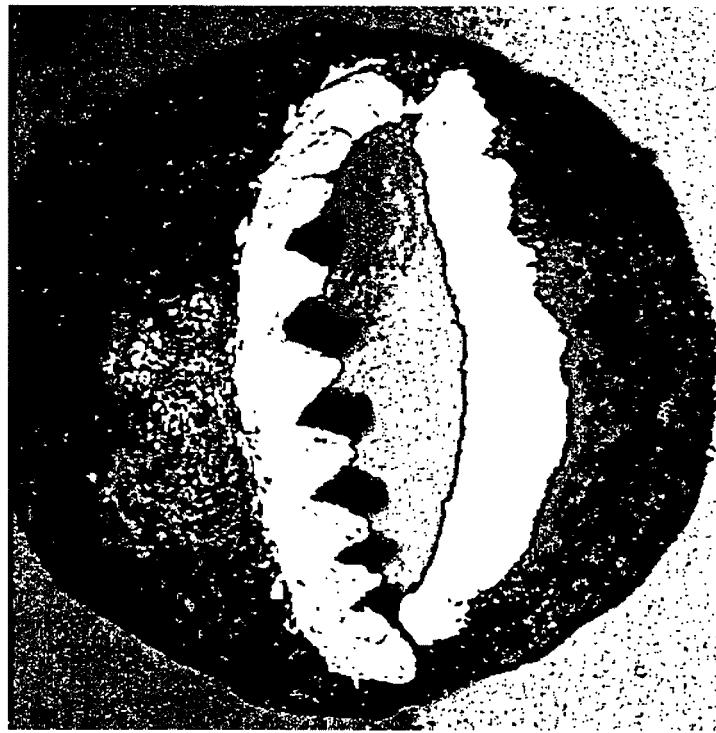


Figure 4.56

*Its huge open mouth with teeth will be a lamp for a son's bedroom. The maker describes hating their home. Synchronously, the house drawing by another member is about wanting to feel safe and happy at home. Children and grandchildren are talked about. A creek is intended to be a safe haven but there are no people. The member who wrote to the group has been met outside and is felt to have changed positively.*

In April the architectural drawing has become a dream-like domestic idyll. My tapestry by contrast, is very black with sparse pink flecks. The three irises are joined by four red tulips. Two members discuss what they have learnt here. They say it is the importance of vision, it has taken them outside of themselves, and the world looks different.

*A medication change has a very positive effect. Two people are feeling better: the significance of architecture is realised by one and the importance of their artwork emerges for another. Grief and deeply missed partners are discussed, and guilt at moving on. Relationships and meeting outside the group is talked about.*

In May the use of red is vivid (see Fig 4.57). A painting is made of the house. It becomes even larger with a very red roof and the faint outline of two people. It develops into a family home, complete with parents and two children. There is a study of more moored boats; this time with a sailing boat with sleeping accommodation is accompanied by a motorboat with wheel and seat. My weaving reaches a pink and red horizon.



**Figure 4.57**

My rectangular slab built container is red inside with small square openings. Slanting turquoise and blue brush strokes do not disguise its bunker-like appearance (see Fig 5.58).



*A disturbing feeling is also described about the house: it is somewhere they do not want to be. It is felt this must come from them.*

**Figure 4.58**

A village appears in June in an elaborate image of a train travelling over a bridge. My tapestry slowly moves through red into blues. The embroidery has been stitched down into red-blushed mountains. The family home is finished. The painter also makes a large image of a young woman in a blue flowing dress holding a baby: a 'modern Madonna'.



Inside the monster's mouth is very red and it has fiendish small eyes (see Fig 4.69).

Figure 4.59



I made two rounded dishes and two wide flat dishes in clay. I trail, pour and splash glaze on the inside surfaces (see Fig 4. 60).

Figure 4.60

*For first time, I suggest we use table easels to look at work. This will become a regular practice. One person still has serious medication difficulties. Marble eyes are given to the dinosaur. Physical illness is prominent. But one member is feeling a bit better, emotionally. It is realised that the embroidery is their 'life'.*

In July a red, round circle appears. It is the backing plate for the monster light. There is a resonant lurid red sky in a painting of a sunset. My tapestry has moved from reds into deep blue and is getting dark again. The blood reds we have all used are strikingly similar (see Fig 4.61). A leaf dish is made in clay.

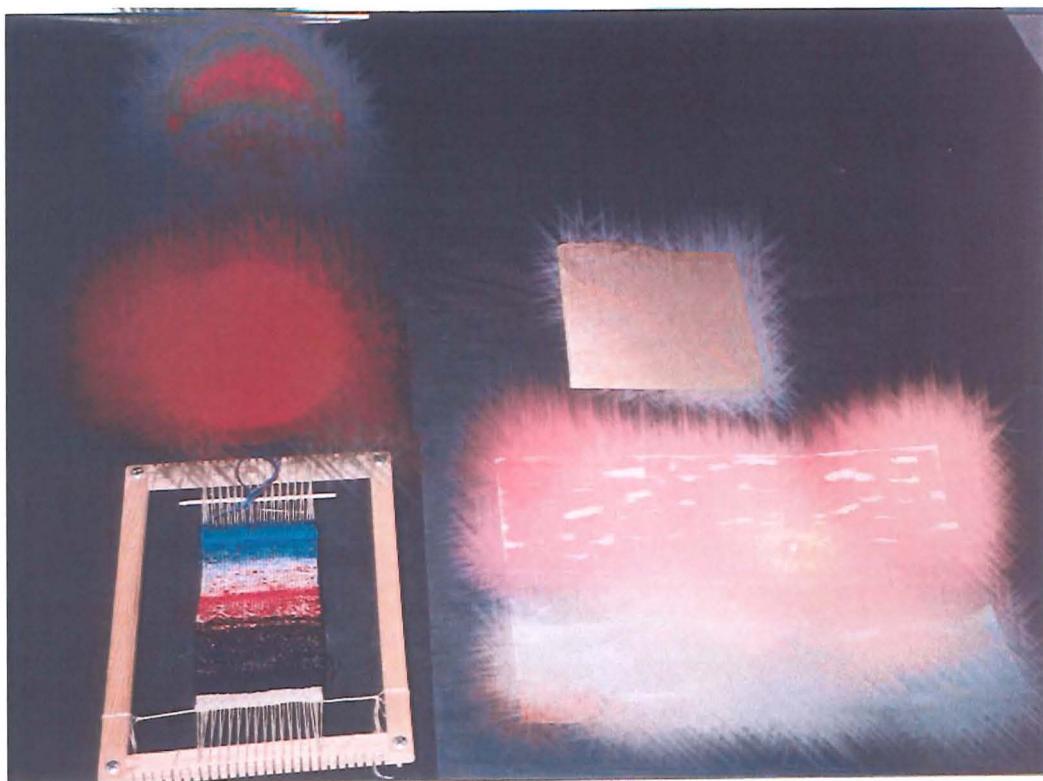


Figure 4.61

Then a rocky seascape is painted with a very deep turquoise sea (see Fig 4.62).

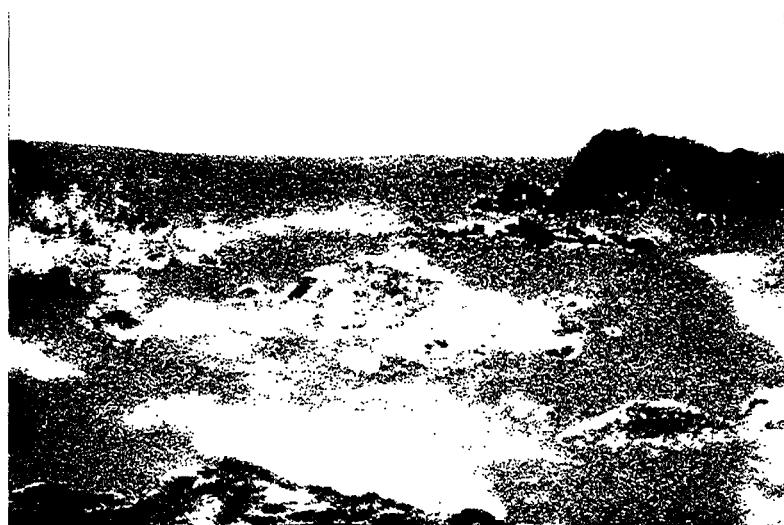


Figure 4.62

*One person is away for seven weeks with physical illness and family difficulties. The others seem much better, making changes outside the group, going out more and following interests. Important links are made - the landscapes relate to 'mobility', movement and work identity, including an extensive knowledge of the British countryside. Anniversaries bring more grief, but change is described in two people: 'The light - learnt to look around at ... the world', 'an awakening', 'hadn't really seen these things before'.*

There are choppy seas in August, scudding clouds and a tiny sailing boat on a distant horizon. When placed next to a previous one, a new seascape seems to join up: the same grey rocky coastline this time gives way to a yellow sandy beach with a boat pulled up. Two more clay leaves are made and three smaller angular dishes, their edges turn upwards. In the embroidery there is pale greenery in a raised knotted stitch. My tapestry is finished (see Fig 4.63). I start a very small one.

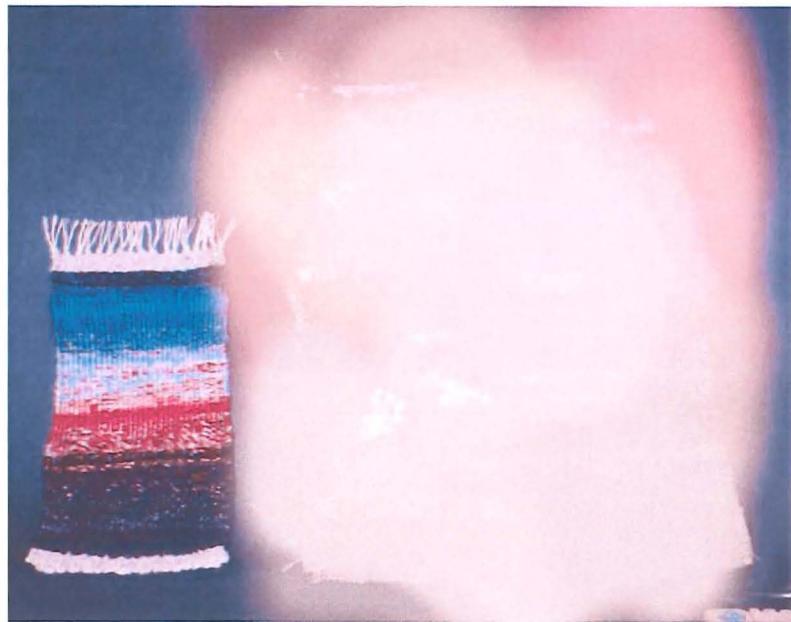


Figure 4.63

*There is guilt at enjoying themselves: the plan chest drawer is 'full up' with their work - 'maybe we are ready to leave!' All three feel much better. 'All of us have strata or bands' which are seen as 'the layers and strata in life discovered in the group'. The embroidery is a record of a 'journey' that shows 'how far I have come'. They ask: 'are these things (the artwork) a wish for what is missed?' 'They feel they have reached understanding about their prolonged grieving process.*

*In September I tell them the group is ending in December as I will be leaving. It is a difficult moment. The plan I arrived at was as the result of much discussion in my supervision, so I felt clear about my decisions. They are shocked. I tell them I think they are ready to leave. We talk about possible options including meeting outside as a self support group; classes; or at a local voluntary organisation. They are supportive to each other, 'we will sort something out'. They ask me 'did I want a change? The group feels flat. However, one person is feeling very good, how they used to feel. Anger is expressed at the group closing - they are cast adrift.*

There is a wrecked boat on a sandy beach. The tide is out. A clay man is made but it might be an alien.

*What are their needs? We discuss them. One person needs to see more people. He is making plans to do this as well as picking up interests he used to have, but adapting them to his current situation. He needs adventures. Another person needs more time for herself outside her family and is arranging this. Now, this is 'her' time. The other member needs to socialise and has already begun, feeling more confident in such situations. This is a 'special situation'. They want a referral to the voluntary organisation - 'tell the manager we are an abandoned art psychotherapy group!'*

There is a moored paddle steamer. The embroidery becomes 'darker' as it progresses downwards. My tapestry becomes 'lighter' towards the top. A crossroads is painted: the road heads for a farm with a spacious barn and hedged fields with open gates, one with jumps for a pony (see Fig 4.64).



**Figure 4.64**

My wide flat lidded dish is also for keeping something in. I am not very happy with it. I finish my tiny tapestry, I like its raised stitches and how it changes from dark green into pale sky blue with moving flecks (see Fig 4.65).



Figure 4.65

The embroidery too is nearing the end. It is rich and full. The three clay leaves look fine in a glassy green glaze. There are glittery poinsettias; a silvery star; and a Christmas tree with silver on it. A huge articulated lorry is heading up into a drawing of a winding road that weaves round a steep bend and over hills into the distance (see Fig 4.66).

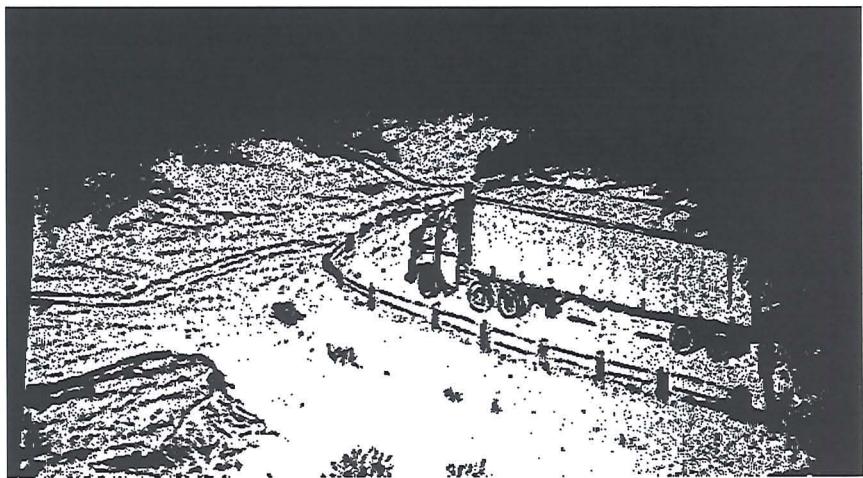


Figure 4.66

In another image, a silvery, full moon shines across the sea and lights up the landscape like day, showing a huge divided chasm below the viewer (see Fig 4.67).



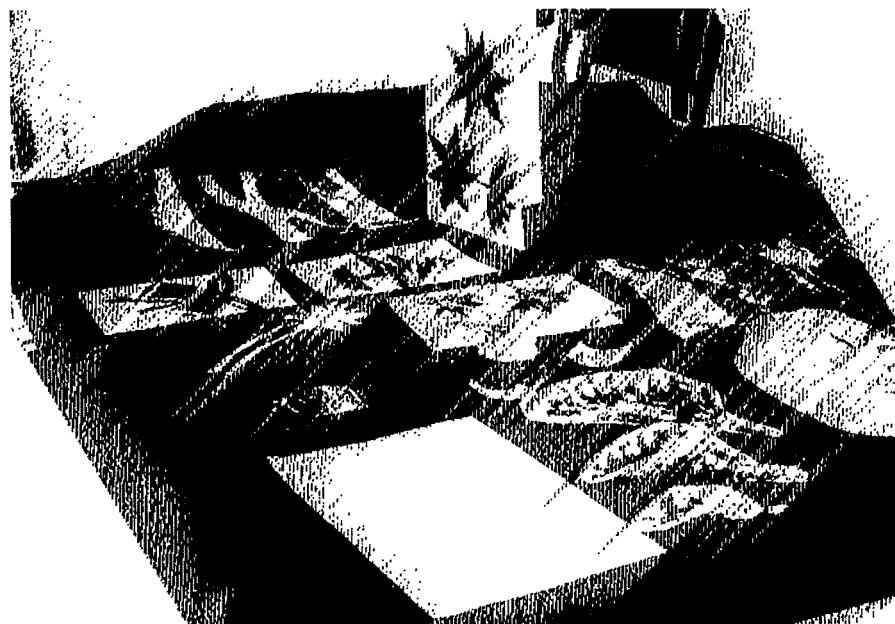
Figure 4.67

*In October a moving discussion about grief and loss concludes that life is about people. The group members are nervous about the future which links with the threes and twos in the artwork. I advise them about self support group issues. Their anger is because it is not their decision to leave, it is just more loss. They are satisfied with the arrangements. They gaze at their work. It looks 'rich' in imagery and colours, but they are not happy with it.*

*In November they visit the voluntary organisation without me. They report that they have been given a room to meet in and make art. One member has serious news that their medication has affected her health. It is noted that the meandering paths need to get somewhere.*

*In the penultimate group in December there is sadness and tears. They didn't want to look back at their work. Christmas cards were made, the moon and chasm is about uncertainty about the future. I pack the kiln for the last firing. They say the group has exceeded their hopes. The difficult times were when people got very distressed. I clarify who to contact if needed. They exchange phone numbers. I weave in warp threads.*

*In the last session they discuss their future meetings and agree if they want, they will meet elsewhere. A member agrees the truck in the drawing must be them (see Fig 4.66). Backing material is cut out for the embroidery. The leaves and dishes with their 'uplifting' edges are unpacked from the kiln. My tapestry has a few threads not woven in. They look at their work and want some of it. One woman gives the other a surviving figure as a present. It is noted that the embroidery stitches are firmer and more even now. There are warm farewells. They photograph the final work (see Fig 4.68).*



**Figure 4.68**

In this final year, a formal method of viewing the work was successfully introduced. Grief and physical illness impacted on the group. The ending was difficult but arrangements seemed therapeutic with positive changes for members. There were archetypal images.

#### 4.2.3 Discussion

Wailing and roaring of monsters

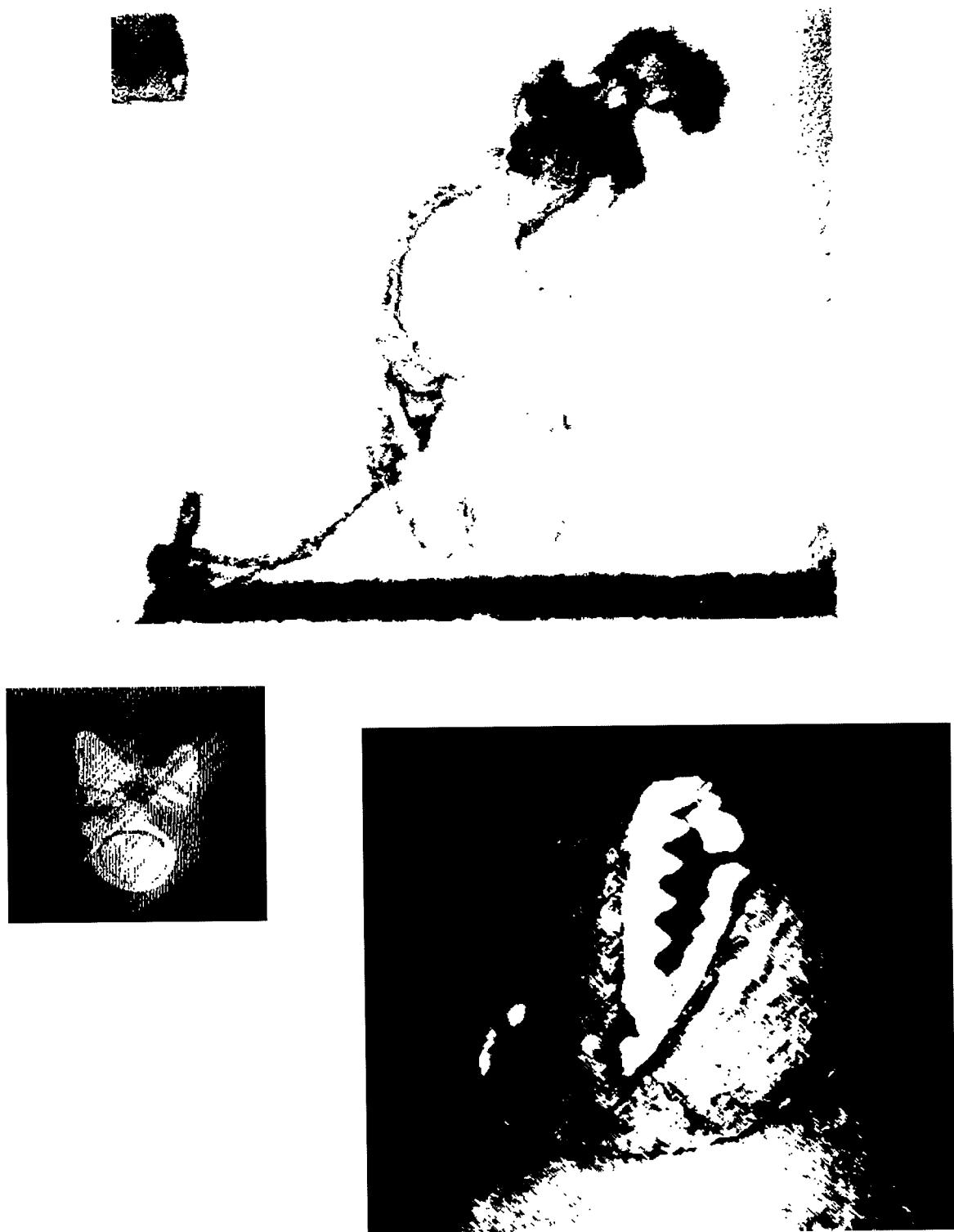


Figure 4.69

I am now going to critically discuss my findings from the narrative, contextualising them in relation to relevant literature from art psychotherapy and other disciplines. I am focusing on the relationship of my art to the group's artmaking process as found in my description of the photographs of the artwork. In Part Three I examined what I make in my art practice and how I am situated as a maker, describing and exploring my particular interests and their significance for the clinical practice.

To recap, my approach in the group aimed to maximise engagement with the media, minimise transference to the therapist, and actively avoid exploring content verbally. It is based on the idea (for which the title *Reunion of broken parts* is a metaphor) that a working through of issues takes place within the artmaking without necessarily reaching consciousness, strengthening defenses and resources and allowing trauma and distress to subside to a manageable level. The space, the impact of the organisation on the work and the impact of changes, breaks and endings (2001/3) on the artmaking (2000) appear in the narrative, as well as manifestations of cultural, social, racial and political issues in the work, but they are not the main focus. For the purposes of my argument, I will consider the impact of my approach and indications for the future regarding the clients, including what they said about helpful experiences in the group. Firstly, I will consider how my methods are illustrated in the narrative.

### **My approach: an active non verbal process of development in a group analytic tradition**

I was surprised and excited at how looking at the photographs of the work produced a dream-like story suffused in metaphor. The narrative has fictional cinematic qualities that remind me of Philips' (2001) case studies. Additionally, a performative aspect of the artmaking became apparent as the reader is fast-forwarded through time by the condensed format. I tried to look at each year as an entity in its own right with an identity and features that I paraphrased in a prelude and concluding statement. Although traditional approaches to case study may result in a metaphorical narrative (see for instance,

Schaverien 1992), the meaning arrived at regarding the artwork is mainly in relation to the individual maker's personal history. The method I used gives a long term overview of the group's artworks as a whole that shows there is a broad narrative with collective meaning for the group and substrata relevant to the individuals, as described by the members (2003). This is consistent with group analytic theory and demonstrates, and gives visual form to, the matrix:

The network of all individual mental processes, the psychological medium in which they meet, communicate, and interact, can be called the matrix (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:26.)

Foulkes and Anthony describe the complex, mutual interaction that takes place in this network. Taking place at an unconscious level, all the ideas and comments - and therefore, with this idea, '*artistic communications in painting, music*' (1965:260, my italics) - are accepted as unconscious interpretations. This is the group analytic version of association in individual psychotherapy - group association (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:29; McNeilly 1990:217; Waller 1993:40). As a field through which individuals communicate, currents within the group come to be expressed or come to a head in a particular person. I propose that the art productions of the group express the matrix, and are the energy of the group, a '*transpersonal network, comparable to a magnetic field*' (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:259). This foregrounds the artwork as the vehicle for the group's operational base.

In the case study, people seem to be working on different aspects of the 'tale' which suggests they are working symbolically with the artwork acting as an interpretation for the group as well as themselves. This resonates with Henzell's (1995) concept that certain kinds of art are their own interpretation without needing words (see Chapter 1.1). A fundamental theoretical formulation in group analysis is that there is a multidimensional process of communication:

... it is everything sent out and received with response whether consciously or unconsciously. Such communication involves many levels of the mind at the same time, and has meaning on all of these (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:259).

### A discourse

Winship and Haigh (1998) suggest their description of a twenty minute experimental group experience on an acute ward sheds light on how the interpersonal group matrix evolves. Three patients and two co-therapists made a clay sculpt on a 2 ft square piece of slate. They see 'layer upon layer' evolving and propose that the sculpture depicts the process of concretising thoughts into symbols, manifesting 'the shapeless chaos of the latent unconscious group matrix' (1998:79). By contrast, McNeilly (2006) ascribes three dimensional, physiological qualities to the matrix, likening it to an empty womb waiting to be impregnated. It is an 'empty' mould that casts a 'full' model or pattern (2006:204). McNeilly builds the theory of his group analytic art therapy approach into a triad consisting of 'formulations of shape, colour, line, aesthetics and form or formlessness' that combine with considering therapeutic levels of function based on the concept of the dynamics of fullness and emptiness (2006:204). He does not explore his role as therapist in relation to the matrix, and he does not take part in the artmaking. His groups are structured to produce a finished image in each session that is then discussed.

I find the earlier group analytic concepts of Foulkes and Anthony most fitting with the description in my narrative. The specific communication patterns found in *mirror, chain and condenser phenomena* make a special therapeutic contribution to a group (1965:151). Reflections of the self as mirror reactions in the group activate 'deep social responses'; the pooling of associations and symbolic material in a chain phenomenon loosens group resistance and the 'accumulative activation at the deepest levels' sees a sudden discharge of deep unconscious material: condenser phenomenon (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:151; Hyde 1988:21; Pines 1983:275). I would suggest that the art made in the group facilitated such unconscious, multidimensional communications contributing to and building on the matrix like an unspoken language. Key works produced by one person, seem to stand out, foregrounded periodically. For instance, the 'Dome' series heralded a new setting being welcomed by the people with wonder, tinged with awe. Awe involves fear and proved to be an augury for loss with echoes from indescribable depths of the group members' past experiences.

The group's art seemed to articulate visual and aesthetic concerns related to broad structural issues at a group and individual level. It was like a series of utterances, a discourse, the implications of which may or may not have reached consciousness in individual group members or in the group as a whole. The art was communicating but this was not articulated verbally. Rather, it transmitted information and complex ideas to and fro within the group. Art provided a means of access to deep unconscious material that could be worked on without ever being fully understood, although it could reach consciousness and provide insight as the narrative illustrates. This is consistent with the aim of the group analytic conductor to 'broaden and deepen' communication and understanding that is 'firmly rooted in the experience of the group, and grows from it' (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:263).

Is this theorising a form of 'art as healing'? I refer to this idea in my MA research (Mahony 1992a) drawing on Waller's (1991) work. Art as healing is a well documented form of traditional art psychotherapy subscribed to by many practitioners (see for instance, in Britain Adamson 1984 and Thompson 1989; and in the USA Kramer 1977, McNiff 1992, Moon 1997 and Henley 1995). Waller (1991) saw a divergence between those who emphasised the image-making as therapeutic in itself, such as Hill (1945), and those who saw the art object as integrative and healing, but also as part of the transference relationship between the client and therapist, such as Champernowne (1963) (Waller 1991:7, authors' italics). After this initial difference, the latter views have mainly dominated British art psychotherapy (Waller 1991; Karkou and Sanderson 2006). As early pioneers of studio approaches, Hill and Adamson made important contributions to the field (Karkou and Sanderson 2006:155). Hill's view was that painting can externalise feelings but the restorative value had implications of distracting the patient from their difficulties (Waller 1991). It was a therapeutic and rehabilitative occupation (Hogan 2001). Adamson saw a curative value to making art taking place in a special studio space, a haven, with as little influence as possible from the therapist. Work of deep significance to its maker could be made over time (Adamson 1984:7). He linked creativity with healing, recognising the cathartic value of artmaking that he saw as intrinsically healing (Hogan 2001:179). His passive (Adamson 1984:7), 'non-interventionist approach' included the view that art psychotherapists should not interpret the work (Hogan 2001:181); he also discouraged communication between patients in the

studio (Hogan 2001:214). Waller suggested that this approach was like a progressive form of art teaching (Waller 1984:7, 1991:55, 1991:73, 1991:89; Hogan 2001:179; Karkou and Sanderson 2006:155). My own approach contains elements of Hill's and Adamson's views. I propose that my focus on group dynamics coupled with the duration of artmaking over time by clients and therapist, enables careful, economic and sophisticated interventions on the part of the therapist. This facilitates an integrative process taking place in the art that, as a discourse, includes the embodiment of autobiographies.

Foulkes and Anthony vividly describe the disturbed social interaction that prevents participation as having no access to free communication so the symptom 'mumbles to itself secretly, hoping to be overheard' (1965:259). As conductor, rather than leader, facilitating integration of the group (see Hyde 1988:20), I saw one aspect of my role to be looking out for this secret expression before it became loudly disturbing, which is seen occasionally in the case study. Aiming for more direct communication, I drew attention to what was happening as sensitively as possible. This was part of my main contribution as therapist in representing the analytic attitude in the group and maintaining the group-analytic situation (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:28). This usually required very few interventions other than boundary maintenance, material structures and occasional verbal interpretation regarding transference in terms of the artmaking or the group, or managing disturbance as mentioned. However, I needed to be vigilant in terms of trying to understand what interactions were happening in the group including in the members' art and my own. The artmaking process seemed to have an important role as a means of achieving stability in the group and developing participation. I have already described my artmaking as documenting the group process (chapter 3.2); with the construct of the matrix, my artwork can also be seen as an interpretation facilitating the group-analytic process. For instance, the messiness of my casting can be seen as an interpretation that making a mess in close relations (the cast and the mould) can be okay and not catastrophic (on a psychological level), and can be cleared up. The final small weaving that I did could be interpreting as well as documenting the closure of the group; that it is alright to have some loose ends that perhaps were about the sadness and loss experienced by everyone. The case study therefore suggests a different method and theory for art psychotherapy groups.

I am fascinated that in this case study, my artwriting method of visual exploration and verbal description seems to accentuate the non-verbal level of the imagery. Even though I have tried to remove evocative language, the narrative can only be a subjective interpretation. However, aiming for a simple description of what I see in a photograph seems to result in powerful imagery. The artwork was not actively explored through speech in the group and the members emphasised that people 'talk in their own time', as illustrated in the narrative. Sometimes key images were never talked about at all. The danger of talking too soon about core problems was also illustrated when a new person flooded herself and the group (2002). I found engagement with the materials was maximised by people bringing work and materials in and out of the group. The account shows that this formed a bridge (painted in 2002 with a passing place in the middle) which is graphically illustrated by the work with bears, reminiscent of Winnicott's (1951) transitional object; often a soft toy or piece of material that acts as a bridge between the mother and the cultural world. As part of the process of differentiation and separation by the small child from parental figures, feelings of security are located in a teddy or other such object at times of anxiety. In this particular case one was desperately needed where there were symptoms of severe agoraphobia. My client's explorations of costumes for bears, or small beasts where a range of garments made for each one, clearly acted as transitional objects at that time, eventually helping the person leave the group. For reasons of confidentiality I will not go into the personal significance of the costumes for their maker. However, reminiscent of this process, Graves makes a beast costume and as a psychotherapist explores her process, describing it as 'beast dreaming' (2003). In her account, she says a love of materials may come from our experience of our mother's skin. She sees costumes as a second skin. My client's body of work went on for a year or more, with symptoms starting to reduce as strategies for going out were developed. With the additional idea of the matrix, the bears could also be seen on another level in group terms, to give form and explore the social and cultural interaction (each had their own identity: policeman, bride, etc) of the core problem, which was a sense of profound shame at being unable to share the difficulties with others in that social context. This illustrates the embodiment of autobiography and is multidimensional as described by Foulkes and Anthony (1965).

## My artmaking

Graves (2003) also considers dreaming and daydreaming resulting from her sewing of the beast costume. Her exploration is relevant to my forms of making in the group. My sewing is described in the first year (1999). Graves says sewing is a rhythmic activity accompanied by reverie. I would suggest this is sympathetic to artmaking in a psychotherapeutic context. Pointing out that such reverie while sewing is private but can take place in public, unlike reading which would be seen as rude, Graves argues that reverie is different to the creative artist's deep dreaming which would seem to occupy the whole mind. I also see important advantages of such an activity in my capacity of group conductor. My whole mind was not occupied but part of my mind could be taken up in reverie, was open to association and unconscious processes whilst still being aware of others. I could still think about what was happening but also was using part of my mind that was in touch with deeper processes. I was allowing privacy (Haeseler 1989) as I was not actively observing the artmaking in a more distanced but also intrusive way. I took part in the 'dreaming'; I allowed it to take on a shape while the slow labour, the stitching or repeated series of casting, allowed me time to reflect on the significance of the imagery for the group and its unconscious processes. This aspect of privacy in the group while making art seems very similar to Winnicott's concept of learning to be alone while in the presence of another; which he saw as an important sign in the development of maturity (Winnicott 1971:55).

Another aspect of making art alongside the clients is that it allows them to know the therapist in a way they would not otherwise, whilst keeping a therapeutic and professional distance (Haeseler 1989). Haeseler suggests that it shows the therapist's commitment to the group and also illustrates a creative process. My embroidered face was a personal image that the group saw develop very slowly over time, from a pair of disembodied looking eyes to the finished face. The slowness of the process also allowed me to monitor its impact on the members and their response to my stitching and choice of imagery. Responses were triggered in the clients; the mask paintings and material practices generally became established in the group at this time. There were other instances where my artwork triggered a response and vice versa.

Some clients might not like the therapist doing their own artwork. For instance, several service users' found it distracting and felt their therapist was not fully there for them (see Brooker et al 2007:35). I told prospective group members that I made art in the group, but they may have not wanted to speak about any reservations. At times during the group, I asked group members how they felt about my artmaking. There was always a positive response, but again, it might be difficult for them to say otherwise. One man when he was leaving said that he had valued it: 'you muck in and join us in the artmaking unlike some therapists'. However, given the service users' important feedback, in future assessments for a group and supervision, I would place even more emphasis on discussing my artmaking in sessions.

The characteristics of rhythm and repetition in sewing are echoed in my other activities with art materials in the group. The slowness of development and the repetition in actual processes (like stitching or casting) and actions, as well as the repetition of actual objects, seem to have a fugue like quality - with themes being repeated in slowly developing complex patterns. I find this intriguing as there is the analogy of music in group analysis: just as we hear an orchestra playing a piece of music, what we experience in a group is the group as a whole (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:26). Single sessions of Skaife and Huet's art psychotherapy groups were likened to the sonata form in music with 'the exposition, the development and the recapitulation' (1998b:21).

My work in the group was at times an accompaniment almost like a drone instrument producing one deep humming note (for instance, a series of objects, or the casting). At other times, I amplified or muted particular themes or provided counterpoint. Foulkes and Anthony seem to describe what might be happening:

... if one's psychological antennae are properly attuned to such experiences, the area often becomes 'atmospheric' with feelings. One should stress that this is not a mystical but a phenomenological experience of interacting groups. If one allows one's floating attention, as Freud termed it, to record automatically its own observations,

one begins eventually to respond to 'pressures' and 'temperatures' as sensitively as any barometric or thermometric gauge ... (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:142)

The tiles made by the clients also have this quality: punctuating the narrative of the artwork at intervals with slight variations to their form or patterning. The artwork I created alongside group members was chiefly characterised by not taking up my complete attention and it seems that this was one way it suited the artmaking process. It allowed 'floating attention' and reverie.

I will go on to examine the significance of three sculptures made in the group over the five years, which refers to the title of this discussion.

### Monsters

I was intrigued that the visual exploration of the photos found three monsters (see Fig 4.71). I foreground them here as I feel they were key images for the group, the people who made them, and for my approach, because of their 'strength', 'loudness' and 'intensity' as images. I use this imagery to illustrate how unconscious material from the deepest levels, as described by Foulkes and Anthony above, came to be expressed in the group's artmaking. I could have examined other strong themes in the group such as the Dome series and awe, or the landscapes, both of which could relate to Greenacre's (1957, 1958) essays called 'family romance of the artist' and 'childhood of the artist'. Greenacre describes the creative artist as having particular awareness and sensitivity to sensory stimulus, and a predisposition for empathy and responsiveness and the development of expressive functions (1957:53). A love affair with the world develops. She describes artists having 'memories of experiences of revelation, awe or some kind of transcendental states in childhood' (1958:34).

Each of the three monsters is a unique entity that I feel I know intimately, partly because I am fascinated by monsters and regularly watch the *Alien Quadrilogy* (see Twentieth Century Fox, 2003) but mostly because I was there, as they emerged out of the group matrix, immersed in the resonances transmitted by its creative life. The monster presages death (Wells 2000:10). In therapy literature, drawing monsters is seen to give children power over

their fears (Doll 1986). A psychotherapy case study investigated the universal or culturally-specific aspects of such images (Goldberg 1991:11). In art psychotherapy a monster and a baby-bear monster were explored and related to separation difficulties (Reddick 1999). In a drama therapy video project with boys, the roles of strength, destruction and vulnerability were played out which seemed to develop relatedness and cohesiveness in the group, as well as their ability to express and contain powerful feelings (Haen and Brannon 2002). The monster Godzilla was explored as a metaphor for art psychotherapists' fear of annihilation in the face of Evidence Based Practice (Gilroy 2006:35).

The group's monsters seemed to 'embody states of otherness' and 'difference' (Wells 2000:10) and like a horror text, to be reproducing deep-rooted fears of '*when* something life-threatening may occur and *what* may produce it' (2000:11). Wells emphasises the urgency of process and how the monster operates in a way that shatters familiarity and form. However, there are implications that the problems can be triumphed over (2000:36). In relation to identity and meaning, gender can be also be implicated with transgressive reactions to constraints and oppressions on many levels 2000:39), which relates to my group as two monsters were made by women. At times, humour is another aspect that is linked to horror and terror, offering comic redemption (2000:37) which also relates to two of the monsters.

The first monster I saw in the photos (1999) bore a remarkable physical resemblance to the monster in the film 'Alien' - a life form that needed human bodies in order to reproduce and which could obliterate mankind. It also had a significant connection for its maker relating to a tragic loss of enormous sadness. I still do not know if the maker made any connection consciously with the sculpture although their later work was definitely consciously linked to the tragedy and enabled discussion with their partner about the traumatic event, and leaving the group.

The second 'little monster' (2000) was also linked to loss but in this case losing people in the group, as well as change relating to moving rooms. A very small head of a cat, its vast open mouth seemed to be wailing or howling. Its maker described it as a 'little monster calling for

its breakfast' so it could have been an affectionate term referring to a cat or kitten. However, its huge open mouth dominates the image and seems to resonate with far deeper feelings - a 'ravelling maw', an all-consuming, voracious hunger. For the person who made this remarkable object, who also made the shoe images, it seemed to have been linked to the horror of diaspora, the related loss and violence on an unimaginable scale. It was not talked about. Early experiences had been briefly referred to and how one painting had stopped a recurrent nightmare. However, the feelings of dread and extreme fear on waking did not leave this group member. A large part of their latter time in the group involved decision making about emigrating to be with family again, and absences from the group while making journeys.

Cox and Theilgaard's (1987) study of mutative metaphors in psychotherapy in the face of extreme disturbance is a significant concept with regard to my approach. Cox worked in Broadmoor Hospital with seriously disturbed offenders and saw his approach to psychotherapy with people with such severe disturbance as a way of reading interaction and communication at a very deep and subtle level. Cox and Theilgaard's use of literary and arts references is sympathetic to my own as they see the therapist having a capacity to pick up nuances and 'music in the wind' - referring to the early musical instrument, the Aeolian Harp. The mutative metaphor facilitates change or reduces instability. Of relevance to the function of artmaking in my approach, '... metaphor, seen from a neuropsychological perspective, integrates the ikonic mode of the right hemisphere and the linguistic mode of the left' (Cox and Theilgaard 1987:xxvii). Further, they suggest that in supportive psychotherapy 'such mutation brings about the consolidation of existing defences' (Cox and Theilgaard 1987:xxvi). The mutative metaphor facilitates change by acting as a bridge. Paradox is one of the features, so are liminality and thresholds, and it centres on the disturbing aspects of a client's experience. The story may be so disturbing that it is repressed (Cox and Theilgaard 1987:3). Cox and Theilgaard describe how 'the patient is frequently frightened by a feeling of impending catastrophe which is about to engulf her' (1987:19). This describes my client's waking feelings above which relate back to their early experiences of trauma and horror. The little monster can be seen as mutative in that it holds conflicting ideas of smallness, affection and unspeakable violence on a vast scale,

acting as a container for feelings that are 'too overwhelming to be tolerated' (Cox and Theilgaard 1987:99) and defy description, but hinting at and touching upon the larger story. The little monster reaches deep down to the depths of disturbance but it had been made paradoxically small and intriguing, slightly comical and something that could be held in one's hands and stroked, so consolidating the sculptor's defences regarding being overwhelmed. It was a very personal image but it also related to the whole group's experience at the time.

The final monster, a dinosaur (2003), again with a vast, open mouth but this time with enormous white teeth, was to light the darkness of the maker's son's bedroom. It was going to be a lamp. Its huge red mouth silently roared and hinted at an abyss. A chasm was painted by another member at this time as we ended which was associated with the group's ending and finding safety and shelter amidst the members' serious physical problems and dilemmas caused by heavy medication. The dinosaur maker wrestled with the damage and traumatisation caused by repeated and lengthy admissions and guilt regarding the effects on their family. The member's medication frighteningly came to pose life threatening dangers. Their humour and strength drew people to them. The dinosaur and the little monster were both created with humour.

It seems significant that the two years when there wasn't a monster was at the time of my own bereavement that the members unfortunately knew about. A lack of containment was probably experienced by them and was perhaps expressed by the predominance of pairs in the imagery and grief referred to in the notes. The traumatic entry into the group by two people also seems significant as if they and the group may not have felt held. My assessment may not have picked up their needs adequately - their problems were linked to complicated grief reactions and it seems possible that unconsciously I was unable to explore this deeply enough with them. More supervision may have helped. In retrospect, I could have seen them for more individual assessment sessions. On the other hand, it is not always possible to anticipate difficulties in the assessment and these things do happen from time to time. They were both people who did well in the group and were very taken with the approach.

The three monsters seem to contain unspeakable horrors on a non verbal level, as well as overwhelming sadness and poignancy. They were only spoken about in relation to their technical making. The full extent of their significance for the group and the individuals concerned only became apparent through examining the photos in this research. My decisions at the time were also confirmed; not to explore the images or make interpretations. Yalom's concept of sealing over (1985:32) as discussed in the previous chapter 4.1 is a key concept when considering these issues in my group, and is supported by Cox and Theilgaard's concept of the mutative metaphor and the consolidation of defences (1987), and Killick's (1991) idea in art psychotherapy of sealed vessels representing the image as a reliable symbolic container.

Images of horror are a place where living through our deepest fears can be rehearsed and visualised (Wells 2000:108), heightening our consciousness of our vulnerability and the fundamental nature of fear and the value of life (2000:111). The group's monsters look as if they are wailing or roaring. Their expression in the group suggests that at the time the monsters could be contained and be examined, perhaps in another mutative metaphorical image, or just through contributing to the collective discourse.

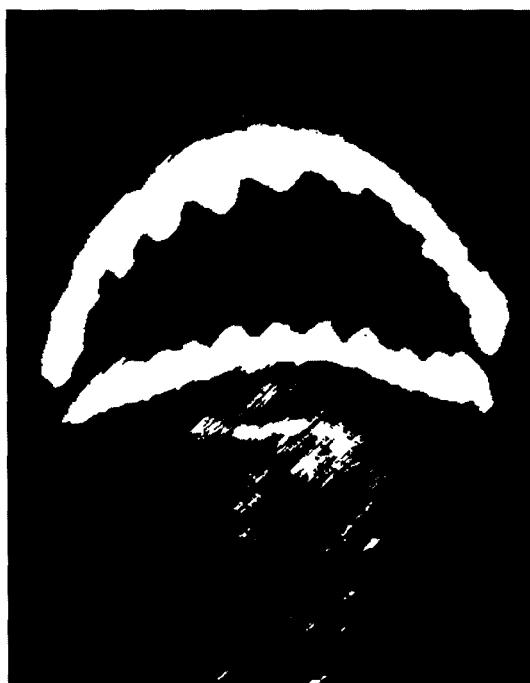


Figure 4.70

## **The group members' experience**

I am including below what members said about what they found helpful or unhelpful, and brief reflection about prognosis including limitations. Positive indicators are any changes made by members in their lives or that they report, or those observed by others or the therapist.

### **The room and the setting**

The original OT art room seems to have been experienced as comfortable and familiar being described as 'like an old slipper!' The art room at the new acute unit, however, was 'too clinical', and members' symptoms were exacerbated by travelling difficulties and seeing acutely distressed people. The group really liked the new studio for its quietness and privacy, the residential setting; it was described as 'peaceful'. The group took place too early for one member who left.

### **The artmaking**

The artwork was found to improve self esteem and trying different materials gave confidence; for example, one member was seen by the others as becoming more confident. It was realised that what was made related to thoughts, feelings and states of mind; for instance the reassembled cracked pots were described as being like their experience of putting things back together again (see also Greenwood 1994). The absorption of making art stopped them thinking about their problems and helped people relax. One person described finding she could calm herself with the art and she also painted what she visualised to calm herself. It was also experienced as 'focusing'. One member was reminded of happy childhood memories. These qualities that are valued by the group members are consistent with the idea of 'sealing over'.

The artmaking process was experienced in a number of ways, depending on the precipitating problems. One man felt it had been about finding acceptance of his life. His relationship with another man had been important even though they broke the boundaries and met outside the group. There were links made to core problems with awareness being developed, and understanding achieved, about such key issues as prolonged grieving processes. One

member saw their embroidery as a record of a 'journey' that showed how far they had come. It was felt the artwork showed the layers and strata in life which were discovered in the group. For one person, a recurring nightmare stopped after painting a particular image. Two people said the artmaking had made them look at things around them in a new way, for instance, how the light falls on landscape and trees. The amount of artwork that was done was playfully linked to getting better (the plan chest 'full up' with their work - 'maybe we are ready to leave!'), wondering if 'these things' (in the artwork) were a wish for what was missed.

### **My studio approach**

They wanted the studio space to be peaceful and a 'safe haven', not filled with 'dissension' and argument or to be 'contentious'. They found it very positive they could concentrate, get absorbed and look forward to it each week; sessions were enjoyed so much they wanted them to be longer. One person said this is 'their' time and it was also described as a 'special situation'. The support of group members was talked about with the group offering 'security'. Talk of closeness with each other also involved worries about leaving such an intimate situation. Planned leavings were found helpful. One person wrote afterwards and said the group had changed her life and how she looked at things.

Anger was expressed when the group closed. They felt cast adrift, but the group had exceeded their hopes.

### **Exploring the work**

'People talk in their own time' was an aspect of the approach that was emphasised - it was so relaxed and 'laid back', with no pressure: 'I could work at my own pace'. Links seem to have been made without actively exploring the artwork. The difficult times were when people got very distressed. One person made a disclosure they regretted and quite soon after left the group, and the retrospective exhibition was very upsetting for another person. Talking too soon was 'too much' for a new member and the rest of the group. The memories were too upsetting. This was also a reason for copying: 'using imagination triggers memories'. When group members made links in their own time they reported understanding symptoms, aspects of their personality and significance of trauma in their lives and making sense of what had

happened to them. There was talk of 'recovering'. The group changed their lives and had emphasised the importance of vision. It had taken them outside of themselves so they could look differently at the world: 'The light . . . I've learnt to look around at . . . the world', it has been 'an awakening', 'I hadn't really seen these things before'. These comments describe a heightened awareness and responsiveness to sensory stimuli and enhanced expressiveness that relates to Greenacre's (1957, 1958) description of the 'love affair with the world' that she proposes is experienced by artists, as referred to earlier.

### **Maximising engagement with the art media**

The absorption of making art was found to be helpful outside the group which I encouraged. Artwork was thought about outside the group. Sketching started at home and was found calming. Several did drawing and painting at home and one person joined art classes. Mornings were often found difficult and it was discovered sewing or knitting could help.

The group wanted to start making art straight away as the topic of discussion at the beginning was not returned to. Making interpretations about the group with my art was of interest to the group. There are two examples: when I described my weaving as 'tentative, probably because it is a new group'; and the clay object depicting the group.

The aspects of reported change noted in this section are very hopeful and positive indications for the members regarding their prognosis.

### **Final reflections**

#### **Like a dream: lost in metaphor**

The narrative was difficult to summarise and cut down; it read like a dream unfolding and so detail seemed very important in building up a coherent picture. There was a mesmeric quality.

This case study records the establishment of material practices in an art psychotherapy group and how they were used to explore core problems. It also indicates how objects for use show the importance of the domestic, signalling an intense involvement at a deep level.

It shows the importance of a wide range of media and that there were omissions, for instance a sewing machine, and a camera that could be left in the art room. It shows the importance of sustained work over long periods and highlights performative qualities in the artmaking. Additionally, the members clearly loved making their work and were intensively engaged with it. I found that the engagement with art media was maximised by members taking work in and out of the group which seemed to act as a bridge, and transitional objects. The art work could also be conceptualised as personal art practice. This refers to the title of the case study, '*Co-creators in combined practices*', as I now conceive of the group's artmaking as personal art practice by all concerned in a therapeutic setting. As co-creators participating together, clinical and art practices were combined in a new form. The model allowed people to come to their own realisations, making their own links and showing unconscious unfolding in an active process of development - placing it firmly in the group-analytic tradition.

I discovered exhibitions are a powerful form of looking back but need to be considered carefully and given much preparation. They may not be helpful for some people as seeing early work can reactivate disturbance that has been 'sealed over'. The case study illustrates symptoms abating after significant artwork and that often links were made verbally, but not always. Sometimes significant events were not talked about, particularly if there was deep trauma. There seemed to be joint narratives with structural themes/concerns running alongside metaphor on both collective and individual levels. The art in my group was formed in a multidimensional non-verbal, group discourse with layers that related to both the collective group and individual autobiography, giving visual form to the group matrix. The art appears to facilitate specific communication patterns at the deepest levels that make a special therapeutic contribution to the group's development. The art could be conceived as interpretations, including mine. Autobiographies, both mine and the clients', were embodied in the work as discussed in relation to the work of Tracey Emin and Grayson Perry (see Chapter 2.2 and 2.3). The art I made was characterised by often being slow and not taking up my complete attention, allowing floating attention and reverie. My art also showed connective characteristics which emphasised my commitment to the group.

Drawing on recommendations from the literature from the USA, I could have referred in the group to the art historical context of group member's work such as current artists, for example with the teddies and textile artists. But I did not do this as I thought there was a danger that it might make people feel ignorant or uninformed. I would want to explore this in a future group.

I will now go on to another examination of the group's art. The next chapter describes the process of curating a private exhibition of all the visual material created in association with a particular period of my art psychotherapy group and what I learned from this process.

# PART FOUR - THE GROUP

## The Matrix - studio-based clinical practice

### 4.3. Artefacts related to an art psychotherapy group

My case study made the argument that the therapist's careful participation in artmaking can enhance the developing group matrix where art appears to facilitate special, therapeutic communication patterns in the group. In this final section of **Part Four**, varied but related frames of interpretation are set up and broadened to an outside/in perspective, again using methods from visual arts practice. I describe an investigation into the junction between visual arts, art psychotherapy and studio practice and the profound links between my art outside the group and that of the group members within it. A narrative account was constructed that explored the process of curating and looking at a private exhibition of archival material associated with the group and my art practice. The text illustrates how the voice I use as author contributes to the findings and also invites a creative response.

#### 4.3.1 The artefacts and the display

<sup>1</sup>This part of the research process took the form of an exhibition at Goldsmiths Visual Arts Studios in September 2000 (see Figs 4.71-4.73). It was the culmination of a year's work and one of the 'stages' of my research process. I was preoccupied with the sensitive, confidential nature of the material produced and how this might be studied without compromising confidentiality or unduly affecting the therapy process. The reflection that followed resulted in the viewers of the exhibition being restricted to my research supervisors and me. The main purpose of the display was to provide initial information, prior to further data collection. In this, it succeeded beyond my hopes. It also raised some important issues for clinical practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Confidentiality and Anonymity

All recognisable material including names, places, dates have been removed.



Figure 4.71



Figure 4.72



Figure 4.73

The room was booked for three days: one to put out the work, one to arrange and look at it, and one to dismantle it. It was a large, square room with four windows opposite the door, painted white with white blinds and four plinths that had been left there. The space turned out to be very suitable. It had been booked for a time when students would not be around and was therefore quiet and confidential.

Due to complex security arrangements there were difficulties on the first morning in gaining access, resulting in lengthy negotiations and time-consuming trips. On the second day, I was able to park nearer. The gate was locked at 9 pm.

Up till then, I had not really considered the effect of exhibiting on the maker and curator. Having arrived to set up the exhibition, this was high on my agenda. I felt very nervous. I remembered feelings of vulnerability and sense of exposure from my previous ceramics exhibitions that had been blotted out of my consciousness. I decided not to involve clients in

any way at this stage of the research, the purpose of this private display being to gather all the artefacts relating to the group and to examine them in a formalised space. My supervisors (Andy Gilroy and Janis Jefferies) took part in this exercise in their role as 'extended clinical team'.

The artwork I had brought with me consisted mainly of the group's portfolio of two-dimensional work, some three dimensional work and a file of photographs of 'work in progress'. I also had files and documents relating to the group: my own artwork, done both in the group and out of it; my personal notebooks relating to my artwork; and files relating to my studio and to the research (see Fig 4.74).



Figure 4.74

I decided quickly that I wanted to see a chronological display of the clients' two-dimensional work and that I would position these on the three walls without windows. There were four current clients and the work ranged back four years. Getting out the work I realised that one person had quite a lot more than the others so I arranged it all in piles, one for each year, in front of each wall. Then I laid it out on the floor: it would just fit. Not having much time to spare, I started putting it up as quickly as I could, using masking tape on the back. After trying it out, I felt a row of each person's work round the three walls would work

visually, showing gaps where there had been no two-dimensional work in a session. It showed individual sessions where there was more than one piece of work. It also showed the overall development of artwork over the four years. When the two-dimensional work was up, I considered how to display the three dimensional work and my own work. The clients had dated theirs; two people had also signed it, which needed masking out. Mine was not dated, but my notebooks enabled the dates to be worked out.

My main concern was that the methods of display would give the work dignity (see Chapter 2.1 *We all peel the onions*; Mahony 2001). I felt that the plinths and formal lines of wall-hung work would help and I used nylon thread to get them as exact as I could. The eyes were drawn upwards to look at the top line of work which I felt also helped.

The next day my anxiety had subsided somewhat, but it now became more focused on a sense of grave responsibility I felt for the client's work and what it represented. Leaving it unattended was difficult. I was relieved when I was able to return it to the clinical setting several days later. I unpacked three-dimensional work and starting moving it around along with the plinths. I also started unpacking my work, the files and documents and looked at the photographs. The photographs showed what was not there: other clients' work, and the cherished three-dimensional work that had mostly been taken home. Some extraordinary links started to emerge between my work done outside of the group and clients' work. It was only by seeing the work all together in this setting, that the links emerged.

I added my three dimensional work that I had done in the group to the group's. I put up photographs taken at the end of sessions and placed them where there were gaps to give an indication of work that was taking place in those gaps, including that of other clients. I eventually arrived at an arrangement of work on the plinths, including the first pieces of clay work that had been made after I used clay for the first time. One plinth had unfired clay work, two pieces of which were by people no longer in the group and where the clay had been used in a regressed fashion (smearing, hitting, splashing). Most of the other work seemed orderly.

I then had to decide how to display my own artwork made outside of the group. For the duration of this current group this had mainly been textile work, involving spinning animal fibres and wool from-the-fleece; dyeing with natural dyes; knitting test squares, swatches, tension squares and garments; making chair pads from handspun raw silk filled with fleece; and I had started tapestry weaving as well. That year my studio had finally been built, of which there were photographs and designs. I had already laid out my notebooks that included photographs of some work I no longer have; as well as samples of spinning and dyeing, and lichen studies. At the time I worried that there were a lot more examples of my work than of the clients but I was never sure if that was actually the case. The four windows in the unused wall acted as frames with a background of the view outside.

#### **A creative process**

During the time of the group I had also finished two sweaters, each taking two years to make. After moving them around I placed them at each end of the walls with windows. Current work was then in the middle. I decided to have the windows open as there was a breeze that gently moved the work hung there. I hung the two garments on coat hangers from nylon thread to exploit this so they could move freely. They swayed from side to side and I became aware they were like absent figures. Over the other two windows in the middle I hung offset square objects on nylon thread so that they became diamond shaped. The cushion pads in one window were strange objects and in the other window there were tension squares that the light shone through, showing the stitches. They twisted and spun in the wind like mobiles. The movement in these windows was soothing and reminiscent of the spinning, stitching and knitting that made them. A creative process emerged in the display of this work in a more obvious way than when I was setting out the clients' work. It seemed a continuation and culmination of the making process.

In retrospect, this aspect of the display related to my history; I had recurrent nightmares as a child of a window that involved absence and early separation. I had always thought that spinning related to separation. It also seemed that writing this account of the curatorial process was important as I had not realised what was happening at the time. I was finished half an hour before my supervisors arrived and I spent the time looking and photographing

the finished result. I was really pleased to see Andy and Janis when they arrived and to show them the final results.

### Discussion

Three key themes emerged from curating this visual display: the process of mapping, the links between work, and my role as container of the group.

#### A 'mapping' process

Walking around the room and looking at the work it was remarked that it was a chronological mapping focusing on the process not the product: a reflection of art psychotherapy and its attention to interior processes. A face I had embroidered seemed to be placed symbolically in the middle of the group's lines of artwork (see Fig 4.75, middle, right hand side). We discussed the display methods and agreed that a sense of dignity had been achieved, the wall-hung work and plinths seemed appropriate for this.



Figure 4.75

## Links

I came to several realisations through curating the clients' and my artwork and had made particular links between certain pieces. One I had made at an Art Psychotherapy Service Art Practice afternoon as a model for a jacket; this was a folded collage of torn pieces of paper that opened out flat to show the construction. There was a striking link between this and a group member's ceramic vase. Painted with underglaze colours, it had been made a year later. However, it had cracked and split open. The group discussed the kiln accident and the group member decided to carry on and work with what had happened. It seemed highly significant as I knew it related to his autobiography and the problems that brought him to the group, although this was not discussed. Given that the group had not seen my piece, the similarity between the two objects in terms of colours and shape was uncanny. I had set them on adjacent plinths to emphasise the connections (see Figs 4.72, 4.73). Another example related to my new studio. My intense engagement at home with drawing designs for rooms and buildings was echoed by drawings of a group member who was also designing rooms despite not having seen my work. This client's unusual work was sustained over many months, eventually becoming three dimensional installations complete with teddy bears in costumes (see Chapter 4.2). These examples embodied core issues from our autobiographies. There were other clear resonances between people's work (see McNeilly 1984) across the four years of the group's life that was on display, including the example mentioned in the previous chapter 4.2 where my plans for this exhibition, unknown to the group, were echoed by a group member's suggestion for an exhibition of the group's work which later took place in the new community art room.

## The art psychotherapist as container

We talked about my role in the group in relation to the display methods. Group members started using clay and textiles after seeing me use them in the group; this seemed to be an important modelling process. We also discussed the lack of mess, except in two pieces, remarking on the apparent order of the work versus my experience of chaos when writing my therapist's notes. My approach in the group aimed at reducing anxiety and it was postulated that the notes were an expression of the anxiety, 'mess' and chaos that I was containing as therapist.

We discussed another 'messy' element that I had kept out of the display: the latex moulds I had made and used for making small, rough, slip cast ceramic containers. These had been an ongoing process in the group for several years. I had put these containers on another plinth. We talked about my garments, their relationship to skin and their position in the display. I explained my realisation that they were like absent figures in the room. It was pointed out that I had placed them like 'bookends', containing each end of the chronological lines of work. Bick's (1968) paper on skin as a container seemed relevant to both disciplines of visual arts and art psychotherapy. The 'gaps' in the layout of the pictures were referred to and how they were a reminder of musical scores, particularly those of John Cage (see for instance, 1978).

It seemed to us that we were looking at and discussing the whole in a way that seemed to address the problem of considering the huge volume of information presented by an ongoing art psychotherapy group and its art works. Here our conversation was very different to usual discussions about art psychotherapy products and the meaning of individual pieces of artwork in relation to individual psychopathology, transference and a session. We were looking at the art and seeing the entirety of its development before us (for example, the emergence of colour in the two-dimensional work - mainly in the last year). My supervisors remarked that this might be the first time an art psychotherapist's personal artwork had been put together with that of her group and that all the related objects and texts could be seen together. We also talked about looking at work in art psychotherapy groups and how it was often placed on the floor.

This was a temporary construction that created a collage-like effect, like thought memories in 'story boards'. It included what was described as 'forensic' work. This was fragments of collected material, put in plastic bags and labelled - actually the contents of some of the cast ceramic containers, which showed what I brought into the group. I explained that six skeins of wool I had hung on the wall now looked sculptural and unlike their usual appearance in my sitting room (see Fig 4.76). By doing that they had become something different. We discussed the intentionality of making and the intentionality of an exhibition such as this.

We discussed the process of putting it up and the status of the work which has to speak for



itself. I felt I had arrived at a climax of the research, yet this study was situated in the middle of the project.

An aspect of this may have related to the anxiety I experienced during these three days. This was partly a personal response to feeling exposed as an exhibitor and curator. It also focused on my responsibility for the security of the clients' work, and my lengthy deliberations about the ethics of involving them, described in Chapter 1.2, that permeated the whole of the research. After the others had left, I looked again at the arrangement and took more photographs. I dismantled the work,

**Figure 4.76**

left the key for the studio manager and made my way home.

### 4.3.2 Findings arising out of the text

I have presented the narrative in an autobiographical style (see Chapter 1.3 *Voices*) that borrows on mythic traditions as described by Gergen (1997:163). This, as he suggests, allows the reader a personal response to the text and retains the fullness of sensitive and subjective experience (McLeod 2001:170). Like a visual work, a sense of fluidity is retained, avoiding closure (Greenhill et al 2001) and, by inviting the reader to identify with the experience, does not imply a status difference between writer and reader (Gergen 1997). The qualities of the text fit criteria that Gergen attributes to the autobiographical mode of writing (1997:163) (see Appendix 3, Table 3.1).

The narrative emphasises the importance of giving dignity to clients' artwork when displaying it, including in an art psychotherapy setting. Seeing all four years' work together made it clear that complex reciprocal exchanges were taking place between my art practice outside the clinical setting as well as inside it, and with the clients' artworks. Resonance was

clear in the artwork between all those making art together. It also became apparent that the creative process of curating a visual display can be a continuation of the making process which changes the way an object is experienced and perceived, enhancing and extending understanding of individual and group processes. Further, the exhibition made it possible to look at a huge amount of information all at once. It enabled us to look at the 'whole' as well as particular parts, as opposed to focusing on the meaning of individual pieces. It clearly showed how 'gaps' in making are as important as making itself. The importance of photography for documentation became clear as an important method of investigation.

The role of the art psychotherapist in an art psychotherapy group was also elucidated. First in terms of modelling, for instance where group members started using particular materials after I had used them. Second, with regard to containment, for instance chaos and mess was mainly experienced in my notes. The importance of communication through unspoken metaphor in the art psychotherapist's art was illustrated too, in particular with regard to the form and use of particular materials and techniques, as explored in Chapter 4.2.

This account of a visual display has shown how such communication through unspoken metaphors can take place. It is particularly valuable for people who have severe and complex problems who may not be able to tolerate talking or recognise direct communication. Examples include the looking face that I embroidered and placed in the middle of my clients work and how the two garments I made outside the group acted as 'bookends' to the display, representing containment. It seemed that unconscious material could be worked on without being fully understood, but it could reach consciousness and provide insight, as my personal experience in the narrative illustrates.

Examples in this account show profound links between my art practices out of the group and that of the clients. Communication through unspoken metaphor is emphasised, especially the containment and role modelling of the creative process by the art psychotherapist and in giving clients access to the therapist's creative process, as illustrated in the use of textiles that I examined in Chapters 3.2. and 4.2. Art practices that are firmly based in the matter from which things are made, habitually described as craft, have also been shown to have an

important function in art psychotherapy groups, drawing attention to meditative, repetitive, laborious process and forms of making involving touch and memory. A different method and theory for art psychotherapy groups has been suggested.

Interdisciplinary collaboration has helped identify the roots and framework of art psychotherapy. The findings imply the art psychotherapist's art practice should receive much greater emphasis, particularly as it is profession-specific. This will be discussed further in **Part Five**.

# PART FIVE - REFLECTIONS (RE-MAKING)

*Algebra* (Arabic *al-jabr*), a reunion of broken parts:  
artmaking as transformer

## 5.1 Relative arrangement of objects<sup>1</sup>

My thesis has presented my explorations into the relationship of my art practice to an art psychotherapy group where I was the therapist. The key questions I fashioned for my research have now unfolded and my interpretations have been formed about the material I investigated. I will consider the implications.

### The creative art experience related to an art psychotherapy group

The images made in an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group have been documented and researched for the first time. A dream-like story suffused with metaphor emerged from my visually-based case study suggesting that making art in a studio-based art psychotherapy group is a multidimensional experience. The methodology I used for the case study produced a multivocal text, orchestrating different realities (Gergen 1997:165). The fictive and cinematic qualities of the resulting narrative illustrated performative qualities in the group's artmaking, entering into an exchange in a visual discourse. The curated display of archival material associated with the group also examined the artmaking as a whole and through both methods I was able to look at the entirety of its development during particular periods. These two methods made it possible to process a huge amount of material, which has been seen as a problem in art psychotherapy groups (Wadeson 1980; Waller 1993:40; Skaife and Huet 1998b:17). A broad, structural narrative was revealed in the imagery with collective meaning for the group and substrata relevant to individuals within it, including the therapist.

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<sup>1</sup> geometry 1 the branch of mathematics concerned with the properties and relations of points, lines, surfaces, and solids. 2 the relative arrangement of objects or parts. The Oxford Compact English Dictionary (1996) Oxford University Press.

The exhibition method of looking at all the work together made it clear that there were profound links between the clients' artworks and my art practice outside the clinical setting as well as inside it, even when it was unseen by the clients. Another aspect that was stressed by the research was the importance of conveying respect for the special value of the clients' artwork when displaying it, including in an art psychotherapy setting. The research showed that curating visual displays is a powerful method for examining a group's artmaking as it changes the way an image is perceived. I would like to propose that this important methodology could be incorporated into clinical practice. In the research, curating extended my role as artist into my clinical work, drawing on and developing these skills and knowledge as suggested by Gilroy (2006, 2008). It was also shown that photography has an important role in investigation. Research is needed to further these methods and apply them in different clinical settings including exploring in what particular circumstances their use is appropriate in therapy with clients.

The artworks seemed to articulate visual and aesthetic concerns related to the group's process and to that of individuals, giving visual form to the group matrix that is described in group analysis (see Foulkes and Anthony 1965). It was like a series of utterances, a discourse, the implications of which may or may not have reached consciousness in individual group members or in the group as a whole. The art was communicating but this was not articulated verbally. Rather the art transmitted information and complex ideas to and fro, creating an operational base for the group and offering visual interpretations. The matrix displays the total interactional field communicating a complicated situation. My research shows this is deeply influenced, intentionally and unintentionally by the therapist who shapes and constructs the social, relational space. The group's complex, sustained artmaking over time seemed to facilitate special therapeutic communication patterns that enhanced participation and sharing in the group. Compared with McNeilly's concept of the art helping to bring about further body to the matrix as a mould and the overall interchange (2006:202), the role of the art in the group that I developed is one that gives the art agency in itself, rather than being simply a contributory factor. The research illustrated how the artmaking materialised and transformed autobiography over time in a non-verbal integrative process. Personal histories, identities and relations were reconstituted in the

art, making symptoms more manageable, whilst still referring to the levels of deepest disturbance for the individuals concerned. Art is a means of accessing deep unconscious material that can be worked on without being fully understood, although it may reach consciousness and provide insight, as the research showed. I would now describe my approach designed to facilitate this process as a group analytic studio model of art psychotherapy where art as a discourse manifests the deep-seated interactions of the matrix. It can be understood as an expressive and exploratory group art practice.

### **Finding personal understanding or meaning through the creative art process of an art psychotherapy group**

I am one of the few who have used visual arts and crafts practice as research in art psychotherapy with this client group in this country. The significance of the research is in drawing on the artmaking process to think about the art in art psychotherapy. The autobiographical lens I used demonstrated reflexivity and aimed to echo my clients' creative process in a similar journey of engagement with art media and practices (Letherby 2003:9; Sullivan 2005:xix).

The personal archive I unpacked in my studio during the research unexpectedly became alive, uncovering layers of my past in a process akin to archaeology. By exploring the materiality of the fragments and artefacts I began to see them in a new light. A reordering took place, transforming major aspects of my life. I have moved back to the area where I started out as a studio potter, re-contacted people I had lost touch with, and realised the significance of my past and my parents to my identity and practice as a potter and art psychotherapist. This period of art practice as visual heuristic research seems an embodiment of the whole research process. It demonstrated how labour-intensive artmaking facilitated an integrative process and additionally, in my case, developed insight. The research suggests that understanding and meaning are embodied in the art when there is the time and the technologies to explore and develop the visual construction. The making process was highlighted as a vehicle for slow physical and visual investigation that allows complex resonances to grow.

The personal experience of visiting three public art exhibitions provided an outer frame for the research and source material for another kind of examination, offering a way of reconsidering and making changes to my clinical practice, which I realised, was in danger of becoming frighteningly narrow. Rose's critical, visual approach for interpreting visual materials provided a way into thinking about art, cultural meaning and power (2001:3) in art psychotherapy, which is essential to develop in practice (Byrne 1995; Gilroy 2008; Hogan 1997:19, 2003; Lupton 1997:8; Karkou and Sanderson 2006:98; Hiscox and Calisch 1998; Skaife 2008). The information drawn from a detailed analysis of text using Rose's structure is relevant for widening the discipline's ideological views on images. Context and the making process emerged as key aspects and are supported by Skaife's (2008) and Gilroy's (2008) ideas. The making process was shown to have the ability to subtly investigate economic, political and institutional relations. It was also illustrated how the visual effects of an image can be a critique of ideas and how its reception holds the implication of multiple meanings. Importantly for the therapeutic relationship in clinical practice, it became apparent how power relations can be reconstructed in an image. The methods were replicated and found similarly complex ideas embodied in the work of Emin and Perry. Significantly, genres of art were revealed as a route for accessing such issues of power and cultural meanings of art. The time-consuming, slow labour of craft practices that are entrenched in materiality allowed in depth exploration and narration of autobiography that became materialised and transformed through the detail, associations and nuances derived from tools, forms and materials, amounting to an optical theorising.

The group members' descriptions of their art psychotherapy group experience contain similar factors to the Recovery Model aims of developing hope, establishing a positive identity, taking responsibility and building a meaningful life (Shepherd, Boardman and Slade 2008). The members' statements reported in my therapist's notes contribute to the emerging picture and indicate directions for future research. They seemed to value the artmaking in the group for characteristics consistent with the concept of 'sealing over'. For instance, by becoming relaxed, absorbed and calm, and for improving confidence. They found expressions of anger and extreme distress difficult. The art was seen to relate to thoughts,

and states of mind, recording psychological and emotional processes, and revealing layers of life and mind discovered in the group. Several people reported looking differently at the world around them, suggesting the development of perception and responsiveness to sensory stimuli. Links were made to core issues, including symptoms abating after significant images. Awareness and understanding was developed. However, the members emphasised the lack of pressure and that talking about issues was in their own time and at their own pace.

### **The role of the art psychotherapist and their art practice**

The art relating to an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group by both members and therapist has been examined together in a curated display of archival material, possibly for the first time. A deep reciprocity in the art of group members and therapist was illustrated. My research indicates that the art psychotherapist influences the group's artmaking even at an unconscious level. As a therapist making art in my group, I monitored my responses and limited my interpretations to commenting on the workings of the group as a whole as suggested by Foulkes and Anthony (1965:144). Even so, supervision and personal therapy that focuses on all aspects of the art psychotherapist's art and art histories seems important to develop as ongoing processes for examining clinical practice. The methods I developed in this research can be adapted for such purposes.

However, not all clients may like the therapist making art (Brooker et al 2007) which must be ascertained before therapy starts. Research is needed to explore different client groups' experiences of therapists' artmaking in groups.

My art history and the sites of practice have been traced showing profound influences on my current art and craft practices. My account shows that my art is of its time and my childhood upbringing and its historical influences saturate what I make. However, *all* the different sites where I made art also have a deep influence on what I make as do further trainings. The reassuring continuity this brings to my daily life I linked to loss and attachment. These influences that also emerged in the group could be seen in both the case study and in the curated display of archival material relating to the group. The implication

for clinical practice is that consideration should be given by art psychotherapists to how their art practice is impacting on their clinical practice.

The artmaking of the therapist taking place in an NHS outpatient art psychotherapy group has been documented for the first time. The characteristics that I found in my art allowed floating attention and appeared to enhance the group's artmaking process, providing an accompaniment that could amplify, mute or provide counterpoint. This is consistent with the group analytic role of group conductor. Further research is needed to establish how personal or situation-specific this was.

However, I would like to extend the idea of this facilitative role by using the term participative art practice to describe the therapist's personal art practice that takes place alongside clients as part of a studio-based group. This practice implies more equality between the therapist and group members than is usual. This is supported by Karkou and Sanderson (2006:67) who suggest the client-therapist relationship becomes less important when the arts are the main feature of the therapeutic process. A hierarchy is suggested when the art psychotherapist is described as the artist (the 'expert'), and their art practice takes place solely outside the group, unseen. However, I am aware there are situations when this seems necessary.

Three important roles for the art psychotherapist making art in an art psychotherapy group were elucidated. First, in terms of modelling the creative process; second, as a container of disturbance; and third, by communicating through unspoken metaphor in their art. The research illustrated how the therapist's artmaking in a studio-based art psychotherapy group can facilitate a complex language of art forms by using a full range of media, tools, technologies, equipment and methods in a containing environment.

Such participative artmaking also offers privacy as described by Haesler (1989) and which my research suggests is an important therapeutic function for this client group. When the therapist's stance is to observe the artmaking, a more distant, less mutual relationship exacerbates the issues of unequal power (Hogan 1997). The term 'participative art practice'

augments the ideas about the ways countertransference can be transmitted in the therapist's artwork, as described by Lachman Chapin (1979, 1983) and Haesler (1989). Deep, complex and reciprocal relationships and communications have been shown to be implicitly enmeshed in the artmaking processes within an art psychotherapy group even when the therapist's art is not seen by the group. My research investigations indicate that despite the difficulties of countertransference, art psychotherapists' artmaking in art psychotherapy groups brings these otherwise hidden relationships into the foreground and finds them embedded in the artwork where they can become accessible and be monitored by all concerned.

Having investigated the non-verbal discourse of the group's creative art process in the research, I would suggest that the therapist's participative artmaking acts as a transducer. Subtle and profound information is transmitted and received which is manifested in the art production, facilitating deep, therapeutic social responses. Connective elements were found in the art I made in the group and a refashioning of power differentials is suggested by the participative approach. Also suggested was that an experience of disconnection, so common when there is severe disturbance, could have been mitigated by the repetitive elements of my artmaking, and that a connection and commitment to the group was expressed. The research extends the work of Lachman-Chapin (1979, 1983, 1998), Haesler (1989), and Greenwood and Layton (1987); Gilroy (1992b) and my earlier work (1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1999). The research has emphasised the disparate power relations in therapy and that it is time to alleviate this as creatively as possible. Co-creators is a more mutual term (Gilroy 2006:95).

### **The use of art media in an art psychotherapy group**

#### **Art as a discourse**

My case study focused on the materiality of the artwork, rather than the autobiography of the artist, which is supported by Skaife (2008). Materials and objects were taken in and out of the setting and maximised group members' engagement with their artmaking. This practice seemed to act as a transitional bridge between the group and the outside world (Winnicott 1951). I discovered that the expressive and exploratory group art practice that

developed involved many forms and media, including codes, formulae, mapping, installation, assemblage, display, performance, documentation, workmanship, systematic investigation, a wide range of equipment and technologies, raw materials, cloth, words, symbols, visual images, sensation, rhythm and sounds. Complex visual qualities and constructions resulted.

The research also showed how communication can be through unspoken metaphors in the form, media and techniques used to make the art. For instance, the embroidered face that I made and placed in the middle of the curated display of the group's art was a personal image that the group saw take shape very slowly over time, allowing assimilation and for me to monitor the impact of my stitching and choice of imagery on the members. Responses were triggered in the clients such as mask paintings, and material practices generally became established in the group at this time.

The tapestry weavings I made in the group also seem to have had containing functions. The characteristics of rhythm, repetition and connectivity were echoed in my other activities with art materials in the group. The slowness of the development of the group's artworks, the repetition in actual processes (like stitching, casting or tile-making), the repetition of actions and objects, all contributed to a fugue-like quality where themes were repeated in slowly developing, complex patterns. There is also an analogy with music in group analysis and art psychotherapy (Skaife and Huet 1998:21), the gaps relating to silence as in John Cage's 'Silence' (1978). The musical analogy also seems to offer a metaphor for thinking about the therapist's choice of genre and its interaction with the group members' art including countertransference.

Making art to think about the art in art psychotherapy with this client group has been documented for the first time in this country. Part of these explorations was about the relevance of craft in art psychotherapy clinical practice and this has now been examined for the first time. How does this differ from craft as used in occupational therapy and arts in mental health when I was the Warneford Hospital's pottery technician? The difference now is that my subsequent art psychotherapy training and personal therapy developed my understanding of ethics and the dynamics of institutional, interpersonal, intrapersonal and

group processes. For instance, when I was a technician, I do not remember making links between the context of the mental health institution and my evening classes for staff, where the high numbers filled the pottery to bursting point. Now I am acutely aware of the disturbance generated by such institutions and the impact on mental health workers' needs, including my own and how this can then affect therapeutic relationships with clients.

The other major difference now is that I have discovered how art and craft practices can become a vehicle for change. I am now aware of the cultural, social and political context in which art psychotherapy takes place. My research showed how craft objects can critically comment on these influences. It also illustrated how craft practices can materialise the culture and autobiography of individuals and of a group, offering complicated visual interpretations. They embodied my culture and world and that of the group members. Craft making processes involve workmanship where technique and physical components are most important including the challenge of risk with each new object (Pye 1968). I found a clear distinction between documentative and generative functions of art. It was also shown how intense engagement can be linked to contemplative vision and the effect of the peripheral field (Pye 1978; Gilroy 2008). Added to this is the sensation of touch which has a profound effect on memory by also triggering a chain of associations. In making objects for use there is a powerfully direct communication with the audience through this sense. The slowness and rhythm of tapestry and associated reflections had the quality of documentation, inserting aspects of the emotional life of the group into the fabric. The slowness of construction, interconnectedness of the weaving structure and the importance of the continuum of the process over time also connected to a sense of place by conveying commitment and continuity. I have suggested the repeated series of actions and calming rhythm may make a sense of disconnection seem less severe.

### **A group analytic studio art psychotherapy approach**

#### **Art as an expressive transformer**

In this research I have proposed a group analytic studio art psychotherapy approach that brings together the main findings and recommendations into a model of group therapy for clients with severe and complex mental health problems in an outpatient setting. Group

analysis sees us all as group beings (MacDonald 2002) and this fundamental social dimension underpins my theoretical approach that I suggest can strengthen and widen group art psychotherapy practice by firmly focusing on the individual as part of a dynamic whole in their social, political, institutional and cultural context. The case study of my art psychotherapy group *Co-creators* in Chapter 4.2 illustrates how the concept of the matrix offers a model for theorising members' and therapist's artmaking in such a group, including the complexity and multidimensional nature of conscious and unconscious levels of communication being expressed through the art, and the potentially healing role of metaphor. The embodiment of autobiographies can be seen in the art production, and how interpretations are offered in the exchange taking place in the group art practice, with a gradual reconstitution of personal histories and identities as themes and images emerge, are amplified or muted.

The role of the therapist as participant and fellow artist in the process is consistent with the group analytic view of the group conductor's role of taking part in the construction of metaphorical and narrative themes, and of facilitating communication (Stacey 2001). My stitched face triggered resonant responses and new genres. In my case, my art seemed to act as an accompaniment much like music, appearing to facilitate the transivity of the imagery (Navridis 2006) passing to and fro. Such a characteristic is consistent with the receptive and passive attitude of the group conductor that encourages participation as described by Pines (1983). Not only is participation and communication in the group enhanced, but change is gradually brought about through the repetitive reordering and refashioning of components. Multiple interactions evolve in the art through these associative chains (Navridis 2006) with art becoming an expressive transformer.

### Diverse media and technologies

In my research the use of diverse media and technologies was found to construct the complexity and richness of the imagery being built up in the group exchange, embodying the culture of individuals and the group in slowly developing, complex patterns. This is driven by the making process which is the central focus of the approach where physical and visual exploration takes place, corresponding to the free floating conversation and association

described by Foulkes. The brimming imagery and the physical involvement with the media and tools in the group was a source of great sustenance and enrichment to participants: an 'awakening' was how one person described their experience. In my approach the 'artistic creation of a shared language' (Douglas 2002:101) takes place as a visual arts form rich in metaphor and narrative themes that pass between participants in complex, repetitive and developing patterns. The research illustrates how sustained making with diverse media and technologies offer group members an experience of slow, detailed exploration. This is why I consider it is an exploratory and expressive group art practice, even though active verbal exploration was not usually evident.

### **Exhibiting**

Exhibitions and displays are a further extension of group analytic methods, manifesting and documenting the developing group matrix. *Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group* in chapter 4.3 illustrates how exhibition methods can examine the group's work as a whole and how I found this visual strategy can 'reveal new understanding in ways that cannot be realised using . . . numbers and words' (Sullivan 2005:193). When exhibitions and displays take place in sessions with clients, this visual arts practice focusing on the materiality of the group's production becomes a visual analysis 'by the group, of the group, including its conductor' (Foulkes 1975:3). Facilitating the curation of such arrangements draws on and develops the art psychotherapist's skills and training from their background in visual arts and combines with the ethical and psychodynamic awareness developed with therapeutic training.

### **A protective, ethical framework**

In a group analytic studio art psychotherapy approach, the matrix as a construct contains as well as transforms. The very structure and framework it offers helps to protect everyone involved (clients, therapist, supervisors, and readers of this research) from the extreme distress and disturbance that group members have previously experienced. By not actively pursuing verbal exploration, the clients have more control over what they reveal and say in their own time. If material is deeply repressed it is more likely to remain undisturbed, allowing trauma to subside. Group members can work at their own pace and the slowness of

working allows assimilation of the imagery and gradual monitoring of the response. By focusing on the group's production and interaction as a whole, both in the case study *Co-creators* (chapter 4.2) and *Artefacts relating to an art psychotherapy group* (chapter 4.3), as well as in the clinical situation, individual autobiographies are not the immediate focus. The art expresses at an unconscious metaphorical level building the matrix in personal response to other responses, triggering and reproducing in highly complex narrative patterns without necessarily being understood.

I was aware of a sense of rhythm developing at particular times, and also how pleasurable the group could be, as described by MacDonald (2002). Certainly, this was expressed by members who wanted the group to 'go on all day'. As co-creators, the power relations were more mutual, reducing hierarchies. Taking part as therapist in the artmaking gave me access to the matrix in a powerful and engaging way as part of the group, but the slowness allowed me to carefully consider my artmaking and its effects. The research showed how metaphorical communication through the artwork could be seen to trigger responses, themes and imagery that were self-generating (Stacey 2000).

By focusing on the discourse of the artmaking process the adjustment that is made enables the group as a whole and its productions to be seen more clearly. Transference to the therapist is reduced, the relationship simply becomes less important (Karkou and Sanderson 2006), lessening the inherent ethical problems of disparate power relations. Instead, the supportive social setting amongst a peer group serves to protect people and the sharing develops social participation.

Despite such safeguards, as in any therapy situation, people can leave before they really commit, or before someone else joins; occasionally deep feelings can erupt unexpectedly and overflow as the case study illustrates. In future I would emphasise very thorough preparation of prospective members in an extended assessment, and once someone joined attempt to be very active in monitoring responses to what was happening, raising my concerns as quickly as possible.

Group analytic studio art psychotherapy is a multisensory approach that, through its theory and method, aims to minimise harm for all involved. It offers a social model of healing, reducing isolation, holding people together and slowing bringing about change through sharing and expression. A synthesis is made, a reunion of visual arts, therapy and ethics.

### Further research

A way forward to examine the issues raised by my research would be a group analytic studio art psychotherapy group set up specifically for research purposes. Service users' voices would be particularly important to include.

In the model that I propose, the art psychotherapist would:

- collaborate with service users about research design, data gathering and interpretation of the data (Meekums 1999)
- explore and draw on the literature of other arts therapies on therapists using their own art form in clinical practice
- consider home visits as part of the assessment process, including training for this new practice
- provide an extensive range of media, technologies and equipment in a studio environment
- carry out participative artmaking in the group
- become fully conversant with, and determine the materiality of, their own art practice through
  - examining their art history
  - studying the genres and forms of their art
  - supervision by supervisors knowledgeable about art, who are also artists
  - examining their art made in and out of sessions
- keep up to date with contemporary visual arts and crafts practices and popular culture
- curate visual displays and private exhibitions as part of the process to examine what takes place

- regarding transference and countertransference
  - in the non-verbal, visual discourse of the artmaking
- facilitate curation by group members as part of the group's art production in the group
- develop photography of the group's imagery as an integral methodology for documenting and investigating the group

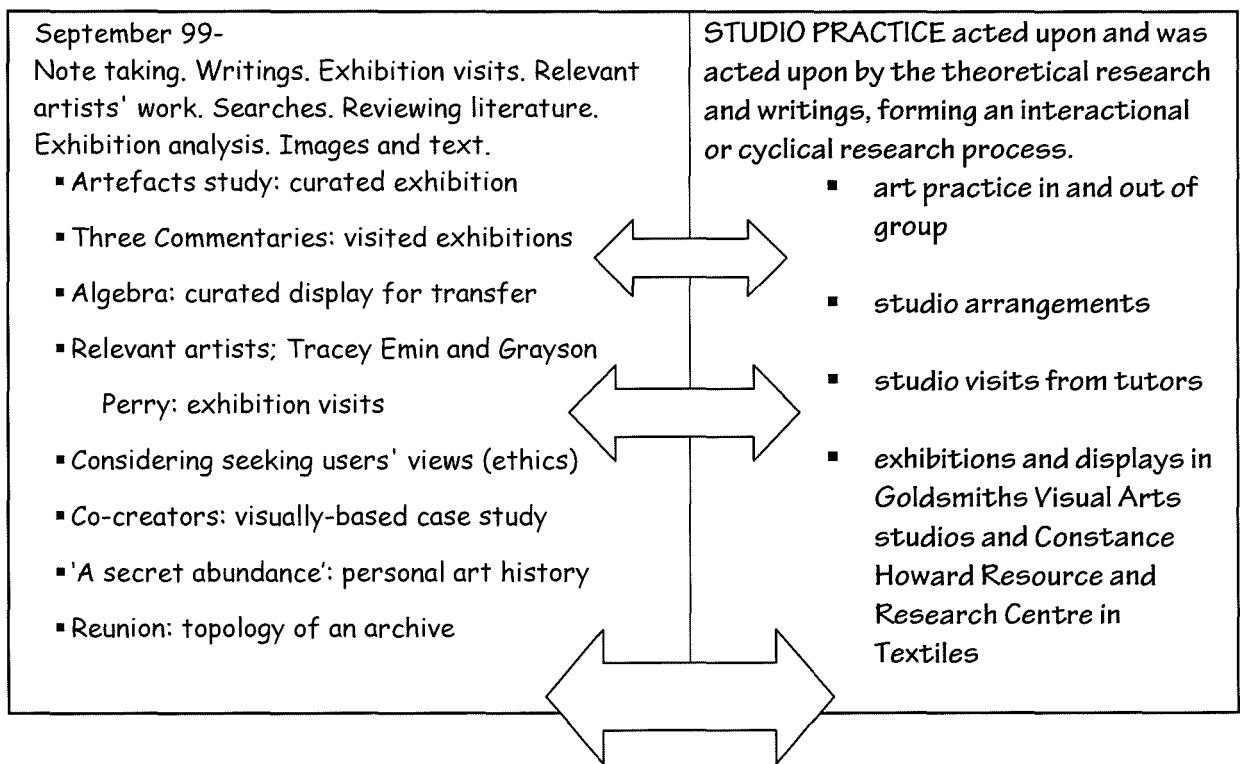
At the end of an extraordinary heuristic research process I experience an integration of my clinical and art and craft practices, now seeing my artmaking in my art psychotherapy group as a form of art practice in its own right.

The implication of this research is that the art psychotherapist's art practice is integral to clinical practice both in and outside clinical groups, even if unseen by the client. A network of relationships has been highlighted that connects a group's art with the makers and viewers, involving a spectrum of social and cultural traditions, associations and hierarchies. Teeming imagery, important functions of craft practices and an enormously wide range of making, conceptualising and audiencing processes have been opened out that hold the potential to breathe new life into current practice, and emphasise the value of the clients' art and culture. This leads me to suggest that clients' experiences can be significantly enhanced by the therapist's artmaking in art psychotherapy groups when carefully considered in relation to the group matrix. This represents a substantial challenge to orthodoxy presented in the literature where the therapist's art practice is often kept separate from the client.

I therefore recommend that far greater consideration be given to the form, genre and characteristics or materiality of the artmaking of an art psychotherapy group, including the therapist's art practice taking place outside the group. Profound influences are being transmitted and documented in an exchange rich in ideas and personal histories that are materialised, embodied and transformed in the group matrix that is constructed by the mutual, non-verbal discourse of making art together.

## APPENDIX 1

Table 1.1 Research activities and their interaction



**Table 1.2 Exhibitions, arrangements and visual displays used in the research and their relationship to the group and therapist**

Outside/in: Visited exhibitions	
1. <i>We all peel the onions</i>	<b>Group and Therapist:</b> Ethics, art and mental health
2. <i>Live in Your Head</i>	<b>Therapist:</b> early art influences
3. <i>Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth</i>	<b>Therapist:</b> recent materials practice
4. Tracey Emin: <i>This is Another Place</i>	<b>Group and Therapist:</b> Textile art and art psychotherapy groups
5. Grayson Perry at Victoria Miro 14	<b>Group and Therapist:</b> Ceramics and art psychotherapy groups
Inside/out: Curated visual displays and exhibitions	
6. <i>Artefacts Relating to an Art Psychotherapy Group</i>	<b>Group and Therapist:</b> Four years in the life of a group - display of art of clients and therapist/textual analysis
7. <i>Algebra</i>	<b>Therapist:</b> Word and image - therapist's clinical notes (visual display for Transfer from MPhil)
8. <i>Reunion (of broken parts): Topology of an archive</i>	<b>Therapist:</b> Practice as a potter: unpacking the therapist's art practice

## APPENDIX 2

Table 2.1 Sites at which the meanings of an image are made (Rose 2001:16)

### PRODUCTION: How it is made

#### Modalities:

1. Technological concerns (the tools and equipment to make, structure and display the image)

*How made?*

2. Compositional concerns (the visual construction, qualities and reception of the image)

*Genre?*

3. Social concerns (the social, political and institutional practices and relations that produce, saturate and interpret the image)

*Who made it? When? Who for? Why?*

### THE IMAGE: What it looks like

#### Modalities:

1. Technological concerns (the tools and equipment to make, structure and display the image)

*Visual effects?*

2. Compositional concerns (the visual construction, qualities and reception of the image)

*Composition?*

3. Social concerns (the social, political and institutional practices and relations that produce, saturate and interpret the image)

*Visual meanings?*

### AUDIENCING: How it is seen

#### Modalities:

1. Technological concerns (the tools and equipment to make, structure and display the image)

*Transmission? Circulation? Display?*

2. Compositional concerns (the visual construction, qualities and reception of the image)

*Viewing positions offered?*

*Relation to other texts?*

3. Social concerns (the social, political and institutional practices and relations that produce, saturate and interpret the image)

*How interpreted? By whom? Why?*

Source Rose 2001

**Table 2.2 Three Commentaries;  
*Textures of Memory: the poetics  
of cloth - issues from narrative text  
relevant to clinical practice***

	Sites			Modes		
	Production	Image	Audience	Technological	compositional	social
1. Frame of mind affected by journey			✓			✓
2. Art can challenge personal beliefs (missing Broadhead's installation)		✓		✓		
3. There-not-there, minimum, traces, material presence of piece of art	✓			✓		
4. Lossing facility to look (eg by overstimulation, preoccupation etc)			✓			✓
5. Gives insight (Binns conveying the quality of clay with cloth)		✓			✓	
6. Writing afterwards produces further insights for viewer			✓			✓
7. Qualities of memory conveyed through technologies of making (fragments of Wilson's work)	✓			✓		
8. Value given by the amount of care that goes into each piece	✓			✓		
9. Importance of cloth and textiles throughout life	✓				✓	
10. Creation of disturbance, sense of loss, pain			✓		✓	
11. Power of domestic imagery		✓			✓	
12. Fine making with attention to detail (Bristow expressing ambivalence regarding the domestic and comfort)	✓			✓		
13. Prints as a means of expression	✓				✓	
14. Vocabulary of cloth and language of textiles (Yahooodi)		✓			✓	
15. Investigating by making (Broadhead)	✓					✓
16. Craft and art		✓				✓
17. Use of colour, 'text', video	✓				✓	
18. 'Vision' challenged (Broadhead)		✓				✓
19. Related fields for examining and discussing work, only one of which is psychoanalysis			✓			✓
	8	6	5	5	7	7

**Table 2.3 Three Commentaries;  
*Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain, 1965-75* - issues from narrative text relevant to clinical practice**

	Sites			Modes		
	Production	Image	Audience	Technological	compositional	social
1. Art as political and social comment		✓				✓
2. Primacy of painting and sculpture	✓					✓
3. 'Good' memories rather than disturbing ones		✓				✓
4. 'Temporary' art that is not permanent (Louw)	✓				✓	
5. Ways of looking back at work, chronological review is only one way			✓	✓		
6. Sensitive material, dignity of work and respect (Harrison, Hunt and Kelly)		✓				✓
7. Links might be visual rather than or as well as 'unconscious' (Plackman)			✓		✓	
8. Visual charts for analysis, lists (Hiller)	✓			✓		
9. Appearances can be deceiving (Craig-Martin)		✓		✓		
10. Getting out of touch with art and the creative process			✓			✓
11. Means of display, framing, mounting (Dye, Craig-Martin)			✓		✓	
	3	4	4	3	3	5

Table 2.4 Three Commentaries; We all peel the onions - issues from narrative text relevant to clinical practice	Sites			Modes		
	Production	Image	Audience	Technological	compositional	social
1. Importance and understanding of ethics in working with vulnerable people	✓					✓
2. Confidentiality	✓					✓
3. Relationship of the artwork to the method of display			✓		✓	
4. Offering materials that appear infantile to adults. Quality of materials	✓			✓		
5. Respect given to sensitive imagery and content			✓	✓		
6. Images given individual consideration in their display			✓	✓		
7. Work is displayed as art? As that of a particular artist? Authorship			✓	✓		
8. Privacy, private work, intention of work, to be seen by a public?	✓					✓
9. Respect for the work conveyed by method of display and presentation eg mounts or frames, pinned to wall?			✓			✓
10. Who is an artist?	✓					✓
11. What makes artwork disturbing?		✓			✓	
12. Informed consent, how much choice do participants have?	✓					✓
13. Who benefits from showing work, publication, (ethics)			✓			✓
14. Listening to criticism	✓					✓
15. Imbalance of power in relationships	✓					✓
	8	1	6	4	2	9

**Table 2.5 Tracey Emin: *This is Another Place* - issues from narrative text relevant to clinical practice**

	Sites			Modes		
	Production	Image	Audience	Technological	compositional	social
1. Context of event for audience, cultural significance, memories, meaning (frame of mind effected by journey)			✓			✓
2. Cultural significances of relationship	✓					✓
3. Use of darkness for evoking memory			✓		✓	
4. Use of neon and words		✓		✓		
5. Provoking a response (swear words)		✓				✓
6. Means of display (where it is placed; how it is lit, )			✓	✓		
7. Guiding/leading the viewer and use of architecture (opening, shutting doors, ascending stairs)			✓		✓	
8. Developing work and multimedia eg poems, writings, photos, journals, photocopies produces further insights	✓				✓	
9. Assemblages of private and domestic objects and resonances	✓				✓	
10. Resonances of clothing		✓		✓		
11. Not wanting to look because it is too painful			✓			✓
12. Creation of disturbance, loss, pain, poignancy			✓			✓
13. Emotive response of the audience on an unconscious level			✓			✓
14. Power of domestic material and cloth	✓				✓	
15. Cultural traditions of making (eg patchwork)	✓				✓	
16. 'Popular' culture	✓				✓	
17. Art as political and social comment		✓				✓
18. Laborious methods of construction	✓			✓		
19. Contrasting forms (words with patchwork)		✓			✓	
20. Framing and series of photographs	✓					✓
21. Different forms: life/death mask - casting, video - moving images and sound, embroideries, prints	✓				✓	
22. Humour		✓			✓	
23. Reclaimed materials	✓			✓		
24. Size and scale: large constructions/small maquettes	✓			✓		
25. Buildings and architecture and evoked memory			✓			✓
26. Stylistic devices with contradictory associations		✓				✓
	11	7	8	6	10	10

	Sites			Modes		
	Production	Image	Audience	Technological	compositional	social
1. Context of event for audience. cultural significance, memories, meaning (frame of mind effected by journey)			✓			✓
2. Cultural significances of relationship, eg age, class issues	✓					✓
3. Light, darkness effects experience, memory (time of day)			✓			✓
4. Effects of thresholds, doorways			✓	✓		
5. An art experience as preparation, raising awareness			✓		✓	
6. Means of display eg where it is placed, how it is lit, minimal, plinths			✓	✓		
7. Guiding/leading the viewer and use of architecture (openings, doors, stairs, corridors, minimal white spaces)			✓		✓	
8. Windows as a reminder of context			✓		✓	
9. Size of work effects the viewer		✓				✓
10. Resonance of imperfection	✓				✓	
11. Resonances of craft		✓				✓
12. Mythological subject matter		✓				✓
13. Visual narrative subject matter		✓				✓
14. Collage of techniques building layers of meaning	✓				✓	
15. Resonances of materials eg lustre	✓				✓	
16. Power of familiar tropes, traditions of making eg classical vases	✓					✓
17. Resonances of clothing eg sexy robe		✓		✓		
18. Manipulation of viewer eg seduction of surface			✓		✓	
19. Intrusive imagery and not wanting to look because it is too painful			✓			✓
20. Hypnotic level of detail		✓			✓	
21. Creation of disturbance, loss, pain, poignancy			✓			✓
22. Emotive response of the audience on an unconscious level			✓			✓
23. Copying as a method	✓			✓		
24. 'Popular' culture	✓				✓	
25. Art as political and social comment		✓				✓
26. Laborious methods of construction	✓			✓		
27. Multi-styles	✓				✓	
28. Humour		✓			✓	
29. Satire and irony		✓				✓
30. Buildings and architecture and evoked memory			✓			✓
31. Stylistic devices with contradictory associations		✓				✓
	9	10	12	5	11	15

## APPENDIX 3

**Table 3.1 Qualities attributed to the Autobiographical mode of writing (Gergen 1997: 163-165) as found in the narrative account in Artefacts related to an art psychotherapy group**

Qualities attributed to the Autobiographical mode of writing (Gergen 1997: 163-165)	Examples in my Account
<input type="checkbox"/> an experiential lens is provided	a personal account attempting to make my experience available to the reader, in diary-like format: "On the second day . . ."
<input type="checkbox"/> the reader can gain access to a period of history that is of broad significance	probably the first time an art psychotherapist's personal artwork has been put together with that of her group's where all related objects could be seen together
<input type="checkbox"/> there is an educative function	aimed at giving insight into the creative processes relating to art psychotherapy
<input type="checkbox"/> the fullness of the event is presented as experienced	includes personal material and that of the mundane
<input type="checkbox"/> expressions of value are included to justify actions taken	"It succeeded beyond my hopes"
<input type="checkbox"/> the 'lived experience' is shared with the reader	"I felt very nervous"
<input type="checkbox"/> the form of writing is being used to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions which a 'civil' reporter might suppress	the bringing together of clients' artwork and therapist' artwork to look at together is challenging an orthodoxy where they are kept separate
<input type="checkbox"/> the reader is invited to share subjectivity by using (1) affectively charged language; (2) quotidian discourse (common place, trivial); and (3) metaphor (the reader senses the qualities of a unique experience)	(1) "the feelings of vulnerability and sense of exposure"; (2) "This gate was locked at 9pm"; (3) "blotted out of my consciousness"
<input type="checkbox"/> the presence of the author is as an agent who resists 'appearing as someone other than a personal self - for example, priest, prognosticator, or 'civil fellow' - and attempts to make his or her interior available to the reader.' (p164)	use of "I" and personal material revealed
<input type="checkbox"/> borrows from the mythic or fictive traditions	there is a sense of 'high-point' or climax

**Table 3.2**

**Initial findings arising out of text *Artefacts related to an art psychotherapy group***

1. Effect of exhibiting on the artist/maker: making oneself vulnerable, sense of exposure (initially experienced in nervousness). Intensity indicates exhibiting could be inappropriate for some clients.
2. Importance of giving dignity to clients' artwork when displaying it (including in art psychotherapy setting).
3. Complex reciprocal exchanges between therapist's art practice outside the clinical setting and clients' artwork.
4. The creative process of arranging a visual display can be a continuation of the making process.
5. An exhibition's audience are participants in the process.
6. Writing after visual display increases insight.
7. Importance of photography as documentation and vehicle for investigation.
8. Formal display of an object changes the way it is experienced/perceived.
9. Resonance clear in the artwork between those making art together.
10. Exhibition made it possible to look at a huge amount of information at once: able to look at the 'whole' as opposed to meaning of individual pieces.
11. Therapist's role in group becomes clear in terms of:
  - Modelling (for instance, group members started using clay after therapist first used it)
  - Containment (eg chaos/mess only experienced in the therapist's notes)
12. 'Gaps' in making are as important as making.
13. What the therapist brings into the group in terms of their creative process but does not 'show' group members is illustrated.
14. Dynamics illustrated relating to personal significance of creative activity in general.
15. Communication by metaphor has implications for use of materials and techniques, for examples, textiles.

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## PART TWO

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**Figure 2.2** Installation view, *Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth*, Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, 2000; showing work by Verdi Yahooda (left) and Caroline Broadhead (right). Photograph by Janis Jefferies. Courtesy Pitshanger Manor and Gallery, London.

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**Figure 2.27** Tracey Emin. *My Bed*, 1998. Mattress, linens, pillows, rope, various memorabilia. [Internet image] Saatchi Gallery, London. Available at [http://www.nationalgalleries.org/media/source/emin\\_mybedcorrectalt.jpg](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/media/source/emin_mybedcorrectalt.jpg) [Accessed 27 August, 2009]

**Figure 2.28** Tracey Emin. *Remembering 1963 (The New Black)*, 2002. Appliqué blanket. Photograph by Stephen White. Courtesy Jay Jopling/White Cube (London).

**Figure 2.29** Tracey Emin. *I do not expect to be a Mother*, 2002. Appliqué patchwork blanket. [Internet image]. Courtesy of the Artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London. Available at [http://www.nationalgalleries.org/media/source/emin\\_donotexpect.jpg](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/media/source/emin_donotexpect.jpg) [Accessed 27 August, 2009]

**Figure 2.30** Tracey Emin. *Self Portrait with Docket I-IX*, 2002. C-type prints in perspex frames, all edition 2/3. Courtesy of the Artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London.

**Figure 2.31** Tracy Emin. *Self Portrait. Here it is*, 2000, monoprint [Internet image]. Courtesy Jay Jopling/White Cube, London. Available from <http://www.oxfordstudent.com/2002-11/14/ox2/2> [Accessed 5 December 2002]

**Figure 2.32** Tracey Emin. *Knowing my enemy*, 2002. Reclaimed wood and steel. Collection of the Artist. Photograph by Stephen White. Courtesy of Modern Art Oxford.

**Figure 2.33** Tracey Emin. Photograph from Emin, T. (2002) *Tracey Emin: This is Another Place*, [Scan] Modern Art Oxford, Oxford.

**Figure 2.34** Tracey Emin. Photograph from Emin, T. (2002) *Tracey Emin: This is Another Place*, [Scan] Modern Art Oxford, Oxford.

**Figure 2.35** Tracey Emin. *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With, 1963-95*, 1995. Appliqué tent, mattress and light [Internet image]. Photo: Stephen White. Courtesy Jay Joplin/White Cube, London. Available from [http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/blogon/artnews/127/the\\_times\\_200](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/blogon/artnews/127/the_times_200) [Accessed 27 August, 2009]

**Figure 2.36** Tracey Emin. *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With, 1963-95*, 1995 (detail). Appliqué tent, mattress and light [Internet image]. Photo: Stephen White. Courtesy Jay Joplin/White Cube, London. Available from [http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/blogon/artnews/127/the\\_times\\_200](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/blogon/artnews/127/the_times_200) [Accessed 27 August, 2009]

**Figure 2.37** Tracey Emin. *I've Got It All*, 2000. Ink-jet print, 124 x 109 cm [Internet image]. Available at [http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/artpages/tracey\\_emin\\_i\\_got\\_all.htm](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/artpages/tracey_emin_i_got_all.htm) [Accessed 27 August 2009]

**Figure 2.38** Grayson Perry. *Personal Creation Myth*, 2007. Glazed ceramic, 49 x 39cm diameter [Scan].

**Figure 2.39** Grayson Perry. *Personal Creation Myth*, 2007 (detail). Glazed ceramic, 49 x 39cm diameter [Scan]. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2007) *My Civilisation: Grayson Perry* [exhibition catalogue].

**Figure 2.40** Grayson Perry. *Claire at the site of a fire*, 2003. Photographic print 39.7x58.7cm, photo Rob Weiss [scan]. Victoria Miro Gallery (2004) *Grayson Perry* [exhibition catalogue].

**Figure 2.41** Grayson Perry. *Claire and Florence Visit Shrine to Essex Man*, 1998, photographic print, 44x66cm (framed), photo: Philippa Perry [Scan]. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2007) *My Civilisation: Grayson Perry* [exhibition catalogue].

**Figure 2.42** Grayson Perry. *This pot will reduce crime by 29%*, 2007. Glazed ceramic, 58x30cm diameter [Scan]. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2007) *My Civilisation: Grayson Perry* [exhibition catalogue].

**Figure 2.43** Grayson Perry. *Our Father*, 2007. Cast iron and oil paint, 80x60x52cm [Scan]. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2007) *My Civilisation: Grayson Perry* [exhibition catalogue].

**Figure 2.44** Grayson Perry. *Map of an Englishman*, 2004, etching, 110x150cm (detail) [Internet image]. Printed by Hugh Stonemann, published by Paragon. Available at <http://rathersplendid.net/images/34.jpeg/web/log/grayson-perrys-map-of-an-englishman> [Accessed on 16 August 2009].

**Figure 2.45** Henry Darger. *At Jullio Calleo*, after 1934. Watercolor, carbon tracing, and pencil on joined papers, 48.3x120.4 cm [Internet image]. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr. and museum purchase made possible by Ralph Cross Johnson 1986.65.168B. Available at <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/results/?id=1122> [Accessed 26 August 2009]

**Figure 2.46** Grayson Perry. Installation view, *The Charms of Lincolnshire*, 2006, exhibition [Internet image]. The Collection, Lincoln, 2006. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/collective/gallery/2/static.shtml?collection=graysonperry> [Accessed 26 August 2009]

**Figure 2.47** Grayson Perry in his studio. Photograph by Geraint Lewis [Internet image]. Available at [http://www.independent.co.uk/multimedia/archive/00017/perry500\\_17783t.jpg](http://www.independent.co.uk/multimedia/archive/00017/perry500_17783t.jpg) [Accessed 26 August 2009]

## PART THREE<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 3.1** Installation view, *Unpacking an Archive*, Display in Cabinet at Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles, 2005.

**Figure 3.2** *My I*, b/w photograph by J. Myrdal, 1971.

**Figure 3.3** L. B. Ephgrave. *Peaked hat with integral ear flaps*, crotchet, made in Germany, 1943. [Scan] Photograph by P. Cawston.

**Figure 3.4** *Green pepper*, 1964. Relief assemblage. Ink, tissue paper, polythene, pva [Scan].

**Figure 3.5** *Three studies of a mincer*, 1965. Biro.

**Figure 3.6** *Circuit board*, 1965. Biro.

**Figure 3.7** *Two figures I*, 1969. Inks.

**Figure 3.8** *First pots, first studio at Kings Cross*, 1970. Thrown and hand built earthenware.

**Figure 3.9** *People and heads*, 1969-70. Ink. Not to scale.

**Figure 3.10** *Bank kiln, Harrow kiln site*, 1971. B/w photograph by J. Myrdal.

**Figure 3.11** *Harrow kiln site: author firing and opening a one-off kiln*, 1971. B/w photograph by J. Myrdal.

**Figure 3.12** *Island*, porcelain, celadon glaze, 1972. B/w photograph by J. Myrdal.

**Figure 3.13** *Press moulded and carved bowl*, celadon glaze, 1972. Photograph by J. Myrdal.

**Figure 3.14** *CoSIRA exhibition*, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, September 1973 (detail). Newspaper cutting [Scan].

**Figure 3.16** Clockwise from top left: *Squared jar*, 1976. Vanadium glaze; *Squared jar*, 1976. Temmoku glaze; *Tree box*, 1975. Vanadium glaze; *Carved dish*, 1976, Vanadium glaze. Photographs by J. Myrdal.

**Figure 3.17** Installation view, *Beach-Thomas Gallery exhibition*, 1977. Photograph by J. Myrdal.

**Figure 3.18** *Ancient wood*, Devon. March, 1980. Watercolour.

**Figure 3.19** *Tests of sprig moulds*, 1980.

**Figure 3.20** *Glazing pots with sprig moulds*, 1979.

**Figure 3.21** *Bowls with copper red glaze*, 1980.

**Figure 3.22** *Combined wood and porcelain*, 1980. By Penny Garvey and author.

**Figure 3.23** *Sprig lids*, 1980. Porcelain inlaid in oak and rosewood.

**Figure 3.24** Participants from the Pottery at The Warneford Hospital, Oxford. Installation view, *Explorations in Clay*, exhibition at The Warneford Hospital, Oxford, 1981.

**Figure 3.25** *Daisy*, 1981. Fired clay, water colour, rosewood.

**Figure 3.26** *New art studios being constructed at Henderson Hospital*, 1987.

**Figure 3.27** *Birdbath*, 1993; and *Duckseat*, 1994. Saltglazed stoneware.

**Figure 3.28** *Fairview*, Brimscombe, June, 1994. Watercolour.

**Figure 3.29** *Half a washed fleece drying*, April 2007, sheered 1997.

**Figure 3.30** *Spinning tests*, Shetland fleeces, 1993-5.

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<sup>1</sup> All images in Part Three are by Jacky Mahony unless otherwise stated.

**Figure 3.31** Installation view, arrangement in Cabinet at Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles, 2004.

**Figure 3.32** *Knitting*, 2000. Handspun Shetland wool, commercial cashmere yarn, knitting needle, safety pins [Scan].

**Figure 3.33** *Research coat*, handspun mixed fibres, detail of arrangement in Cabinet at Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles, 2004.

**Figure 3.34** *Inside/outside?* 2006. Detail of arrangement in Cabinet at Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles, 2004. (Clockwise from middle left) Lichen test showing orchil (in jar); book made in the group showing *Face* embroidery; packet of entomology pins; combs; open box of specimen pins; *Horizon IV*, tapestry; wool fibres; combed lock of sheep fleece.

**Figure 3.35** *Sketches for studio design*, 1998.

**Figures 3.36, 3.37** *Bale plans for east and south side of straw bale studio*, 1999. Ink, graph paper.

**Figure 3.38** *New studio*, 2001.

**Figure 3.39** *Harris fragments*, 2006. Watercolour, ink.

**Figure 3.40** *Bowglass, Harris*, July, 2006. Watercolour.

**Figure 3.41** *Archive log books and notebooks*, 1974-1984.

**Figure 3.42** *Sketchbook*, 1974.

**Figure 3.43** *Before Unpacking*, 2001.

**Figure 3.44** *Horizon I & II*, detail of studio arrangement, February 2003. Tapestry, mixed fibres.

**Figure 3.45** *Algebra I & II*, detail of studio arrangement, February 2003. Enamel.

**Figure 3.46** *Horizon I, II & III*, detail of studio arrangement, June 2003. Tapestry, mixed fibres.

**Figure 3.47** *Algebra III*, detail of studio arrangement, June 2003. Mixed media.

**Figure 3.48** Studio arrangement (detail), June 2003. (From left to right) *Matty*, raku; *Box*, stoneware, oxides; *Abstract*, stoneware, underglaze colours.

**Figure 3.49** Studio arrangement (detail), June 2003. *Two bowls*, raku.

**Figure 3.50** Studio arrangement (detail), June 2003. *Matty*, raku.

**Figure 3.51** Studio arrangement (detail), June 2003. *Fragments*, sprigs in porcelain, earthenware and stoneware.

**Figure 3.52** Studio arrangement (detail), *Finding an archive: tools*, January 2004.

**Figure 3.53** Studio arrangement (detail), *Finding an archive*, January 2004.

**Figure 3.54** Studio arrangement (detail), *Codes, keys and properties*, January 2004.

**Figure 3.55** Studio arrangement (detail), *Tools*, January 2004.

**Figure 3.56** Studio arrangement (detail), *Broken pieces*, January 2004. Glaze tests.

**Figure 3.57** Studio arrangement (detail), *Photo of My I seen through magnifier*, January 2004.

**Figure 3.58** Studio arrangement (detail), *Throwing tools*, January, 2004.

**Figure 3.59** Studio arrangement (detail), *Looking closer*, January, 2004. Pots, notebooks, journals, magnifier.

**Figure 3.60** Installation view, *Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford*, 2004.

**Figure 3.61** *Horizon IV: Land, sea and sky*, 2003. Tapestry, mixed fibres, 6 x 10 cm.

## PART FOUR<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 4.1** Jacky Mahony. *Casts and moulds*, plaster, latex, earthenware clay, paper towel. Max diam 10cm.

**Figure 4.2** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Fragile monster* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.3.** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Dancing figure* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.4** (Clockwise from top) Jacky Mahony. Book with *Germinating wheat*, cotton thread, watercolour; *Cast dishes*, unfired clay. Art psychotherapy group members' work removed [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.5** Jacky Mahony. *Handmade book*, mixed media. 13x12cm.

**Figure 4.6** Jacky Mahony. *Miniature embroidery* in book, mixed fibres, paper.

**Figure 4.7** (Clockwise from bottom right) Jacky Mahony. *Two cast dishes*, clay. Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. [Photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.8** Jacky Mahony. *Germinating wheat* in book, cotton thread, watercolour, black paper. 13x12cm.

**Figure 4.9** (Clockwise from top) Jacky Mahony. *Embroidered face* in book, mixed fibres. Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. [Photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.10** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's. *Sheep with decorated coat* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.11** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Embroidered face*, mixed yarns[photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.12** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Embroidered face*, mixed yarns. [Photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.13** Jacky Mahony. *First throwing on the wheel*, clay, potters' wheel.

**Figure 4.14** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Embroidered Face*, mixed fibres. Max diam 24cm [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.15** (Clockwise from top right) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Casting a square dish*, plaster, slip[photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.16** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Square pot*, unfired clay. [Photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.17** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Shoe*, [photoshop].

**Figure 4.18** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's. *In a cell*,[photoshop].

**Figure 4.19** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Tree in winter* [photoshop].

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<sup>2</sup> For reasons of confidentiality the photographs of clients' work that illustrate the case study in this dissertation were altered with Adobe Photoshop and included for examination purposes only. Once the examination process was over, the clients' work was removed from the photographs in the thesis as they cannot be available to the wider public.

**Figure 4.20** Before moving. Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. (Clockwise from top left) Jacky Mahony. *Square slab dish*, earthenware clay; *Oval dish*, press-moulded glazed clay. (Centre) *Square pot*, glazed clay; *Square dishes*, fired with oxides; *Casting square dishes*, slip, plaster [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.21** After Moving. (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Embroidered face*, mixed yarns; *cast dish*, glazed clay for firing [photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.22** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Millenium Dome I & II* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.23** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Teddy with teddy* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.24** (Clockwise from bottom left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Press-moulded dish*, earthenware clay with slip decoration; *Cast dish*, glazed clay for firing. [Photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.25** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Group depiction*, clay; *Two castellated containers*, clay. Max diam 17cm [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.26** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Little monster* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.27** Impression of art psychotherapy group members' work. Installation view, *Private exhibition* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.28** (Clockwise from top right) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Sculpture*, fired clay; *Embroidered Face*, mixed fibres [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.29** Jacky Mahony. *Oceanic cards*, watercolour, wax crayon. (Bottom right) Art psychotherapy group member's work removed [Photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.30** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's. (Clockwise from top left) *Bear in satin*; '*Dressed' Barbie*; *Barbie Doll*; *Miniature knitted ensemble* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.31** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Fairies* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.32** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Cards*, crayon, watercolour, metallic paper, card. Max dimensions 42x30cm [photography/photoshop].

**Figure 4.33** (Clockwise from bottom left) Jacky Mahony. *Tapestry*, wool, 21x30cm. Art psychotherapy group members' work removed [photograph/photoshop]

**Figure 4.34** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Humanoid and broom* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.35** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Three bears in uniforms* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.36** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Pylon* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.37** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Shoes* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.38** Impression of art psychotherapy group members' *Frog grasping reed*; *Knitting for teddy* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.39** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony. *Horizon I*, tapestry, mixed fibres; *Trouble box*, clay. Max diam 30cm [photoshop].

- Figure 4.40** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Head* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.41** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Couple* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.42** (Clockwise from top) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony.  
*Horizon I*, tapestry, mixed fibres; pyrometric cone log for kiln. Max diam 42cm  
[photograph/photoshop].
- Figure 4.43** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Snowscape* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.44** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Riding the Swell* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.45** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Lighthouse off sheltered cove* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.46** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Birds-eye view* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.47** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Wrapped objects* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.48** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Estuary with boats* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.49** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Apple landscape* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.50** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Looking out to sea* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.51** (Clockwise from top) Jacky Mahony. *Flat dish*, clay; *Horizon II*, tapestry, mixed yarns. Art psychotherapy group member's work removed [Photograph/photoshop].
- Figure 4.52** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Bridge* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.53** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Wooded glade* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.54** Impression of art psychotherapy group members' work [photoshop].
- Figure 4.55** Impression of art psychotherapy group members' work [photoshop]
- Figure 4.56** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Dinosaur* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.57** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony.  
*Horizon III*, detail, and *Horizon I & II*, mixed yarns [photograph/photoshop].
- Figure 4.58** Jacky Mahony. *Rectangular container*; clay, 9x15x8cm.
- Figure 4.59** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Dinosaur* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.60** Jacky Mahony. *Four dishes*, glazed clay, max diam 18cm.
- Figure 4.61** (Clockwise from top left) Art psychotherapy group members' work removed. Jacky Mahony.  
*Horizon III*, mixed yarns. Max diam 42cm [photograph/photoshop].
- Figure 4.62** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Rocky seascape* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.63** (From left to right) Jacky Mahony. *Horizon III*, mixed yarns. Art psychotherapy group member's work removed [photograph/photoshop]
- Figure 4.64** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Crossroads* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.65** Jacky Mahony. *Horizon IV*, mixed yarns, 8x6cm.
- Figure 4.66** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Artic* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.67** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Chasm* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.68** Impression of art psychotherapy group members' *Final work* [photoshop].
- Figure 4.69** Impression of art psychotherapy group members' (clockwise from top) *Alien monster* (Year One); *Night monster* (Year Five); *Little monster* (Year Two) [photoshop].

**Figure 4.70** Impression of art psychotherapy group member's *Night monster* [photoshop].

**Figure 4.71** Art psychotherapy group members and Jacky Mahony. Installation view, *Artefacts Relating to an Art Psychotherapy Group*, private exhibition in Studio B, Goldsmiths, September 2000 [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.72** Art psychotherapy group members and Jacky Mahony. Installation view, *Artefacts Relating to an Art Psychotherapy Group*, private exhibition in Studio B, Goldsmiths, September 2000 [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.73- 4.75** Art psychotherapy group members and Jacky Mahony. Installation view, *Artefacts Relating to an Art Psychotherapy Group*, private exhibition in Studio B, Goldsmiths, September 2000 [photograph/photoshop].

**Figure 4.76** Jacky Mahony. Installation detail, *Artefacts Relating to an art Psychotherapy Group*, private exhibition in Studio B, Goldsmiths, September 2000, showing handspun skeins of wool.