

CANVASSING THE EMOTIONS

Canvassing the emotions:
Women, creativity and mental health in context

Sally Northfield
BSc: University of Melbourne
GDip in Women's Health: University of Melbourne
GDip of Applied Psychology (Community): Victoria University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy
College of Arts, Victoria University

(April, 2014)



Sara Wilson, *Mona Lisa*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm. Collection of the artist.

Artist's Statement: "I was trying to capture the Fauvist movement's colour on her face. I changed the background (to what it would have been in the original) to a volcanic eruption (looming danger). I did this because they say she was pregnant in this painting and unmarried. In this time frame it was frowned upon to be unmarried and pregnant, so she would have had a tough time looming ahead, without support and with society discriminating against her."

Abstract

Canvassing the emotions examines the role and meaning of artmaking in the lives of women who have experienced mental ill-health and/or psychological trauma in Australia between the 1950s and the present. Hovering at the nexus of a number of contested domains, the thesis bypasses the perennial question of *what is art* to explore the neglected and perhaps more interesting query – *what does art do for the artmaker?* – and associated questions of *why does art matter; what is the function of artmaking in relation to wellbeing; and what are the implications of a thwarted life of making?*

The thesis presents the findings of three studies: The Exhibition – a touring exhibition of art produced by women with an experience of mental ill-health; The Interviews – with thirty-two women who make art and who have experienced mental ill-health; and The Collage – a collation of women's accounts of – what does art do?

To provide context for the three studies, this thesis examines the status of feminist research in the 21st century and the ontological and epistemological implications of various feminist theoretical positions which impact upon how women's participation in research can be presented and understood. In asking what it means to be a woman and an artist, the research adopts a diffractive methodological approach borrowed from feminist quantum physics and nomadic theory, and opens up a contingent space for an artistic subject to create.

Historically, the identity of the mental patient has too often been thrust upon women, but the identity of the artist rarely. The thesis acknowledges the various challenges women encounter when envisaging, establishing and sustaining an art practice. Having taken the risk to proclaim *this is what I see*, many women held strong views about the role and meaning of artmaking in their lives: making matters. For some, with or without an experience of mental ill-health, artmaking was a way of living that was integral to wellbeing and inseparable from existence: *It's what I do, It's who I am*. This research resonated with an ontological presence.

The women behind the paintbrush, pencil, pastel, charcoal or needle provide perspectives that challenge traditional ubiquitous links between 'madness' and creativity. This thesis resists the positioning of artmaking as an artefact of mental illness or artworks as direct representations of the artist's clinical symptoms, and disrupts the notion that locates women primarily within the realm of the 'emotional'. The manifestation of creativity in artmaking may have more to do with mental wellbeing than mental ill-health and provokes consideration of the role of artistic endeavour in each of our lives, individually and collectively.

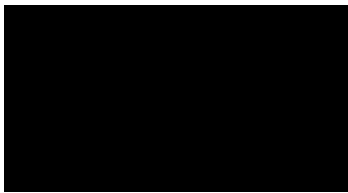
Keywords: women, artmaking, creativity, mental health, artist, feminism, diffraction.

Student Declaration

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

"I, Sally Northfield, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, footnotes and interview punctuation to indicate pauses and omitted data. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work."

Signature



Date 23 July 2015

Awards and Publications

Australian Postgraduate Award Research Scholarship (2005-2009).

Victoria University Abroad: Student Exchange Scholarship (2005) – to the University of Florence, Italy.

Grants

Macedon Ranges Shire Council (2009) to tour the exhibition *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* to Kyneton for International Women's Day.

Alfred Health (2008) for the exhibition *Canvassing the emotions* to appear at the 3rd International Congress on Women's Mental Health at the Melbourne Convention Centre.

Department of Health Services Goulburn (2008) to tour the exhibition *Canvassing the emotions* to Bendigo for Mental Health Week.

Victoria University (2008) to present the exhibition *Canvassing the emotions* at Level 17 Gallery, Melbourne and present the seminar *Womenmakingartmakingwomen* for 100 years of women's suffrage celebrations (Victoria).

City of Melbourne Arts Grants (2007) for development of an exhibition of works by women who have experienced mental ill-health. Launched and first exhibited at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre, Melbourne in 2008.

Victoria University: Student Travel Grant to Italy (2005) – University of Florence.

Publications

Northfield, S. (2014). As If: 40 years and beyond – The Women's Art Register in the 21st century. *Portia 2014. Journal of Victorian Women Lawyers*. Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Women Lawyers Association.

Northfield, S. (2011). *50th anniversary of the pill in Australia: An incomplete revolution: A contribution from the Women's Art Register*. Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Women's Trust.

Northfield, S., Lawrence, D., & Wilson, S. (2010). *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health: An exhibition. Women Against Violence: An Australian Feminist Journal*, 22, 4-17.

Northfield, S. (Ed.) (2008). *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* [Exhibition catalogue]. Melbourne, Australia: Cunningham Dax Collection.

Acknowledgements

Perhaps we all know an artist or two who has succumbed to the pressure to call her art a hobby or pastime and regard it as nothing more. Or who has succumbed to the pressure to quit. But this research also highlights women who, despite formidable challenges encountered or invitations to cease presented, have imagined, then established, then sustained an art practice and dared to claim the title of artist. I would like to acknowledge all these creative women and particularly the 45 women who participated in either the exhibition or the interviews for this research. Thank you for your insights concerning a life of making.

To my wonderful supervisors Professor Jill Astbury and Heather Gridley, who never stopped asking me the hard questions or trying to reel me back in from whatever tangential plane I was exploring that month, and who simultaneously also kept reminding me not to douse myself. Thank you both for your expansive knowledge of so many areas, both theoretical and in practice and thanks for leaving the spark in this work.

To Gail Stiffe, Rosemary Mangiamele, Christina Turner, Jan Delaney, Jane Henry, Antje Bauer and Danielle Hakim at the Australian Women's Art Register, thank you for your persistence and insistence that women's art matters and for sustaining The Register as a significant resource highlighting women's contributions to the cultural landscape in Australia.

Thank you to my sister, Dianne Northfield, for actually reading the mammoth first draft, nearly double the required size, and making strategic comments that actually engaged with the content. Likewise to my old friend Lisa Kerrigan who now says she views the world diffractively. To my partner Harry Lovelock and daughters, Ruby, Lydia and Scarlett Lovelock, two of whom were in primary school and one in kindergarten when I began this project, thanks for coming to Italy with me on the study tour (that was the exciting bit), subsequently enduring the PhD process, and you can have the computer back now! Thanks to my mother Jan, who frequently looked after the girls when they were small so that I could find some space to think, and to my many friends who I have cajoled into debating and considering the issues pertinent to this research. The thesis is over but the conversation about the role of creativity and artmaking in our lives will continue.

To Philippa McMahon, Madeleine Flynn and Meredith Rogers, loosely known as the women of infinite distractions, who have met most fortnights since 2008 to discuss our PhD progress, I thank you for the support, encouragement, moments of hilarity, and then great sadness as we lost our dear friend and colleague Philippa, who diligently pushed us all to complete our projects. Despite or perhaps because of our diverse areas of research – music and sound, theatre, landscape architecture, women's health and community psychology – the meetings were always challenging and fruitful. This thesis is dedicated to you, Philippa, for your frequently mischievous but always wise counsel.

Who did I think I was!**Frances (2007)**

No I've never - -

I have always - -

When I was married I did knit

I used to knit a lot of stripes

I used to make blankets

I used to knit them in multi-coloured stripes but that was something that

I did - - sort of - - never in front of my former husband - - never - - *it was done in secret*

- - well I used to think I had no right to be sitting here doing this

I should be doing all the millions of jobs and slaving over the four hot kids

And yet knitting the stripes was what *kept me sane*

Has kept me - - I was going to say kept me sane - -

I'm not mad but you know it kept me - -

Now I don't have to do anything in secret

I do everything quite in the open and have all my paints and crayons out on the table

If I want to sit and just doodle or do anything

I can't say I'm an artist

I have no training

I love this (tapestry) ... if it went out into the public it would be picked to pieces for flaws in it

No, I can't show it to anybody

Who am I to think I can?

Oh well who did I think I was?

Tell her I'm an artist (laughs)

But then I thought I should say no - - slaved over four hot kids all my life

Should I say I'm an artist? (laughs)

And then I thought, 'don't fool yourself'

I'm absolutely no housekeeper - -

But my stitching - -...

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iv
womenmakingartmakingwoman	1
Section One: Situating the Research	4
Section Two: The Three Studies	5
Study one: Exhibition making.	5
Study two: The interviews.	6
Study three: The Collage – Searching under the haystack.	6
Sketching portraits.	7
Section Three: What Does Artmaking Do?	8
Chapter 1: Preparing the Canvas: Researching Creativity and Artistic Identity, Pathways and Practice	10
Defining Creativity	11
Creativity and genius.	11
Linking genius and madness.	12
Determinants of Creativity Research	14
Everyday creativity research.	14
What artmaking does: Studies and theories of creativity: Escape and flow.	15
Painting Like a Girl. Artistic Identity: Claiming the Title	17
Envisaging yourself as artist: A silly trifle.	18
Don't call me a woman artist.	18
A Valid Occupation for a Girl? Establishing a Life as an Artist	19
Establishing and sustaining an artistic practice.	20
Studies on Women and Creativity	22
Artistic identity and artistic practice.	23
The becoming of an artist.	24
Section One: Situating the Research: Examining Feminism (a way of seeing), Epistemology (a way of knowing) and Ontology (a way of being) to Locate a Research Position	27
Chapter 2: Daubing on the Background	27
A Piece of Feminist Research	27
Is feminist research in crisis in the first decades of the 21st century?	28
Chasing the Tail: What is Feminist Research?	29
Broad feminist positions from the mid-20 th century.	29
The postmodern turn.	31
Identity politics: The general versus the particular.	32
The Implications of the Postmodern Turn	33
Losing woman.	33
Losing woman and a sexed body.	33

The body in a postmodern bind.	34
Losing experience.	35
The Disappearing Agentic Self	36
The Disappearing Woman Artist	37
Searching for an artist behind the easel.	38
Artistic practice as knowledge.	39
The artistic body: Lived space: I can/I can't orientation.	39
Seeking to Retrieve the Artistic Subject	41
Epistemology to ontology.	42
Jumping generations.	42
Chapter 3: Sketching Back in the Outline of Woman. With a Margin of Freedom – A Space to Create	44
Revisiting the Second Sex to Retrieve an Embodied Woman	45
Retrieving woman.	46
Retrieving the lived body.	47
Styles of being.	48
Retrieving experience.	48
Experience and becoming.	49
Retrieving an Agentic Self: Freedom in Constraint	49
Margins of freedom: Taking action.	51
De Beauvoir Provides a Bridge	51
Chapter 4: Out of the Quicksand: Emergent Corporeal or Neo-material Feminisms	53
Making Matter Matter	54
Matter becomes.	55
Rethinking the Body (Corporeality) as Entangled Existence	55
Agency and Entanglement: Agential Realism	56
Agency as what we do – not something we have.	57
Questioning Representation	57
Seeking Diffraction	59
The brittlestar.	60
Ode to Athena: Reimagining Artistic Identity – Artistic Style of Being	61
Reimagining an artistic self.	63
Reimagining a Space to Create: Human Capabilities, Agency and Freedom in the 21 st Century	64
Human rights to human capabilities.	64
Human capabilities in an enmeshed existence.	65
A space to create: Agency and 'the freedom to'.	65
An Ambient Context	67
Researching Diffractively	69
Chapter 5: Doing the Research: Diffractive Methodology	71
Diffractive Methods as Interferences	72
Methods: Agential cuts: What you measure brings it into being.	73

Revisiting voice and reflexivity in feminist research interviews.	74
Collecting and Presenting Data: A Serious Attempt to Understand the Artist's Project in the World	76
Researching with Potentially Vulnerable Participants	77
Defining Research Concepts/Terms	78
Wellbeing.	78
Distinguishing art production domains for recruiting research interview participants.	78
Recruiting Agencies: Scoping	80
Arts-based practice (ABP).	80
Recruiting Participants	81
The participants: Demographics.	82
The Interviews. A Life of Making	84
Organising and reporting interview findings.	84
Anonymity: Identifying participants.	86
Cartography	87
Section Two: An Exhibition: The Interviews: A Collage	89
Chapter 6: Background to Study One: An Exhibition: Portrait of the Artist as a Mad Woman	89
The Individual Artist and Mad Genius Revisited	89
Art under Psychiatric Surveillance	90
On being artists.	90
Mad Women Artists: Making Art Makes you Mad	90
Sexual violence, the hysterical personality and women's imaginations.	91
Put Down your Brushes: Quelling the Imagination	93
Unconventional Girls – Being Artistic and Visiting the Madhouse	94
Art from within the walls.	96
Pick up your brushes again: Psychiatric art as tarot card.	98
Resisting the art is therapy paradigm.	100
Chapter 7: Study One: The Exhibition: Canvassing the Emotions: Women, Creativity and Mental Health in Context	103
Defining the Artworks and the Artists	103
Sketching the Unfolding of an Exhibition and a Thesis	104
Framing an Exhibition	107
The Context: Art by Women who have Experienced Mental Ill-health	108
The historical and societal context: Women making art in 20 th century Australia.	109
Theoretical and ethical considerations for exhibiting.	111
The historical and ethical context: Clinical records versus art.	114
Contacting and involving the artists: The dilemma.	116
Exhibition Making	117
Data sources.	117
Selecting the works.	119

The artists and their works.	120
Exhibition supporting materials and display protocols.	122
To the Public	124
Chapter 8: Study Two: The Interviews	127
Bringing All of the Women Together: A Dinner Party to Set the Parameters	127
Creativity	128
What Women Can Make	129
Mental Health	132
Wellbeing	134
A Bunch of Flowers	134
Chapter 9 – Study Two: The Interviews: Ten Artists Speak	136
Introducing the Ten Artists	137
Part A: Ten Artists Speak about Artistic identity, Artistic Pathways, Artistic Practice	143
Artistic Identity	144
Constructing alternative identities.	145
I am an artist. Forging an artistic identity.	145
Portrait 1: Ola - It's just me/I just do.	145
Ambivalence – I am – no I am not an artist.	146
Portrait 2: Frances: Who do you think you are?	147
Artistic Pathways	147
Artistic motivations across time, space and relations.	148
Portrait 3: Norah: making marks.	148
Starting young.	149
Portrait 4: Margaret: I lost that sense of love between high school and primary school.	150
Science versus art pathways.	151
Portrait 5: Ruby: It's a bit of a gamble.	151
Artistic skills not valued.	151
Portrait 6: Janis: It's a useless thing, those artistic skills you have.	152
Artistic Practice: Relational Barriers	153
Being a mother and being an artist.	153
Portrait 7: Joy: Don't want to get on the men's train.	153
Portrait 8: Frances: A tradition: Mother to daughter. Artmaking in secret.	154
Artistic Practice: Practical Barriers – Space, Materials and Authority to Claim Them	155
Claiming space: Art as part of daily life.	155
Sourcing materials to make art.	157
The right to claim materials.	158
Selling yourself – selling your work.	158
Artistic Practice: Having an Experience of Mental Ill-health	159
Drugs and artmaking.	159
Art under the mental health umbrella.	160

Portrait 9: Alice: Mental health services to mainstream.	160
Mainstream to mental health service.	161
Art not therapy.	162
Reception of women's art: Interpreting women's art.	163
Part B – The Interviews: Ten Artists' Speak: What Does Artmaking Do?	163
The Power of Artmaking	163
Just have to do it: I think it's absolutely essential.	164
Survival strategy. It saved my life.	164
If I don't I get sick.	165
Lived Body (Corporeality): A Style of Being in the World	165
To make is to be human.	165
Portrait 10: Ruby: The things that make your heart sing.	165
It's a visual language.	166
Portrait 11: Janis: My whole body thinks.	166
Meaning making: I am entitled to exist.	167
Portrait 12: Janis: A way of being in the world.	167
Lived Space (Spatiality): Dimensions, Intra-actions: This is What I See	168
Artmaking helped me discover things about myself and the world I live in.	168
Portrait 13: Alice: The world looked different.	168
Dimensions/spirituality.	169
Lived Time (Temporality): Altered Time	170
Portrait 14: Norah: losing time.	170
Lived Relations (Relationality): Communities of Practice	171
Community arts.	171
Supported art studio.	171
Artmaking as a means of connection.	172
Artmaking as a means of connecting with self.	172
Putting yourself into the artworks.	172
Alchemising troubles.	172
Visual diary/working out where I'm at.	173
An agent of change.	173
Artmaking as aesthetic expression.	174
Artmaking as a political tool.	174
On Being an Artist and a Life of Making Art: Summing up the Patterns	175
AS IF: A Future Artistic Identity	178
Chapter 10 – Study Two: The Interviews: Nine Aspiring Artists Speak	179
Part A: Artistic Identity, Artistic Pathways, Artistic Practice	180
Introducing the Aspiring Artists	180
Artistic Identity	183
Artistic Pathways	184
Starting young.	185
Portrait 15: Mary getting that spark back.	185

Science versus art pathways.	185
Artistic Practice: Relational Barriers	185
Artmaking in secret.	186
Portrait 16: Angel: Shaky identity.	186
Artistic Practice: Access to Space, Time and Materials	186
Part B – The Interviews: Nine Aspiring Artists’ Speak: What Does Artmaking Do?	187
The Power of Artmaking	187
Lived Body (Corporeality): A Style of Being in the World	187
Hand body mind connection.	187
Bringing thoughts to life.	188
It’s in the doing.	188
Lived Space (Spatiality): This is What I See	188
Lived Time (Temporality): Altered Time	189
Portrait 17: Inge: Zone out.	189
Lived Relations (Relationality): Artmaking as a Means of Connection	190
Connecting to a wider community.	190
Artmaking as a means of connecting with self.	190
Visual diary.	190
Alchemising.	191
Communities of practice. Supported art programs: A time for I CAN.	191
Arts within mental health services.	191
Being with other artists.	191
Portrait 18: Lesley: artmaking in a supported studio.	191
I Can’t DO becomes I CAN	192
Portrait 19: Anna: I can’t do art.	192
Flow on effect to other parts of my life.	194
Portrait 20: Pamela: I’m a person not an illness.	194
Art Practice under the Mental Health Umbrella: Art or Therapy?	194
Coming to a Life of Artmaking as an Aspiring Artist: Summing up the Patterns	195
Chapter 11 – Study Two: The Interviews: Thirteen Makers Speak	196
Part A: Artistic Identity and Pathways	196
Introducing the Women	196
Artistic Identity	199
Artistic Pathways	200
I can’t.	200
Part B: The Interviews: Thirteen Makers Speak: What Does Artmaking Do?	201
The Power of Artmaking	201
‘I can’t’ becomes ‘I can’.	202
Portrait 21: Jessica: I can.	202
Portrait 22: Jane: Have a go.	203
Discovering skills – ripples over to other parts of my life.	204
Lived Body (Corporeality): Being Handy – Putting Yourself on Paper	204
Lived Space (Spatiality): A Way of Seeing the World	204

Portrait 23: Taylor: opened up my mind.	204
Lived Time (Temporality)	205
Lived Relations (Relationality): Social and Safe	205
Connecting to a wider community.	206
Artmaking as a means of connecting with self.	206
Visual diary/visual history.	206
Artmaking: Summing up the Patterns	207
Chapter 12 – Study Three: The Collage –Other Artists Speak – What Does Artmaking Do?	210
The Power of Artmaking	211
Art is life is art: It's not a choice: I have to do it: It's what I do.	211
I can't live without art.	213
Art as survival.	213
Climbing the stairs to sanity.	214
A safe place.	214
Lived Corporeality	215
It's like food or the air you breathe.	215
It's an addiction	216
Lived Temporality and Spatiality	216
Drawing Together the Patterns	216
A Life of Making: Persistence and Insistence to Claim ' <i>This is what I see</i> '	216
Section Three: What Does Artmaking Do?	221
Chapter 13: What Does Artmaking Do for the Maker? Discussion of Findings and Theories	221
Artmaking Matters. Why?	221
What Theories: Ways to Think about what the Women have said about Artmaking	222
Revisiting theories about creativity: Disrupting the canvassing of emotions.	223
Revisiting art program participation.	225
Revisiting theories of flow.	227
What Does Art Do?	227
Thinking Diffractively about Creativity, Imagination and Artmaking	228
Returning to the brittlestar to blur the boundaries.	229
Multi-layered thinking: A continuum.	229
Dreams and imagination.	230
Being an Artist: 'It's a bit of a gamble' (Ruby, 2007)	232
The nomadic artist.	233
Braidotti's idea of flow.	234
As if.	235
Enacting as <i>if</i> : Transformative Frameworks for Supporting Artmaking	236
Art Just Is/I Just Do (Ola)	237
Chapter 14: Conclusion: Artmaking Does Matter	240
References	250

Appendix A: 'I' Poems	297
Appendix B: Interviews and Ethics	312
Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Research Interview	319
Appendix D: Invitation to Participate in Research Interview/Plain Language Statement	320
Appendix E: Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research	321
Appendix F: Research Interview Questions	322
Appendix G: Exhibition Catalogue	325
Appendix H: Exhibition Postcards	334
Appendix I: Extract from the public talk by Sandy Jeffs accompanying the Exhibition: <i>Canvassing the emotions</i> (2008)	335
Appendix J: Portraits	337

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic information for interview participants	83
---	----

List of Figures

Figure 1. Donna Lawrence – See Beyond This image and artist’s statement	108
Figure 2. Artist name withheld – Untitled work image and artist’s statement	114
Figure 3. Sara Wilson – The Blue Lady image and artist’s statement	120
Figure 4. Donna Lawrence – Untitled image and artist’s statement	124
Figure 5. Donna Lawrence – Empower Me (2) image and artist’s statement	126
Figure 6. Returning to the Dinner Party: Advice to Other Women	245

**Canvassing the emotions:
Women, creativity and mental health in context
womenmakingartmakingwoman**

“That is the most important thing I have said: Art is a guarantee of sanity”
(Louise Bourgeois in Wallach, 2001, para. 7).

Art has always garnered extravagant claims about its ability to either transcend human reality and misery or, equally, to deceive and trick us to believe it is something more than that – a reflection or illusion. Where you situate yourself in this conversation requires considered philosophical debate, for how you view the nature of art has implications for its uses, claims and central relevance to human wellbeing and existence. This thesis asks *what does art do for its maker – the artist?*

Consistent with the marginalised position of women in the history of art, women artists who experienced mental ill-health¹ and/or psychological trauma have attracted scant attention. Little has been documented about the actual experiences and artmaking practices of women with an experience of mental ill-health who produce or have produced visual art. In 2011, the Australian Government released a National Cultural Policy discussion paper heralded as a once in a generation opportunity to comment on the place of art in Australian lives, and the first arts and cultural paper since *Creative Nation* in 1994 (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994). This work culminated in a new National Cultural Policy in 2013 called Creative Australia (Australian Government, 2013). *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* is therefore timely in contributing to a body of knowledge concerning the role of artistic endeavour in our lives, individually and collectively, and responds to the lack of knowledge regarding women who have experienced mental ill-health, their artistic identities, pathways and practices, and the role of artmaking in their lives.

¹ “The term ‘mental ill-health’ is used when referring to a spectrum of problems that interfere with an individual’s cognitive, social and emotional abilities. This term encompasses both ‘mental health problems’ and ‘mental illnesses’...” Retrieved from <http://himh.clients.squiz.net/home/our-resources/what-is-mental-health>

Mental ill-health has currency with consumers of mental health services and by health practitioners. One of the women I met at the beginning of this research informed me that mental ill-health was a phrase with hope as it allowed for the idea that if you can take away the ‘ill’ then you would be left with mental health. Patrick McGorry (Professor of Youth Mental Health: University of Melbourne and Director Orygen Youth Mental Health Research Centre) also uses the term mental ill-health, both in everyday language (McGorry, P. (2009, February 18). Mental health reform needs care, *The Age*, p.19), and professionally (McGorry, P., Bates, T., & Birchwood, M. (2013). Designing youth mental health services for the 21st century: Examples from Australia, Ireland and the UK. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 202(s54) s30-s35. doi:10.1192/bjp.bp.112.119214).

This thesis presents the findings of three studies within a feminist framework, which together examine the relationships between being and becoming a woman, creativity, and mental health and ill-health in Australia between the 1950s and the present. For those familiar with feminist critiques of art or mental ill-health, some of this thesis will appear pedestrian. However, because this thesis hovers at the nexus, each area requires some background sketching in order to discuss the intra-connected issues. The thesis is not an investigation of the efficacy of art and its uses within mental health settings (art as tool for achieving health outcomes or art as therapy for achieving therapeutic outcomes). It is an exploration of the role and meaning of artmaking in the lives of women who have an experience of mental ill-health – across the lifespan and art production sites, between artistic genres, evolving skills and art practices, and through individual and collective productions.

The identity of mental patient has frequently been assigned to women, and it is tempting to wonder if the long held notion of linkage between creativity and madness, debated persistently and predominantly via a male genius analysis, is equally applicable to women. However, if historically women have not been accorded the title of artist, let alone genius, then madness and artist has no genealogy for women and such associations must be considered afresh.

Women did not enter psychiatric institutions to pursue art, although it may be surmised that they were often put there for pursuing their art – a practice seen as subversive to prescribed female roles. “Talkativeness, violation of conventions of feminine speech and insistence on self-expression was the kind of behaviour that led women to being labelled mad to begin with” (Showalter, 1985, p. 81). This is consistent with the notion of the ‘madwoman in the attic’ as an alternate fate for women who dared to express themselves in the 19th century (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000), or for being ‘strange’, as Hoorn (1994) describes the 20th century positioning of artistic women.

Furthermore, creativity remains an extraordinarily difficult concept to define, with researchers tending to concentrate on capturing the ‘nuggets’ of genius via explorations of publicly renowned geniuses throughout history (overwhelmingly, lists of male contributors to the arts and sciences) along with their manifestations of symptoms of mental ill-health. Visions endure of the artist as a mad genius, eccentric, antisocial, unconventional loner, or outsider who rejects and challenges established art culture values. However, this imagery does not encompass women, who were frequently not included in art culture in the first place (Cubb, 1994; Parker & Pollock, 1981; Witzling, 1991; Davies, 1994). To pursue a career as an artist was to form an identity independent of women’s prescribed familial role (Prieto, 2001), let alone the role of the mental patient. A woman not only had to find her artistic style or way of being, as all

artists do, she also had to convince society that she should have the right to find that style and then use it.

Psychological research on creativity continues with the quest to define more determinants of creativity and characteristics that a creative person might possess (Pfeiffer, 2008). However, the majority of research on creativity and mental illness has little to contribute to the understanding of women, creativity and mental health. This remains an area where women's thoughts on creativity can provide a rich basis for understanding the constraints which inhibit the way we think about and express ourselves artistically. Women's contributions to the creativity/'madness' debate are particularly pertinent when considering the now almost ubiquitous claim that involvement in arts activity can contribute significantly to individual and community wellbeing (Community Indicators Victoria, 2007). The manifestation of creativity in artmaking may well have more to do with mental health than mental ill-health. As the quote from Louise Bourgeois suggests, is art more sanity than symptom?

The question *what is art?* – a hoary old chestnut made hoarier by years of dominance of the Western canon of art and the privileging of the male Master Artist – becomes the far more interesting question *what does art do?* In particular, what do women say about the role and meaning of artmaking in their lives? Do women who have experienced mental ill-health accord artmaking with any influence on their wellbeing? How do art and illness interact for women – cure or symptom – or is it far too monochromatic to even think that such a relationship could be so polarised?

De Botton and Armstrong (2013) contend that there is still an institutional reluctance to address the question of what art is for. Dissanayake (1998) and Graham (2005) concur that the focus should be on what art does for people rather than what it is, and since all societies have made art, it must contribute something important to human existence: What purposes and roles does art play in the life of individuals and the community and society as a whole? However, even when attending to what art does, these authors still tend to focus on what art does for the viewer, leaving the artmaker sidelined. Questioning, with a focus on the maker, does not simplify the complexity of defining art but it does clarify the parameters of this study – to seek to understand the role and meaning of artmaking in women's lives – a focus on the practice and the process. Perhaps artists themselves are the least interested in what art actually is, as they – *Just do it*.

In order to contemplate such questions it is necessary to ask even more fundamental questions: *What is a woman?* and *what is a female artist?* And, for this thesis, *what is a woman who makes art and who has an experience of mental ill-health?* And *what does art do for this woman?*

Section One: Situating the Research

This section explores these questions which contain a number of hotly-contested terms – ‘woman’, ‘artist’, ‘mental health’. Feminist literature and theory advances arguments, counter-arguments and counter-counter-arguments in an endless to-ing and fro-ing between the rocky ground of essentialism and the paralysing, becalming straits of postmodern discursiveness. To provide a context for the three studies in this research, this section examines the status of feminist research in the 21st century and the ethical, ontological and epistemological implications of various feminist positions which impact upon how women’s participation in research can be presented and understood.

The challenge for this thesis was to uphold the postmodernist agenda of avoiding the essential woman (for if there is an ‘essential’ woman there is, by implication, a woman who is essentially ‘not quite right’), and conversely to allow for a knowing self with the freedom to create works of art (the ‘knowing self’ being an anathema to postmodernism, and the creative self obliterated with the death of the subject, author, and, by association, the artist).

The women in *Canvassing the emotions*, who participated in the exhibition or in the interviews, demanded (metaphorically) to have their contributions framed within a philosophy that could accommodate their experience, individually and collectively. I want to talk about women without using quotation marks to signal I understand that the category of woman is slippery in postmodern theory. I want to talk about identity, particularly artistic identity and mental patient identities. I want to talk about a contingent agentic self who has a degree of freedom to create. Can I acknowledge that there is a self that is experiencing, without reducing this self to an essentialist or universal prototype? And importantly, I want to talk about bodies, specifically female bodies engaged in artmaking practices and what it means to produce art from a sexed body; a female body. In effect, I want to bring back the centrality of the visceral experience of artmaking to describe the way a woman makes sense of her situation, her actions and her art, without resurrecting the ‘biology is destiny’ conundrum. The lived body: concrete, material, living, dying, historically and socially situated, contingent, ambiguous, relational and always becoming as, Simone de Beauvoir would say – the body AS situation. Or, as Iris Marion Young may intimate – *painting like a girl*.

In order to bring back the centrality of the bodily experience of artmaking, I trace the three Western feminist positions in the second half of the 20th century – liberal, standpoint and postmodernism – to a seeming impasse between an essentialised woman and a fragmented postmodern subject incapable of agency. I then revisit the ideas of de Beauvoir to provide a bridge to emergent corporeal or material feminism,

heavily inspired by Karan Barad's theories of agential realism and diffraction which challenge ubiquitous notions of representation and reflection. Rosi Bradotti's nomadic subject, which reconfigures the possibility of a self and the notion of an artistic self, is introduced (and revisited in the conclusion of this thesis) as a way of considering women and artmaking. The context of a contingent space and freedom to create for the artist is also considered, as theorised by Elizabeth Grosz.

Rather than moving away from or negating deconstruction or phenomenology or standpoint theory, corporeal/material feminisms seek to re-engage these methods differently. By moving backwards, sideways and forwards simultaneously, this emergent theory considers the three predominant feminist epistemological classes – liberal, standpoint and postmodern – offering a theory of *shared* characteristics which can lead to shared conversations across and between generations and disciplines. Such work is non-foundational; with “new, unexpected theorisations; it is not totalising or relativist” (van der Tuin, 2009, p. 28). This theory, named neo-materialism by Braidotti (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012), is engaged as a guiding framework for this research, which employs a diffractive methodology that looks across and between women's stories and artworks, attempting to capture the individual and collective embodied and situated experience of artmaking.

Section Two: The Three Studies

The studies examine the individual experiences of a number of women with mental ill-health at a particular time, place and social circumstance, and are concerned with what artmaking does for the artist, as opposed to making interpretations about women's mental health status or experiences (Cosgrove, 2003) or their artworks. These experiences are situated in relation to material, structural and discursive obstacles that the women encountered and strategies they may have employed to move around, bypass or turn back, when envisaging, establishing and sustaining a space and place for artmaking.

Study one: Exhibition making. This study describes the processes and ethical considerations associated with exhibiting artworks by people who have experienced mental ill-health, and aims to identify and dispel a variety of myths and misconceptions about women, art and mental illness, offering alternative ways of accessing and exploring the artworks. Sources from the Cunningham Dax Collection (CDC) included artworks and archival material from 355 women who produced works in the psychiatric institutions of Victoria from the 1950s to the late 1990s. Contemporary practising artists who donated works to the collection were also included. This study manifested as *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context: The Exhibition*, which toured five locations around Victoria in 2008 and 2009 to an audience

of over 2,700 people, and included public floor talks, seminars, artist lectures and media events.

Study two: The interviews. Study Two explores the relationships between creativity, women and wellbeing, via a selective sample of 32 women who are engaged in visual artmaking and who have had an experience of mental ill-health. Using a feminist, democratic recruitment strategy, where art and artist are self-defined, this project includes women who consider they have something to say about the role and meaning of artmaking in their lives and throughout their lives. None of the women in this research were undertaking art therapy, all were involved in either independent art practices, community-based art initiatives or supported art-skills-based programs and classes, where the emphasis was more about learning the nuances of shading, stitching, colour and tone; tweaking the aperture of the lens to catch a shadow, rather than 'painting your feelings' (See Chapter 5 for description of art production programs).

This study identifies a number of meanings participants attached to their artmaking practices, in many cases revealing a range of unexpectedly passionate views regarding the role of artmaking in their lives and the wider world. Via a diffractive methodology, the findings are presented in a variety of ways; the women's responses are grouped firstly by self-definition – artist, aspiring artist and makers. Within these clusters, artistic identity, artistic pathway and artistic practice are considered. Women then respond to *what does art do?* Responses are organised around lived body (corporeality), lived space (spatiality), lived time (temporality) and lived relations (relationality). Inspired by Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and Judy Chicago's seminal feminist artwork, *The Dinner Party*, a conversation is created to discuss a life lived as a maker with an experience of mental ill-health.

Study three: The Collage – Searching under the haystack. Murphy (2003) comments that it was rare that women's documents were donated to museums or libraries, and even rarer that women's artworks were acquired for public collections, commissioned for public spaces or put up for sale (Peers, 1999; Taylor, 1991; Topliss, 1996). Artworks were often left lying forgotten. A large collection of Clarice Beckett's works were discovered in a country hayshed exposed to the weather (Summers, 2009) and some of Joy Hester's works were located in the garden shed at Heide (Burke, 1995). When Burke (1990) began researching women's art in Australia in the 1970s, she found examples in the basements of galleries but rarely on the walls. In a striking irony, a repository of thousands of women's artworks was preserved from the 1950s onwards in the CDC in Melbourne. However, these works were not preserved for their artistic integrity but for their purported ability to convey diagnostic information and educate the public in the realm of mental illness.

The available material on women artists has largely followed the canon of Western art history producing artists' biographies and monographs, but very little on women's day-to-day lives or the triumphs and challenges of the artmaking process (Power, 2008). What little there is tends to follow the sensationalist biographical path of the mad woman in the attic, or the 'emotionally difficult' women – Frida, Camille, Zelda – all with first name only notoriety. Lipton (1990) argues that critics and historians have systematically represented women artists as first and foremost women, effectively erasing their art and status as artist. In a familiar pattern that Mencimer (2002) calls the culture of the personality; women cease being the artist and become a subject of fascination. Or in the case of women who have an experience of mental ill-health, the focus on 'madness' or eccentricity eclipses any attention to artmaking (Fox, 2008). Critical attention to women's art can be diffused by concentrating on their personal lives, reading 'emotion' into the artworks, or applying a psychiatric diagnosis; the art can then be reduced to 'your mental disorder'.

Sketching portraits. The research for study three, the Collage, informed studies one and two and the findings are threaded through the thesis to be read alongside the exhibition and interview findings. I use the Beauvoirian strategy of presenting everyday examples of women's lives and practices as artists from both published sources and from the 32 interviews conducted in this research. This contextual research was collated from a wide range of difficult-to-access sources that have not been brought together before. The major data sources included published accounts of women's lives as artists and files and publications from the Women's Art Register (WAR). Established in Melbourne alongside the Women's Art Forum and LIP Magazine in 1975 to rectify inadequate documentation and support for Australian women artists, this collection of over 14,000 images, associated archival material, and ephemera, is one of the few available sources of women's thoughts on artmaking. These sources are analysed for associations between cultural understandings of creativity and insanity at the time. I was particularly interested to identify any traces of women's first-person accounts of their artmaking practices and, where possible, included information from Australian women artists. Women artists from around the Western world are also included as their thoughts on their art practices make a concurrent contribution, notwithstanding the vagaries of place, time and cultural differences. Weaving a collage of archival data and published sources across the thesis provides a context from which to consider women, art and wellbeing and the role of artmaking in women's lives, with or without experience of mental ill-health, in what Lorraine Code (1995, p. ix) calls choral support.

Taken together, these three studies suggest that there is a strong need to consider what sort of theories of expression and artistic articulation are adequate to begin to gain an understanding of women and artmaking in relation to a style of being in the world.

Section Three: What Does Artmaking Do?

What is the purpose of Art? To give us the brief, dazzling illusion of the camellia; to carve from time an emotional aperture that cannot be reduced to animal logic. How is Art born? It is begotten in the mind's ability to sculpt the sensorial domain. What does Art do for us? It gives shape to our emotions, makes them visible and in doing so, places a seal of eternity upon them, a seal representing all those works that, by means of a particular form, have incarnated the universal nature of human emotions. (Barbery, 2006, p. 199)

The eloquence of Muriel Barbery's concierge, Renée, seems to encapsulate the purpose of art, as for some theorists the use of emotion in art is the primacy of its worth, and for particular periods in Western Art, such as the expressionist movement, the expression of emotion via art was paramount. The title of this thesis, *Canvassing the emotions*, seemingly perpetuates this alignment of art and emotion, and for a thesis involving women, this is a contentious move given women's traditional association with the emotive, and the notion that art is an explicit expression of personal experience via visual media. Additionally, Outsider Art or 'art of the insane' is often confused with the visual self-expression of people with an experience of mental ill-health; an explicit expression of illness. This thesis acknowledges that emotion can certainly play a role in artmaking. However, to position this as the only or primary role is inadequate. This discussion considers and looks further than one role for artmaking in our lives, contests the dialectic of artistic woman and emotion, and takes the mad and emotional woman as artist out of the attic.

Viewing art as praxis rather than outcome, and as integral to being and becoming, requires our thinking to take a side step from the predominant view of the Western art canon, where ideas are founded on art as representational, echoing or reflecting the natural world. Material feminism, particularly theorists such as Donna Haraway, Barad and Braidotti, challenge these optical metaphors of reflection and mirroring. Furthermore, when Grosz (Copeland, 2005, para. 43) thinks about the most basic impulse to produce or create art of any sort, she thinks of the often forgotten "more visceral, dynamic aspect that art has, this intensifying of sensation."

Having heard from the women who participated in this research and other primary sources documenting women's views on artmaking in their lives, a review of the theories and research about creativity reveals the gaps and slippage between

theory and what women themselves are saying about artmaking and creativity as lived. An investigation of imagination in concert with creativity indicates a focus on linkages between madness and genius, but surprisingly little attention to theories of expression in psychological research and theory. In keeping with theories of corporeal embodiment and new materialism the question *what is art?* is thereby transfigured by the way in which the women artists interviewed for *Canvassing the emotions* talked about their corporeal lived experiences of creating art.

This section concludes with imagery of a nomadic artistic subject not bound by the reflective surface of representationalism, but striving to utilise a degree of freedom to create in a world where conditions are conducive to enhancing human artistic capabilities. What, then, are the implications of such a world for women who make art? And, specifically, for women who have experienced mental ill-health and make art?

Although this project began at the CDC with a focus on the use of art in the mental health system in Victoria, it shifted vastly beyond this horizon. What I had first thought of as another investigation of women's experiences in a male-dominated area of employment - that of being an artist - turned out to be far more than just negotiating a career which is traditionally ascribed as a masculine activity. Artmaking, for some women in these studies, was a way of living – a way of being or an artistic style of being in the world – that was integral to their wellbeing and inseparable from existence.

Chapter 1: Preparing the Canvas: Researching Creativity and Artistic Identity, Pathways and Practice

If truth is that which lasts, then art has
proved truer than any other human endeavour.
What is certain is that pictures and poetry
and music are not only marks in time but marks
through time, of their own time and ours, not
antique or historical, but living as they ever
did, exuberantly, untired. (Winterson, 1995, preface)

When Beardsley (1958) asked, *what good is Art?* he considered the question to have two parts. What good the act of creating an aesthetic object does to the creator himself (sic) and what good the aesthetic object does to those who experience it? Beardsley primarily viewed aesthetic experience as a preventative measure for good mental health rather than a cure, but acknowledged that on the question *what good is art for the maker?*, knowledge is limited. Interest in *what art does for the artist* has only recently attracted attention with research beginning to query the role of art and creativity in our everyday lives (Craddock, 2000; Pope, 2005).

In 2000, the Australia Council commissioned a study *Australians and the arts: What do the arts mean to Australians?* With over 1200 participants, women, girls and people from non-English speaking backgrounds were found to have a significantly more positive view of the arts than men and boys. Eighty percent of people said they 'felt good when they expressed themselves creatively', 66% agreed that 'the arts are good for my inner self' (p. 12) and 66% derived enjoyment from being artists (34% for their own enjoyment and 24% for others to enjoy) (Costantoura, 2000, p. 11). The arts were also valued in their contribution to national identity and other intellectual, social and emotional benefits (p. 20).

These views underscore the findings I will present in this research; it appears artmaking does matter to many women, for many reasons which vary across, time, space, relations, and cultures. Art can influence your way of seeing (Felstead, Jewson & Walters, 2004). However, many studies considering the importance of the arts, such as Matarasso (1997), still tend to focus on participation in the arts and benefits for the audience rather than the effects of artmaking, engaging in the process of making and being creative.

In the first half of the 20th century the personality of the artist was paramount and creativity was seen to reside in the artist, not in what she or he made. In the latter part of the century, postmodernism and the death of the artist led a movement away from looking at the artist as a way to understand or read the artwork, and as a

consequence, the attention to artmaking processes and practices was also sidelined (Parker, 1996). There is debate about whether we should judge a creative work by its creator as the work is not the person, nor is the person the work (Leys, 2011).

However, Tomkins (2008) argues we do need to look at the artist, as art and artist are not separable. Like Tomkins, and consistent with a neo-materialism feminist approach, this research does not consider art separately from the artist, nor without consideration of the production context in which artwork is made. Art produced under the mental health umbrella has serious ramifications for its reception and the status of the artist, particularly, as I illustrate, if you are a woman.

Defining Creativity

In seeking to define creativity, “What’s missing is the meaning of life aspect, the heart rendering power of achievement” (Armstrong, 2007, p. 22).

The significance of creativity on both the individual and socio-cultural level has led numerous authors to describe it as residing at the core of human existence (Nelson, 2005). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the psychologist and theorist who coined the term ‘flow’ (1975) to describe how people experience creativity, regards creativity as a central source of meaning in our lives due to it being ‘species-specific’, that is, creativity is a function that makes us distinctively human, distinguishing us from all other species (although Burke (2012) and Grosz (2008) would dispute this division between human and nonhuman creativity). Additionally, Csikszentmihalyi, drawing on his theory of ‘flow’, argues for the centrality of creativity due a sense of fulfilment and self-actualisation, “...when we are involved in it, we feel that we are living more fully than during the rest of life... (Creative activity) comes close to the ideal fulfilment we all hope to get from life, and so rarely do” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996/2013, p. 2). Creativity has also been regarded as humanity’s basic ‘survival kit’; a means of coping with anxiety (Grossman, 1981).

Despite such accolades for the role of creativity in human life, creativity is difficult to define (Boden, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Runco & Albert, 1990). There is a lack of consensus among researchers, theorists, educators and policymakers about what creativity is (Weilgosz & Imms, 2007). This lack of concord has not been conducive to systematic study as unclear definitions “lead to erroneous assumptions, misconceptions and misguided beliefs” (Beghetto, 2005, p. 255). Like art, traditionally confined within the white box of the gallery, creativity has been positioned in an exceptional or ‘genius’ framework, not in an everyday context.

Creativity and genius. As Battersby argues (1989), genius is an ambiguous word closely linked to creativity that has for centuries been designated as a Western male domain. Models of creativity and genius are fundamentally phallogocentric and

ethnocentric, the implications of which remain largely unexamined (Nettle, 2001; Pope, 2005). Battersby traces the history of ideas surrounding the creative genius and concludes that, from the early 18th century until the Second World War, the concept of the genius encompassed a special individual imbued with a divine spark – an elitist position consigned to artists in Western countries. It was only geniuses who were capable of producing capital ‘A’ art which was distinguishable from the craft made by ‘primitives’ or lesser humans, including women. Only men were capable of being geniuses (Parker & Pollock, 1981). The *Index of Scientific Writings on Creativity* (Rothenberg & Greenberg, 1975) lists hundreds of artists designated as geniuses from the 18th century to 1975. Only 16 are women and, having located and reviewed many of these accounts, I would say these 16 are the usual suspects – Emily Dickinson, Mary Shelley, Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf – it is these same few women who are the representatives of female creative genius. There are no references to women who are primarily visual artists, indicating that the barriers to entering this artistic domain were even more rigid than for women as writers and poets.

Linking genius and madness. “Great genius is to madness near allied and thin partitions do its bounds divide” (Dryden, cited in Andreasen, 2006, p. 13).

An abundance of studies have looked at genius and creativity, frequently drawing a link between these and madness. Characteristically, these studies consider the link by examining eminent male figures and attempting to diagnose symptoms of insanity from fragments of historical text (Steptoe, 1998). Examples include: Simonton (1997), who examined over 5000 documents about individuals throughout Western history; Post’s (1994) study of 291 famous men; Cox’s (1926) *Early Mental Traits of 300 Geniuses*; and Jamison’s (1994) *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*. Jamison examines 47 artists – 42 are men. With just 5 women included, Jamison again draws from the pool of the usual representatives of creative women – Virginia Woolf, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelly. The criteria for inclusion in her study, is that the person must have won a significant prize or award in their field. The study is retrospective so fails to consider the social, political and cultural context for women as artists and how atypical it was to be recognised as an artist or a genius in your field as a woman. All the above studies concluded that the rate of mental illness was higher in their studied populations than in the general population. But, as genius is designated male and so few women are included in these studies, any perennial link made between madness and genius cannot be extrapolated to women’s creativity.

Battersby (1989) highlights the confusing nature of the rhetoric surrounding genius, with assigned ‘feminine characteristics’ such as intuition and the ability to

express deep emotions, celebrated in male creators, but for women more often aligned with concepts of madness, such as hysteria. Genius operates by the process of exclusion and so acts as a deterrent to women pursuing a life of creative endeavour, and Battersby argues that Romantic assumptions about creativity and genius still infuse Western thinking, largely based on notions of a male God creating the universe; the genius is born not made and thus creativity is a gift from God. The artist becomes a conduit to mimic divine creativity (Boden, 2004).

Battersby (1989) maintained that the mythology of the male artist as hero creating art in a state of ecstasy, sometimes crossing into madness, still lingered at the time she wrote her book, and Westbury (2010) argues it is still pervasive in Australia in the 21st century. Battersby calls this the Virility School of Creativity with star pupils such as Picasso and Jackson Pollock. Furthermore, although postmodernism has tried to strip the author from the textbook and the artist from the canvas, this school of creativity is alive and kicking shouting “I am the author. I am male and I am God” (Battersby, 1989, p. 43).

However, the artist does not necessarily have to be ‘Good’ like God, for as Battersby quips, the unconventional, bohemian and unique (male) artist can visit brothels, be promiscuous, treat those who surround him appallingly and generally be as mad, bad and unpleasant as he likes and still be celebrated as a great artist “...the sexual antics of the male genius are thought of as causally related to his art” (1989, p. 14). This idea of artistic creativity being associated with sexual energy was transported into the 20th century by Freud (Battersby, 1989) and Csikszentmihalyi (1996/2013) upholds it right to the end of the century.

When women dared to pursue such a lifestyle and, even worse, proposed to create as well, they risked ending up in the madhouse, like Camille Claudel, or being restricted to a quiet room to tame the artistic passion, as in the case of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and perhaps many other women who did not or were unable to record their treatment at the hands of doctors and family members anxious to stem the supposed dangerous health consequences of artistic leanings. There were also social implications for women pursuing an artistic career that had to be reckoned with, for to do so was to be considered a freak or an anomaly or as Hoorn (1994) proposes – a strange creature. There were also inherent dangers for women in bohemian life, such as poverty and loss of sexual innocence, which for men were glorified, but rather than necessarily enhancing a woman’s professional artistic career, could instead be costly (Burke, 1995; Prieto, 2001). Just to remind us that artistic women still cop flak for traversing into male artistic domains, consider the continued vitriol directed towards Courtney Love in the 20 years since Kurt Cobain’s

death. As Castles (2014) observed, she has been blamed for a multitude of sins including introducing Cobain to drugs, causing his death, and taking his songs without attribution. But he claims her real mistake was to live wild – drugs, fights, loudly voicing opinions, flaunting her sexuality – “What she did, in other words, was behave like male rocks stars always have” (p. 12). What is also evident is that the boundaries for creative domains, and what can be produced from within these domains, remain restricted for women as artists.

Determinants of Creativity Research

When not seeking to prove a link to madness, research about creativity has searched for constructs to illuminate what has generally been theorised as an intrapsychic process – an individual trait or combination of traits. Studies of people with acquired brain injuries who subsequently felt compelled to artistic creation have also been popular. Different brain structures, different personality traits and disorders of temperament have been assumed for exceptionally creative people. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) nominates divergent thinking and discovery orientation as two of the most researched domains of creativity in the psychological literature. Guilford's 1950s research, where creativity was defined as divergent thinking, remains “one of the most popular cognitive theories of creativity” and was influential in directing research to identify determinants of creative thinking (Weilgosz & Imms, 2007, p. 49).

Creative determinant research has attempted to identify a variety of characteristics of creative people, such as self-discipline, tenacity, organisation and strong self-image (Nettle, 2001); motivation, willingness to take risks, dissatisfaction with the status quo, sensitivity, arrogance, naiveté, impatience and higher intellect (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997); the ability to be open to experience, intimate involvement with ambiguity, complexity and intuitiveness, intellectual curiosity as self-directed source of novelty and change; and the ability to imaginatively use metaphors (Runco & Albert, 1990). Andreasen (2006) reports curiosity, being adventurous, and seeing things that are not obvious to other people. These studies represent a smattering of research that has added to the list of characteristics that a creative person might possess and the quest to define more determinants continues. Yet, such studies have not led us any closer to understanding the role of artmaking and creativity in women's lives or what art does for the artist.

Everyday creativity research. Amabile (1996) contends that creativity research has concerned itself too much with measuring and describing creative characteristics, largely ignoring the social and environmental influences on creativity and the conditions that are conducive to creativity. However, by the 1990s, creativity research focused on the nature of creative thinking and how it develops, rather than

who possesses it, and included the creativity of 'ordinary' people. There was also a shift in the argument from how far creativity is innate to how creativity can be learnt. Boden (2004) argued that the only difference between a creative person and a less creative person is the increased knowledge gained from practised expertise and the motivation to acquire it and keep on using it – *Just do it*.

Pope (2005) wants to encourage an understanding of creativity beyond the stereotype of the inspired individual artist – the extraordinary mind and the artist as outsider – to instead recognise being creative as part of a usual state of being human, a collaborative and vibrant creative aspect to everyday life – a democratic aesthetic. Thus, as Fabiani (2009) and Weilgosz and Imms (2007) note, more encompassing definitions of creativity are now emerging with several studies identifying creativity as process, not event – a process of seeing new possibilities around finding and making connections. In this research I asked women to define what creativity means to them, as reported in Chapter 8: The Dinner Party.

What artmaking does: Studies and theories of creativity: Escape and flow.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) theory of 'flow' is one of the most influential theories in the study of everyday creativity and is premised on the notion of being completely involved in an activity for its own sake (intrinsic motivation), where nothing else seems to matter. His early study of art students – painters – reported a trance-like state, and in the 1970s he expanded his research to other occupations such as musicians and chess players and found people reporting similar flow experiences, a timelessness or complete immersion in the now, which required high levels of concentration. Flow was not achieved in routine or habitual activities, as a certain level of challenge and expanding of skills was required where actions and awareness merge to flow as one point of mind. The idea of flow is spoken of in terms of control – excelling, exceeding and triumphing in the activity undertaken and learning to gain order in consciousness or control over one's inner life (Debold 2002). Frequently people discussed deep concentration and total involvement, where worries become suspended when in the process and a sense of time was altered (a loss of clock time). A sense of being part of some greater totality or a medium for transforming chaos into order is also noted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990/2008).

Between 1991 and 1995, on the basis that "no systemic studies of 'living' creative individuals existed", Csikszentmihalyi (1996/2013, p. vii) conducted research with 91 creative people, of which 30% were women, but only three were visual artists. Participants were eminent in their respective fields and thus could not be considered representative of those engaged in everyday creativity pursuits; however the distribution of participants again underscores the difficulty of being recognised as

eminent as a woman and a visual artist. From this research, he refined the theory of flow by applying a systems approach to genius and creativity and located these concepts outside the human brain in a virtual space or system where individuals interact with a cultural domain (symbolic rules) and a social field (experts who recognise and validate innovation). He maintains that it is in the relation of these entities and the individual that creativity can manifest itself.

So, Csikszentmihalyi (1996/2013) expands the personality research of creativity and does not reject it. He lists a set of 10 binary traits that he states are frequently present in creative individuals, such as the phenomenon of “to a certain extent escaping rigid gender role stereotyping...over and over one finds that creative and talented girls are more dominant and tough than other girls...” (p. 70). Given the lack of creativity studies that have included women, it is hard to know on what he based this observation; in effect inserting attributes such as eccentricity or, in this case, toughness, serves only to erect a new kind of artistic stereotype. Whilst he acknowledges that creativity occurs within a context, he does not fully examine the boundaries of the cultural domain and social field he has nominated, and therefore does not take into consideration the restricted space of the domain and field that women can access as artists, or the influence of experts or gatekeepers who determine what is validated. For instance, he nominates the conditions necessary for flow to occur as being free from responsibilities and having uninterrupted time spans with attention to finding the best rhythm for sleeping, eating and creating, “what counts is to be the master of one’s own time” (p. 145). These conditions are, of course, extremely difficult to achieve for artistic women with carer responsibilities. He also nominates the production site and space as being very important and it is unlikely that he has considered the kitchen table as an artistic production site.

Similarly, in one of the few longitudinal studies of artists, Freeman (1993) also attempted to explain creative abilities by defining cognitive abilities and personality traits. Like Csikszentmihalyi, Freeman did recognise that the artist develops in a context and acknowledged that the family of origin, the art community, and the institution of art, all have significant influences in forming an artistic career. He did not, however, consider how these factors may influence the life of an artist as a woman and implicitly leaves the romantic view of creativity and genius untroubled.

The concept of ‘flow’ has also been co-opted by the increasingly ubiquitous positive psychology movement, and although flow had its origins in the artistic domain, it has now been employed in a variety of contexts, including corporate settings to promote worker productivity and achieve work-life-flow (Pope, 2005). There have been extensions to the theory of flow that suggest artmaking provides an avenue of escape

from day-to-day mundanity and the woes associated with living. For instance, Dissanayake (1998) argues that art allows for an escape from tedium and a temporary participation in a more desirable alternative world. It is also an attractive option to extrapolate that, not only are everyday banalities suspended for a time by the practice of artmaking, but also traumas.

Although aspects of flow identified by Csikszentmihalyi have potential value as a guide for looking at what women in this research said about their artmaking practices, Bloch (2000) has conducted expanded studies on the idea of flow as a particular type of experience and has concluded that flow is a significantly more complex phenomenon than has thus far been articulated; likewise, women's artmaking practices.

Painting Like a Girl. Artistic Identity: Claiming the Title

'Artist' is taken to mean any person who creates or gives creative expression to, or recreates works of art, who considers his artistic creation to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognized as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations of employment or association. (UNESCO, 1980)

Notwithstanding the breathtaking use of masculine pronouns in this UNESCO statement, I wish to highlight here the phrase "...who is or asks to be recognised as an artist..." and contemplate what this may mean for an aspiring young woman engaged in artmaking. The artistic identity debate strikes at the heart of the ideas that circulate around the link between artistic ability and madness. However, women have been reluctant to call themselves artists for centuries, and as we shall see, for more reasons than a fear of conjuring up the clichés that generally apply to male artists anyway.

From Artemisia Gentileschi to Sofonisba Anguissola through to Joy Hester, issues regarding artistic identity and artistic pathways have been well covered in a substantial body of feminist theorising on the barriers women experience in becoming artists. In particular, see Chadwick (1990), Parker and Pollock (1981), Petersen and Wilson (1976/1985), Pollock (1988), and Snyder-Ott (1978). In her seminal paper *Why have there been no great women artists*, Nochlin (1971) concentrates on external barriers like discrimination. In *The Obstacle Race*, Greer (1979) considers that "all women are tortured by contradictory pressures, but none more so than the female artist" (p. 325). More recent feminist scholarship suggests that this commentary continues to resonate (Butler & Mark, 2007; Heartney et al, 2007; Higgie & Heiser, 2007). It is also evident that, in Australia, women are still struggling to forge a pathway as an artist. "There is a long history of disadvantage experienced by women artists. Despite the substantial progress made in reducing gender-based discrimination in the workplace and elsewhere, there is considerable concern within the arts at the

continuing difficulties faced by women in pursuing a professional career as an artist” (Throsby & Hollister, 2003, p. 60).

Envisaging yourself as artist: A silly trifle. In 1867, artist Fanny Anne Charsley dared to publish her book *Wildflowers around Melbourne* and in the preface she explains away her work as “a silly trifle – a pleasant occupation” (p. 12) or as Williams (1991) observes, Fanny is self-consciousness as an artist and ill at ease with this role. For Fanny and her peers, an art practice was seen as an amusement, a delicate feminine pastime and perhaps if they did dare to assume the title of artist it was more often as an amateur artist. While men easily fulfilled the requirements of professionalism, women faced “a more complicated, difficult, and ultimately different process” in becoming fully-fledged artists (Prieto, 2001, p. 18).

A founder of WAR, the painter Erica McGilchrist commented in an interview with Barbara Blackman (1985), that some women had only just begun to have the confidence to proclaim “‘I am an artist’ in contrast to saying ‘well I paint a bit but I am just a housewife.’” As Melbourne-based painter, Robyn Fox said “My first husband thought it was a hobby, keep me off the streets” (p. 36) and Robyn Dawson concurs, “Most of my relatives treat my painting like a hobby...” (Johnson & Purcell, 1985, p. 53). From colonial to contemporary times, a litany of such examples, where woman are depicted or describe themselves as housewives with a hobby or amateur pastime, punctuate the literature (de le Roy, 1989; Jeffri, 1992; O’Keeffe, 1976). This creates a powerful legacy cascading down through the centuries, as women continue to negotiate a suite of barriers or disincentives erected socially and psychologically to deter them from grasping the title of artist.

Don’t call me a woman artist. Peers (1993) observes, that women were considered “too prudish and inhibited or too sexual and lewd to create art” (p. 1). At either axis, Peers notes a key conundrum faced by every woman artist, which is to try to either assimilate within the mainstream art world or withdraw to a feminine enclave. De Beauvoir (1949/2011) argues that it is inauthentic to deny you are situated beyond your sex, but that for women artists it is tempting to do so in order to try to gain access to the universal – just wanting to be known as an artist full stop (see also Chapter 2). In 1943, Peggy Guggenheim ran a show in New York called ‘Exhibition by 31 women’ at which Georgia O’Keeffe announced she was ‘Not a woman painter’ (Dearborn, 2004, p. 240) or stated “A silly topic...Write about women. Or write about artists. I don’t see how they are connected” (Prieto, 2001, p. 1). Similarly, Margaret Olley said, “I’ve never considered myself a ‘woman’ painter. I’m a painter. I sign my works ‘Olley’, that’s the end of it” (Stewart, 2005, p. 504). Margaret Preston also did not wish to be identified as

a woman painter, and the sculptor Inge King doesn't consider her gender important (Kirby, 1992).

Art is art and has no sex but artists do...it is not the quality of our femaleness that is inferior, but the quality of a society that has produced such a viewpoint. To deny one's sex is to deny a large part of where art comes from. I don't think it is possible to make important or even communicable art without some sense of source of self on one hand and some strong sense of audience and communication on the other. (Lippard, 1976, pp. 147-148)

Whilst there is no such thing as women's art, the status of the maker matters (Parker & Pollock, 1981). Greer (1979) explains that the mantra 'There is no sex in Art' has been popular since the 19th century and describes the choices for women artists as being – you can be like a man or be a freak – outside normal femaleness. To be an excellent painter meant to be desexed, "She does not draw like a woman" (p. 75). The other kind of false praise is to be singled out and compared only to other women – the best woman painter. Greer (1995) calls women active in the arts as experiencing the flying pig or dancing dog syndrome – she is "performing some arduous and unnatural contortion of her personality" (p. xxi). As Bourgeois observed, "A woman has no place as an artist until she proves over and over that she won't be eliminated" (Nemser, 1995, p. 9). Prieto (2001) believes the "dilemma for many was how to become an artist without violating their womanhood" (p. 151); and it was not just a matter of restricted opportunities, but the question of 'imagining oneself as an artist' in the first place.

The cultural prescriptions of femininity make it difficult for her to see and be seen as an artist. She has double consciousness, an identity divided between "woman" and "artist," since gender ideology will not permit her to be both at once. She lives and works as a neglected, misunderstood being who often comes to a tragic end. The woman artist thus feels isolation and alienation... (Prieto, 2001, p. 5)

A Valid Occupation for a Girl? Establishing a Life as an Artist

Having made it through childhood and then art school with the vision and ambition to become an artist still intact, women spoke of encountering a number of hurdles when actually establishing and sustaining an art practice (Jerrems, 1974; Power, 2008). How is artmaking woven into everyday life? How are opportunities for artmaking thwarted? – who you live with, who you care for, how you view the world, all effect your sense of artistry and wellbeing – the day-to-day conundrums of sustaining an art practice. Many women have delayed their art careers and some have never returned to a life of artmaking. A late start as a serious artist is a common feature of women's career patterns – after the children have grown up, after divorce from an

unsupportive husband or after discontinuing a relationship with a fellow artist (Suther, 1993, p. 145).

Some of the major relational challenges to establishing and sustaining an artmaking practice, including being a mother and perhaps the wife/lover/daughter of another artist, are discussed here while Chapter 6 explores barriers in relation to having an experience of mental ill-health. A myriad of other structural and relational hurdles such as the struggle to have your work taken seriously within a supportive network of family, friends or communities of practice are discussed throughout the thesis.

Establishing and sustaining an artistic practice. “Art and motherhood have long sat in troubled relationship to one another, though rarely has this been explored outside of the artist’s journal” (Power, 2008, p. 1). Simonton (1997) found that the peak productive age for creativity was 40 years of age. For women, this is a time when child rearing is potentially at its most demanding. Indeed, many Australian women artists in the first half of the 20th century remained unmarried and did not have children – Ethel Carrick Fox, Margaret Preston, Margaret Olley, Thea Proctor, Clarice Beckett, Dorritt Black, Grace Crowley, Grace Cossington-Smith, Anne Dangar (Peers, 1993; Topliss, 1996). Due to the lack of women’s records, we are often unsure why and how they made this decision. Although, Olley said “...marriage didn’t seem to be a very happy prospect for anybody who wanted to keep on painting” (Stewart, 2005, p. 107) and Grace Cossington Smith indicated that “art was her passion; the duties of married life would have compromised her passion” (Goldie, 2003, p. 5).

Joy Hester encapsulates not only the phenomenon of being overshadowed by her modernist male peers involved in the Melbourne art scene in the 1940s, but also the difficulties experienced in making art and having children. Burke (1983/2001) describes Hester’s struggles to sustain her practice as an artist against the burden of illness (Hodgkin’s disease) and the responsibilities of being a mother as an instance where “creative forces are unconscious and untrammelled and the need to express them can be destructive to the established pattern of life and certainly to the conventional expectations of a woman’s role. Creativity is like a hunger, and it needs to be fed time, ideas, energy, books, art, landscapes, journeys, changes of all kinds” (p. 31). Constance Stokes commented that “any creative work is a difficult life for a woman if she is a wife and mother. Painting requires much concentration.” In 1965 she was “half-mother, half painter” (Summers, 2009, p. 51).

The contradictory pressures of being a woman, an artist and a mother deserves continued scrutiny for it appears women are still struggling with this conundrum, as Power discovered in 2008 when she interviewed 26 Australian women artists for her

book *The divided heart: Art and motherhood*. “No amount of money, no amount of structural change, can entirely resolve the fundamental dilemma for the artist-mother: the seeming incompatibility of her two greatest passions. The effect here is a divided heart: a split self; the fear that to succeed at one means to fail at the other” (p. 23).

Power (2008) argues that throughout history only the most doggedly determined women could sustain an artistic practice, and it was even more difficult for those women without status or resources or perhaps who had an experience of mental ill-health. She reasons that, for some, the characteristics of mother and artist are too divergent, each too all-consuming to co-exist and either they chose to wait until caring duties were less burdensome, stopped altogether or tried to forge a life to accommodate both. Furthermore, unlike many other forms of employment, artmaking rarely meant leaving the house for a sanctioned form of paid employment (Rosewarne-Foster, 1992) and the work place is often the kitchen table where a regular income from artmaking is not assured, creating “an identity crisis due to conflict between our roles as artists and mothers” (Beevers, 1988, p. 17) and such hurdles as finding the time for those long and uninterrupted hours to concentrate on making art (Britton, 1981).

Power (2008) describes her life after the birth of her child as “within a matter of months, what had been the centre of my world – namely my passion for art – became so flimsy and irrelevant it seemed close to collapse” (p. 16). She goes on to say, “Art was like a monkey on my back and I resented its skittish hold on me, the way it caused me to strain away from my babies, to live a split life, be a split self (p. 17)...Frequently I stormed about the house, pent up with frustration that exploded at any small irritation. Ideas rubbed against the interior surfaces of my brain like grains of sand, chafing till I was raw (p. 19)...I knew that if I buried that creative urge in myself, it would only re-emerge in some ugly and distorted form; that it would not in fact make me a better mother but one full of bitterness and frustration – a recipe for martyrdom” (p. 22).

Being a mother is not the only relational barrier women encounter when establishing and sustaining as art practice. Chadwick and de Courtivron (1993) and Bailey (1994) document a long line of women artists who were overshadowed by their artistic male partners, including Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne, Frida Kahlo, Eva Hesse, Lee Krasner, Kay Sage, Leonora Carrington, Berthe Morisot, Vanessa Bell, Camille Claudel and Sonia Delaunay. In Australia, Joy Hester’s relationship with Albert Tucker meant that “...Joy was known as ‘Bert’s girlfriend’. This was her public identity”. And so “her reputation as an artist was barely visible” (Burke, 1983/2001, p. 73). Melbourne artist, Evelyn Healy discusses having to earn her right to paint, revealing that “like in

other parts of the world, the role of the Australian woman was the wife supporting the artist – not the artist” (McGuire, 1993, p. 17).

When asked about her work, painter Louise Hearman, the partner of photographer Bill Henson, replied, “you asked me about feminism, well, why can’t this be about me, just me? I want it to be about my show. When I read articles about Bill’s work I don’t see references to me” (Coslovich, 2008, p. 17). Louise’s irritation at having the focus removed from her own art to that of her more famous partner’s controversial art has a long history in the Australian art scene. Ruby Lindsay has been described as “the best pen and ink woman artist Australia has produced” (Newmarch, 2009, p. 2); however, we know little about her life or her artmaking practice as she is overshadowed by her more famous male siblings.

Klepac (2000) argues that Nora Heysen, the first woman to win the Archibald Prize in 1938, queried “the validity of the award, always suspecting that it might not have been the quality of the work alone that was responsible. In the same way she always wondered how much of the success of the 1933 (solo) exhibition was due to her paintings and how much to the fact that she was the daughter of Hans Heysen” (p. 4). Thus, despite being an acclaimed artist, Heysen’s story underlines the difficulty that women artists in Australia have encountered and if it was difficult for her, it does pose the question of how many other women have been stymied, discouraged and actively prevented from pursuing a life of artmaking at some point along their lifespan and how can the effects of this life of NOT making be fathomed? Or, even if women sustained an artmaking practice, what are the effects of consistently having what you make devalued? It appears there is little research addressing such questions. Many studies have looked at the benefits and pitfalls of art program participation for people, both with or without an experience of mental ill-health (see Chapter 11 & 13); however, research studies which include women as participants and investigate the art practices of individual women artists are remarkably few and are summarised below.

Studies on Women and Creativity

“How many women models...Madonnas, Eves, Mary Magdalenes, Venuses, Delilahs, Salomes, Judiths – had yearned to be on the other side of the easel?” (Vreeland, 2002, p. 88).

Winter (1978) conducted interviews with 17 women artists working in Europe and identified some similarities including:

- an inseparable connection between the conditions of the world around them and their creativity
- their personal survival mode as forming the core of their artistic process
- devotion to their work and the creative process rather than the end product

- an urge to contribute something of beauty and value to their community
- the need for perpetual questioning and continual experimentation while remaining rooted in discipline and history.

Marianne Paget (1983) conducted one of the few studies that, like *Canvassing the emotions*, actually asked women about the role of art in their lives. Her study, conducted in America, found that generally women viewed the work of artmaking as a discipline and a habit of being, and were constantly balancing an intense commitment to making art with a feeling that they did not have the right to participate in culture-making; doubting their right to be artists.

Geraldine Brooks (1995) undertook a phenomenological study of eight Australian women artists. She documented:

- the struggle to assume the identity of an artist and the self-determination required to continue with artmaking after feelings of being an outsider, being a pioneer, and being obstructed
- being torn between the needs of self and others, and the struggle to find harmony between self, art and career
- artmaking as a facilitator of connection and belonging.

Ellen Langer (2005) based her comments about becoming an artist on many interviews with women living in America about their art practice. She observed that often women talked about the total engagement in the process where ‘time stood still’ and ‘nothing else matters’ in agreement with the theory of ‘flow’. She concluded that the purpose of creative activity is to feel alive and become enlivened, whereby art opens our eyes and helps us see in new ways, observing subtleties and fine distinctions otherwise dulled by day-to-day living. In a statement that reverberates across this thesis, Langer summarises her thoughts on the role of artmaking in her life, “Art is not for art’s sake but ‘art is for life’s sake’” (p. 206).

Artistic identity and artistic practice. Taylor and Littleton (2006) investigated the career trajectories and the identity work of 29 male and female postgraduate Art and Design students in London. Patterns in the data are reported as exemplifying three repertoires which they conceptualise as doing identity work. These were: the creative milieu where a family member had been supportive; creative inheritance or evidence of inherent aptitude for art where a family member is evoked to prove this claim; and prodigiousness where the participant discusses an early interest and talent for art. The authors conclude that all three strategies boost the speaker’s claim to be a creative person and are woven into an artistic biography. They emphasise that the participants displayed more than one way to become an artist – perhaps combining the early

interest with revealing that they had felt different from an early age and that their creativity had contributed to not wanting to be like all the others. Concerning the role of an artist, many were aware that career stages would not be linear and, particularly for the young women in the group, a resolution to this scenario was having a fall-back position such as teacher training, and being prepared for periods of uncertain employment when assuming parenting responsibilities (Taylor, 2010).

Similarly, Mishler's (2004) study of craft artists' trajectories of identity formation found erratic career trajectories and Jeffri (1992) found that artists' careers paths were typically non-linear, noting hurdles referenced by participants including the significant influence of encouragement or discouragement in childhood, the commitment and tenacity needed to pursue craft/artmaking, and the isolation in which an artist works. In 1993, Jeffri published 12 interviews in *The Painter Speaks*. The most important factors influencing respondents to pursue their careers in arts were the "inner drive to make art" and the "higher calling sense of purpose" (p. 212). In Australia, Throsby has researched the life of artists over the last 30 years and has produced five reports for the Australia Council (1983, 1989, 1994, 2003, 2010). Respondents in the Artists' Survey identified support from family and friends as the most important extrinsic factor advancing their careers, and the qualities of persistence and passion as the most intrinsic factors (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 32).

Collet (1998a) conducted an Australian study concerning nine women's perceptions of, and strategies for, sustaining their careers as visual artists. She found that in the 1980s and 90s women often employed various strategies such as working and exhibiting in groups to combat gallery prejudice and to provide mentoring and support, share skills, resources and ideas. Collet concluded that generally women's careers as artists are characterised by discontinuities, periods of stagnation, diversions into a variety of media more suited to the moment, and diversions into related fields such as teaching. Taylor (1991) also reviewed Australian women artists' careers and identified significant challenges to maintaining an art practice including: women's lack of confidence in their artwork, working in isolation without feedback, rearing young children, and lack of role models.

The becoming of an artist. These studies indicate that the career path for an artist, and for a woman as an artist, can be characterised by disruptions, nonlinearity, and the envisaging of an alternative position if an artistic career does not eventuate. Supportive influences to an artistic career included a drive and commitment to pursue an, at times, difficult career, early encouragement from family and a sense of creative inheritance, and an enduring interest and feeling of capability in the artistic realm that began in early childhood. The few studies discussed above that have focussed on

women as artists hint that women may often have little confidence to seize an artistic identity and are torn between the needs of others and their own intense need to make art. They also suggest that artmaking is entangled in life and may provide both a survival mechanism and a space to transcend habitual life.

Despite these inklings of what it might mean to be an artist and a woman, the majority of research about creativity has contributed little to the understanding of women, creativity and mental health, and their day-to-day art practices. There may indeed be a strong link between creativity and madness but only if the proposed link is an inverse correlation. Helson (1990) asserts that although it remains problematic for a woman to develop a concept of herself as a creative person, her work with women and creativity suggests that the lives of many women are improved if they can find space for creative expression. Perhaps then to make art is not associated with madness but in fact with wellness and is at times a strategy to stave off periods of mental ill-health. Could it be that madness is not the muse but the implication of unrequited creative production?

For the becoming of an artist is not only about enacting (doing) but envisaging and considering a life as an artist. Moi (1999) reads Woolf and de Beauvoir as delineating a major strategy of sexism as the imprisonment of women in their subjectivity, and that one of the greatest freedoms is to be able to think of things in themselves. "Creativity requires the freedom to be able to escape the given, the familiar and the known as well as the freedom to return to it" (p. 155). Dissanayake (1998) claims that making art is a tendency – to make special – to create a special realm to be contrasted with the everyday and allow an intimate connection with a world that is different from the ordinary. She maintains that whether you chose to call it imagination, intuition, illusion, make believe, dream, the unconscious or some other label, the work of art is often thought to be symbolic of this other world or realm, which leads Salort (2010) to inquire how "the eye jumps over the wall" (p. 1) of what is banal, of what is habitual, of what is inert, lifeless: and to find inquisitive realities. The next section will investigate how to encompass such expanded dimensions and how to research creativity in a framework cognisant of 21st century dilemmas in feminist theorising and praxis, articulating not so much artmaking as means of escape but as an entangled life of making.

In June 2011, Flick Grey, a self-identified mental health consumer, gave a lecture called the *Politics of Madness* at the Open University in Clifton Hill, Melbourne. She said, "you can't silence our lived experience. We are real humans with deeply distressing experiences. Don't silence us by talking only of social constructs. Listen to our words of our experience. Begin and continue the conversation" (Grey, 2011).

Notwithstanding the controversy surrounding feminist emphasis on experience, which I will examine in the next section, this thesis heeds Flick's advice and is the beginning of a conversation about women, art and being.

Section One: Situating the Research: Examining Feminism (a way of seeing), Epistemology (a way of knowing) and Ontology (a way of being) to Locate a Research Position

Chapter 2: Daubing on the Background

In addition to respecting the virtue of nonmaleficence (certainly the researcher should do no harm to the participant), the researcher should be concerned with how he or she treats the participant...represents the participant's experience, and how the knowledge claims contribute to the participant's future well-being (Gunzenhauser, 2006, p. 624).

Or, "No thanks. I don't want to feel like a stick insect" (personal communication from a woman who creates murals and declined to participate in this research, September, 21, 2007).

A Piece of Feminist Research

"What's that got to do with psychology?"

"Oh, not another piece of feminist research."

Such comments, overheard in response to a poster presentation about this research project (Northfield, 2009), combined with the current state of feminist research in Australia, urged me to consider how large bodies of feminist research and work could still be clumped together, the nuances erased, and then promptly dismissed in this manner. Whilst I struggled to reconcile the myriad feminist epistemological positions available in which to locate this research, the wider psychological research community was seemingly not interested in these tangential musings or the under-examined relation between theory and methods employed in research. How then would any knowledge claims arising from this research be positioned?

How would I be able to present or re-present the participants' words and artworks in a manner which both respected the women's opinions and did not pretend that these words were mirror reflections of reality? This project led me to indeed ask, *what is a woman?* and if I was to speak about women and artmaking, then *what is a self?* Does a self even exist in a postmodern world, if I was to think about artmaking and its relation, if any, to expressing the self? Is it still possible to talk about women's experience? How can we conceive of experience to convey women's ideas of artmaking and wellbeing? Can we talk about artistic identity or any identity – has feminist identity politics left feminism in paralysis and thereby rendered the concept of identity unusable? And finally, what is mental illness, how is it conceived in the 21st century, and what is its relation to wellness for people who participate in artmaking?

Is feminist research in crisis in the first decades of the 21st century?

Spongberg (2009) argues that feminist scholarship has almost disappeared from the agenda in Australia, consistent with an international trend that has seen the specificity of feminist research slowly erased and no longer recognised as a separate field of enquiry by funding bodies. Spelman (2007) contends that since the late 1980s the feminist movement has been in conceptual and political disarray, and Le Grange (2002) characterises feminist research as being in a period marked by methodological and epistemological ferment. Alaimo and Hekman (2008) agree, and propose that with many feminists turning to postmodern social constructionist models, this orientation has become a default feminist research position leading feminist thought to an impasse. The dilemma then for feminism and feminist research is that at one end of the continuum, postmodernism is antithetical to feminist politics because it annuls the human subject and deprives women of political agency. On the other hand, feminism and postmodernism, when deconstructing dominant paradigms and discourses and making normalising practices problematic, are pursuing compatible agendas aiming to destabilise 'truths' associated with gender and power.

Recent feminist research appears to be teetering on a shaky theoretical base, having pragmatic ramifications across all feminist activity, not just research (Caro & Fox, 2008; Moi, 2006; Monshat & Staker, 2011). Postmodernism's focus on difference and rejection of any commonalities between women has created a chasm between feminist philosophy and feminist action. Have relativism and diverse legitimacy claims stymied constructive dialogue and collective action (Moss, 2007)? Furthermore, if we don't acknowledge the possibility of the existence of a self with a degree of agency and responsibility and a space to create, then according to Gannon and Davies (2007), ethical paralysis and apolitical commentary will ensue.

To be able to talk about emergent feminist theory in the 21st century, it is first necessary to trace how feminist theory and subsequently feminist research came to be at this impasse. Virtually all of the dilemmas and issues of feminist theory reappear in the context of research methods; however, there is a growing gap between methods and theory in the social research literature and, consequently, insufficient attention has been given to the link between the two (Bergoffen, 2008; Denner, 2001; Harding & Norberg, 2003; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Wilkinson, 1996; Wilson, 2008). This chasm is also evident in psychological research methods and scholars such as Darlaston-Jones (2007), Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin (2009) and Creswell et al. (2007), therefore urge researchers to begin their inquiry process with scrutiny of the philosophical assumptions underlining the research orientation. The epistemological stance adopted directs how the research is conducted (Longino, 1993; Russo, 1999;

Worell, 1996), particularly when researchers bring private stories into the public domain as I have done in this research. More recently, feminist researchers have emphasised the importance of clarifying ontological as well as epistemic orientations and examining the methodological implications of ontology, because abstract theoretical positions have material and ethical implications in practice (Bergoffen, 2008; Fonow & Cook, 2005; Moss, 2007). Furthermore, Michelle Fine (2012) highlights how 'evidence' gleaned from research can be appropriated and misconstrued to serve competing agendas, and in an era of increased drive for 'evidence-based' interventions, feminist research has a responsibility to ask whose evidence counts and for what purpose?

Chasing the Tail: What is Feminist Research?

"Feminist knowledge is proper knowledge but..." (Pereira, 2012, p. 283).

Nelson and Wylie (2004) consider a minimum standard for feminist research as one which ensures that gender is not dissolved as an important axis of investigation. But Moss (2007) asks, "Does feminist research have any commonalities?" (p. 372). Akman et al. (2001) reviewed writings on feminist theory and methodology, and identified common concerns about power imbalances between researchers and research participants, and the insistence on the political nature of research. However, provoked by polarised feminist positions, debate swirls around the poles of the general and the particular, universal or specific, sameness and difference. Perhaps all that can be asserted is, as Gridley and Turner (2010) suggest, they all, to some degree, question the central claims of a purely positivist science and traditional scientific enquiry, and all attempt, albeit by different sets of methodologies, to produce accounts of the world which provide a better understanding of the way women live. Women's stories of their lives are acknowledged as legitimate sources of knowledge (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Dallimore, 2000) even as it is recognised that such stories are an approximation of knowledge not the material reality of women's lives (Brunskell, 1998). Shared goals for feminist research therefore appear tentative as the relationship between specific research methods and the complex theoretical underpinnings, which drive a particular piece of feminist research, are investigated.

Broad feminist positions from the mid-20th century. Although there has never been one correct feminist epistemology which generates one correct feminist methodology, three broad schools of Western feminist thought since the 1970s – liberal (empirical), standpoint and postmodern – are still viewed as oppositional positions uncongenial to one another on a philosophical level (Kruks, 2001). Moreover, each feminist methodology contains at its heart a paradox.

Liberal feminism attempts to minimise the differences between the sexes and fight for equality – concentrating on examining and removing barriers that exist to

prevent women gaining access to opportunities within existing social structures and institutions. Policy initiatives and strategies such as equal opportunity and affirmative action were/are enacted to increase participation in a wide variety of areas by women and girls (Probert & Wilson, 1993). Often referred to as the 'add women and stir' approach, the assumption is that as more women enter any field, its gendered nature will disappear over time. This approach requires gender consciousness as a basis, while requiring the elimination of gender within practices (Girkup & Fox Keller, 1992; Kramarae & Treichler, 1992; Rosser, 1992). In the Western art world this was characterised by the concerted effort by feminists in the 1970s and 80s to document women as artists. However, this 'add women' approach denies the conditions of women in general and how these conditions influenced the art produced (Lippard, 1994; Synder-Ott, 1978), and it does not disrupt the inherently sexist status quo of the Western art institution.

Second wave feminism (standpoint) celebrated women's differences from men, their closeness to nature, more concrete and embodied ways of knowing, and conceptualised a set of female values that would lead to a feminist cultural revolution. Longino (2007) explains that in the 1980s, standpoint feminism covered a broad range of feminisms that were interested in the importance of women's situated knowledge and experiences to expose how relations of dominance are gendered in particular ways, or "to study up", as Harding (2004) describes the goal of standpoint to locate "a distinctive insight about how a hierarchical social structure works" (p. 31). DeVault and Gross (2007) consider experience, often collated via research interviewing, as essential to the feminist projects of 1960s and 70s. By the 1980s, experience had become foundational to feminist standpoint research as a means to produce knowledge about women's lives. However, as Hallstein and O'Brien (2000) note, one risk of doing feminist standpoint research is inappropriately confusing women's experience with women's standpoint. Standpoints, then, are not something that all women have simply because they have certain experiences of oppression. To articulate a standpoint demands conscious reflection on, and political understandings of, their experiences of oppression. Despite these complications, experience remained central to standpoint theory that continued to advocate that women recognise both their unity (Harding, 1987; Harstock, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1990) and their diversity. The struggle to reconcile this paradox of unity and diversity invited suspicion on the validity of experience as the bedrock of feminist research, and standpoint theory has been criticised as essentialising in assuming that women of a particular group will have a consistent and identifiable standpoint (Longino, 2007). Consequently, this approach

has been critiqued as equating gendered differences with an essentialised female identity and encouraging the idea of a universal sisterhood.

In the Western art world, standpoint feminism was characterised by the rise of women's art movements where women's artistic identity took on a political and activist meaning. Artists such as Judy Chicago with the *Dinner Party* (1974-79) in America and Mary Kelly's *Post-partum Document* (1973-79) in England explored the idea of a uniquely feminine or feminist aesthetic to challenge what were seen to be phallic modes of representation. This was called 'central core' imagery or 'cunt art' (Ellyard, 1991; Meskimmon, 2003) and although many feminists would now concede that the search for a female form has ultimately been fruitless, as there is no single female sensibility, media or style, exploring a female aesthetic was a galvanising pursuit for many artists. A re-examination of traditional cultural practices such as sewing, quilting and embroidery also occurred, accompanied by concerted attempts by artists using these practices to embed these firmly in the arts realm. In Australia, Erica McGilchrist, said "It felt so good to be decorative (in my work), to indulge my long-held interest in embroidery and household textile crafts...all the things that art criticism had conditioned me into believing were second rate art forms, if ART at all" (1980, p. 1).

The postmodern turn. The third wave of 20th century western feminism was characterised by the postmodern turn in the 1990s (Del Busso, 2007; Fonow & Cook, 2005; Kruks, 2001; Lather, 2007; Moi, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Postmodernism², intent on being anti-essentialist and anti-normative, questions grand narratives, disputes natural laws and focuses on discourse and cultural deconstruction (Del Busso, 2007). All phenomena are understood as systems or signs, and such systems are understood to have regulatory power with attention to subjectivity and an emphasis on identity construction and deconstruction. Any representation of others' experience is always tainted by the researcher's own situated position which is constructed culturally and historically (Freidman, 2006).

The turn to culture, language and discourse proved an effective feminist strategy to scrutinise the bonding of femininity with female biology and nature, and a factor that led feminists to run from the body in order to refute biology as destiny

² The terms postmodern and poststructural have often been used almost interchangeably in theory and research literature, overlapping and blurring distinctions, consistent with how these theorists wish to avoid all tendencies towards categorisation (Gannon, S., & Davies, B. (2007). Postmodern, poststructural and critical theories. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp.71-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.). However, the use of deconstruction and discursive analyses is fundamental to many fields of postmodern thought (Lather, P. (2001). Postbook: Working the ruins of feminist ethnography. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 27(1), 199-228.). As 'postmodern' is used more frequently in the arts, this will be the term employed in this thesis henceforth.

(Alaimo & Hekman, 2008). The sex/gender distinction was employed by feminists to dismantle the biology as destiny notion, disrupt prevailing gender identities and open up many ways of being (Del Busso, 2007; Moi, 1999). Friedman (2006) contends that as feminist postmodern research also aims to raise the visibility and credibility of all the voices at the margins, it is easy to see why this theoretical stance became such an attractive choice for feminist researchers.

Identity politics: The general versus the particular. Postmodern feminism spawned a concerted drive to recognise that women have profoundly different experiences from each other, speak in many different voices and potentially have conflicting interests (Kruks, 2001). As multiple difference feminism emerged, stressing the multiple identities that divide women and focusing on identity-based and particularistic struggles, feminism acknowledged the kinds of differences race, class, culture and other variables make to women's identities and lives. Simultaneously, the possibility of a unified women's movement was threatened and women of specific intersections of race and class could create only their own feminisms (Spelman, 2007).

For Kruks (2001), the celebration of women's experiences and women's nature, via the second wave of feminism and standpoint theory, had backfired as postmodern theorising critiqued the grandiose and universalising claims which were said to obscure oppressive differences between women. The problematic aspects of feminist empiricism and standpoint theory were seen to be solved by feminist postmodernism's focus on diversity rather than equality (liberal) or difference (standpoint) (Gergen, 2001; van der Tuin, 2009). Postmodernism dissolves the universal subject and with that the possibility for women to speak in a unified voice or to be addressed as a group (Rosser, 2007).

Archer (2000) claims that postmodern theory has far reaching consequences. The stability of humanity and the human subject was under threat with the death of God, and with the death of Humanity comes the death of the author and artist, and the death of woman. Archer goes on to contemplate the possibility of the emergence of postmodern beings, "they are such a contradiction in terms that they could never get out of bed" (p. 2). The paradox for postmodern feminists is that the push to recognise diversity among women leads to claims that all truths are equally valid and yet the reality of women's oppression cannot be denied. Spelman (2007) argues that postmodern feminism was not as inclusive as hoped. "Instead of a unified women's movement grounded in a theory of women's commonality, we ended up with the shards and splats of narrowly focused identity-based feminisms" (p. 201).

The Implications of the Postmodern Turn

Experience, identity, self and woman were all erased in the linguistic turn along with a concerted flight from and deconstruction of the body in order to avoid essentialism, universalism and biological determinism. The term 'woman' was used in brackets. Giving voice was no longer viable in a postmodern world because the subject was dead and who was speaking anyway? However this was clearly problematic to feminism as a movement of cultural resistance and transformation; polarisation occurred where certain strands of feminism were silenced as theoretically heretical (Bigwood, 1991).

Losing woman. Mikkola (2006) argues that the issue that has divided the feminist community so markedly is the divide between gender realism (the view that women have some feature in common that makes them women – sameness and generality), versus gender nominalism (difference and particularity). With the rise of postmodern theory in feminist circles in the 1990s, 'Woman' was interrogated as a stable, coherent common identity. Heinämaa (1997, p. 21) aptly highlights this when discussing Kristeva's position that, *strictly speaking, 'woman' cannot be said to exist*, and Irigaray's that *woman does not have a sex*. 'Woman' was deemed to be just another universal oppressive category, essentialist, heedless of historical and cultural diversity and enforcing hierarchical and heterosexual gender divisions that marginalise minority groups (Bigwood, 1991; DeVault and Gross, 2007).

Mikkola (2006) and Moi (1999) contend that Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Elizabeth Spelman's *Inessential Woman* (1990) were hugely influential in making the category of woman unstable. McLeod (2009) discusses Butler's statement that 'Woman is something we do, not something we are' and argues that this ignores the material and the political. For Butler there is 'no doer behind the deed': the doer becomes formed from the doing and is a mere linguistic structure in formation with no control over their speech acts – or, I would add, if there is no painter at the easel there is no control over their creative acts.

Losing woman and a sexed body. "Are there women, really?" (de Beauvoir 1949/1989, p. ix) or "Are there even women?" (de Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 3).

Moi (1999) argues that fear of using the word woman has largely come from "a certain theoretical confusion about sex and gender" (p. 9). While the sex-gender distinction has worked politically against biological determinism, it is not relevant to the work of "producing a concrete, historical understanding of what it means to be a woman (or a man) in a given society" (p. 5), or, by implication, an artist. The distinction has caused great trouble for feminism and is one of the reasons that de Beauvoir has

been misread by contemporary feminists via “the lens of the 1960s sex/gender distinction” (Vintges, 1999, p. 17).

For feminists such as Curthoys (2000) and Magarey (2007), the explosion of gender studies has led to ‘Gender’ becoming a euphemism for ‘sex’ in Western cultures and is a term that is routinely overused in everyday language, often culminating in statements that are nonsensical. Importantly the word gender has also been co-opted to biological deterministic ends, such as in the field of socio-biology. In her book, *Delusions of gender*, neuropsychologist Cordelia Fine (2010) insists that the assumption that *biology is destiny* is thriving. Following “the trail of contemporary brain science I found gaps and assumptions, inconsistencies, poor methodologies and leaps of faith” (p. 27). What she terms ‘Neurosexism’ serves to reinforce cultural beliefs about women and gender does not necessarily serve the interests that feminists originally intended. Del Busso (2007) observes that the word gender has now been rearticulated to confirm natural, fixed gender differences once called sex differences. This nourishes such notions that the lack of female Rembrandts or Picassos is evidence of biological deficiencies in women’s abilities to create art. Biological facts justify social norms, practices and traditions, which therefore have their origins in nature. Thus, “whether it is gender or sex that is pictured as pervasive the result is the same – the insidious sexualisation or genderisation of women” (Moi, 1999, p. 10).

The body in a postmodern bind. Equally, the postmodern view is caught in a bind that views the body as a biological category and gender as a social one. McNay (1991) summarises that feminist theory, when emphasising gender, leaves the body neutralised without any importance, creating a disconnection between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders, with gender becoming a free floating entity and bodies, inert masses waiting to be inscribed by cultural discursive texts. Or as Moi (1999) summarises, “In the English language distinction, sex is medicalised into the realms of biology and science and gender becomes a psychological category...Now sex is the body, gender is the mind and a body mind division is again justified” (p. 43). Furthermore, Moi (1999) notes that a sexed human being is more than the sum of sex and gender, otherwise when you consider a person, everything about them that is not sex must be gender and all that is not gender must be sex. This returns sex and gender into a binary pair and denies that “woman is a concrete, embodied human being of a certain age, nationality, race, class, and wholly unique set of experiences” (p. 111). Moi reads de Beauvoir as saying “to avoid biological determinism all we need to do is deny that biological facts justify social values” (p. 33).

Significantly, it is not just the sex-gender binary that remains intact, but also as Alaimo and Hekman (2008) underline, language/reality and nature/culture and that by

deconstructing dichotomies such as discourse/reality, postmodernists have moved so far from privileging reality that they privilege language over the material and inadvertently reinforce the active culture/passive nature binary they claimed to deconstruct (Bigwood, 1991; Colebrook, 2008; Hekman, 2008; McNay, 1991). Kirby (2008) argues that every attempt by feminist theorists to replace binary errors with non-binary corrections has effectively reinstated them in a more subtle and insidious way. The flight from the real and material, the body and woman, has placed the discursive as the sole constituting source of nature, society and reality. One side of the binary is rejected and the other still embraced. Alaimo and Hekman (2008) caution that while there has been considerable postmodern work on the body, it is almost exclusively confined to analysis of discourses and representations about the body. The sex-gender distinction maintains “The feeling body split from the knowing mind” (Alcoff, 2000, p. 42) and traditionally research has echoed this division, separating thinking and somatic experiences (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). This separation has significant ramifications for women who engage in artmaking and the notion of blurred boundaries and artistic practice will be discussed throughout this thesis: the entanglement of matter and meaning.

Losing experience. By losing woman, the validity of her experience also became unstable. In clarifying the raft of terms used to discuss experience – self, self-hood, subjectivity or positionality, perspectives, position in discourse, subject positions, speaking positions etc., that litter the literature, Griffiths (1995) observes that self and subjectivity are often used to mean similar things – and even though different, they are used to indicate the particular perspective of an individual; their experience.

However, as Oksala (2004) notes, at the beginning of the 1990s, the importance of experience for feminism began to swing like a pendulum from central importance to the opposite extreme, with Joan Scott’s seminal essay *Experience* (1991) disputing the notion that feminists could make experience visible because the representational system in which we operate remained unanalysed. Scott argued that experience was always discursively structured and when experience is relayed, it is not pure – *what happened* – but is influenced by what one already knows and is able to articulate. In 1994, Joan Hoff wrote a retort called *Gender as a postmodern category of paralysis* arguing that if the material realities of women’s lives become deconstructed into readings of texts, women’s complex and contradictory experiences are reduced to debates about the limits and possibilities of knowing (Ramazanoglu, 1996). These examples from the 1990s are indicative of a growing polarisation in feminist theorising, but the turn to postmodern theory in feminism continued unabated.

Kruks (2001) argues that one of the implications of postmodern particularised identity politics is the assumption that knowledge arises from an experiential basis and is therefore group specific, leaving people outside that group in a position where they cannot share that knowledge and cannot have the right to speak about it. The implication of viewing experience in this way is that even when alliances are formed, difference and group membership claims, threaten to topple any form of solidarity among women. The other consequence is the inability to talk about everyday lived experience as de Beauvoir did, and as I wish to do in this project.

The Disappearing Agentic Self

Feminist postmodernism as epistemological underpinning for research poses a dilemma for the researcher (Del Busso, 2007; DeVault & Gross, 2007; Miller, 2000). Reconciling respect for women's diversity of experience and wariness of generalities which transcend boundaries of culture and region, with the desire to posit women as a single and solid unit for political purposes has proved a difficult task. Friedman (2006) illustrates this conundrum by maintaining that social constructionism is a particularly hopeful approach to take toward anything we regard as unjust as we can try to construct it differently next time around. Of course, this assumes an agentic-self to effect change.

Many postmodern feminists have, knowingly or inadvertently, "frequently granted the subject an element of freedom" (Kruks, 2001, p. 130) – some agency and choice – and in so doing have abandoned the theoretical frameworks they claim to hold. Implicitly acknowledged is a capacity for resistance and thus a presupposition of a degree of interiority and agency despite claims of no interiority of the subject (Wilson, 2008). Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008) also point out that although theoretically the postmodern and standpoint approaches are in contradiction, nevertheless, in research the two are often synthesised, maintaining the humanist concept of the unified subject with agency, but at the same time promoting the idea of narrative as always multiple, socially constructed and constructing. This is not entirely adequate, as the underlying ontological and epistemological issues are not resolved or challenged by merely combining the antithetical positions.

McLeod (2009) cites Brown (2005, p. 111) to encapsulate the postmodern feminist dilemma, saying that "[G]ender is regarded (and lived) by contemporary young scholars and activists raised on postmodernism as something that can be bent, proliferated, troubled, resignified, morphed, theatricalised, parodied, deployed, resisted, imitated, regulated...but not emancipated" (p. 137). Thus, as Del Busso (2007) notes, there is no conceptualisation of human freedom in this orientation, so from a

postmodern orientation, the repercussions for this research project are that there is no acknowledgement of a space to create or an artist creating.

The Disappearing Woman Artist

Moi (2008) asks why the question of the woman as writer and feminist aesthetics disappear from the feminist theoretical agenda around the early to mid-1990s – just when women had begun to carve a space to air their views and, more importantly, be heard (Del Busso, 2007). It is critical to examine how and why not only feminist research but also the women's art movement remain marginalised and what this implies for artistic women. In Australia, despite the establishment of WAR, LIP magazine, Melbourne's Women's Gallery and Canberra's AGOG (Australian Girls Own Gallery) in the 1970s and 80s, the momentum to sustain women artists has stalled and, with the exception of WAR, organisations assisting women in the arts have all but disappeared (see McDonald, 2008a).

"You think such and such a thing because you are a woman" (de Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 5). De Beauvoir's writings in 1949 remain salient in 2014, as she also considered the idea that some women writers she had known did not wish to be considered women writers but writers per se. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the *Don't single me out as a woman artist or a woman anything. I want to be counted as one of the men, as part of the universal* remains intact. But de Beauvoir says women don't have access to the universal and losing your subjectivity is to sever your own lived experience. If you think you are just a human being then you will lose touch and access to thought about the full range of your own experiences "this denial is not a liberation for those concerned but an inauthentic flight. Clearly, no woman can claim without bad faith to be situated beyond her sex" (p. 4). However, divesting your subjectivity is tempting, as de Beauvoir explains how the statement, 'You say that because you are a woman,' illustrates how women's words can be reduced to their bodies. I would say that women's art works can also be reduced to their bodies – you paint that because you are a woman. Additionally, woman with mental ill-health have their artworks reduced to their state of mind – so instead of looking at any political or cultural meaning in the art, viewers instead concentrate on the personal details of the woman, in this case her mental disorder. *You paint that because you are a mad woman*. So such statements question the credibility of her argument or her artwork and to retain her intellectual or artistic credibility she must remove her subjectivity, ultimately silencing her.

Moi (2008) argues that for artists who are women, it can be incredibly frustrating to be told that they have "to write (or paint) as a woman or like a woman" (p. 264). Or worse, '*this is so good you wouldn't know it was painted by a woman*' (e.g. Nora

Heysen, Lee Krasner). On the other hand, it can be just as frustrating for a woman writer to feel that she has to write as a generic human being, since this opens up an alienating split between her gender and her humanity. Moi (1999) believes this situation is difficult because there will be times when you want to be considered, for example, an artist not a woman artist. "I am a woman but in some circumstances I wish my body to be considered as an insignificant background to my claims. I do not want to escape my particularity, or to be thought of as a neuter, or as some kind of universalised human being" (p. 204), creating an alienating split and both alternatives are unsatisfactory. "Every writer will have to find her own voice, and her own vision. Inevitably, a woman writer writes as a woman, not as a generic woman, but as the (highly specific and idiosyncratic) woman she is" (Moi, 2008, p. 266).

If, as Griffiths (1995) contends, questions of the self have been central to the women's movement, these very questions are also central to artmaking where art has been viewed as an expression of the self, and in the case of mental illness, an expression of the illness or the self as construed through the illness. Is art a socially constructed discursive effect or is someone behind the easel wielding the brush? This then necessitates a reconsideration of the idea of self, subjectivity and agency. If the subject self has ceased to exist, then so too the author and the artist and the postmodern question inspired by Foucault 'What does it matter who is speaking?' is posed. Kruks (2001) says it does matter for feminism who is speaking, and it does matter who is making art.

Searching for an artist behind the easel. It is vital not to displace the creative role from the subject to discursive systems nor deny the subject a role as an originator (Archer, 2000). Equally we do not want to "erase the emotional and affective aspects of subjectivity," such as artistic expression, "that are not easily amenable to discursive articulation. A subject is vital for the concept of creativity or else is imagination just a conduit for discursive effects?" (Kruks, 2001, p. 17). Thus, this research required a subject, and in this case an artistic subject, a doer behind the action, an artist behind the brush, who was capable of agency and a degree of freedom, albeit bound by social discursive restraints, to produce their art.

Vintges (1999) asks why one should become a self? Why should one create an identity when, for women, a common identity is disputed? And if it is increasingly difficult to contemplate an identity as a woman, then is this so for an artistic identity as a woman also? Has identity become a hollow concept warped beyond usefulness by identity politics, and should we be considering self-definition of styles of being instead? How does one adopt an artistic style of being? Is this more difficult to attain if you are a woman and a woman with an experience of mental ill-health?

Feminist organisations such as WAR, artists and feminist art theorists have persistently contested the Western art canon, querying the parameters imposed upon what is the accepted range of art practices, access to materials and training, and who has the power to look at who (the gaze). Yet the consequences of this postmodern scrutiny for the women's art movement were with the dissolution of the word woman – a disappearing of a self that is required to create art – and for the woman artist, her ability to claim an artistic identity. Although prescribed female roles are changing, pervasive gender inequities remain that determine the parameters in which women can form identities and make art: Identity as an artist – how a person envisages, establishes and sustains an artistic identity; identity as a mental patient – how a person forms this and how societal forces conspire to maintain it, and in particular how pervasive and persuasive this identity can be in terms of swamping possibilities for other aspects of self. Thus identities and the idea of fluid identities seemed particularly salient to explore and capture in this research and demanded an ontological and epistemological stance which allowed contemplation of webs of embodied identities.

Artistic practice as knowledge. There are experiential knowledges that are unable to be linguistically articulated, practical skills and practical knowledge, “this is often what women have and a knowledge which has not been privileged” (Longino, 2007, p. 548), as practical and untheorised knowledge is deemed inferior (Code, 1991). Often these types of knowledges are important to women who engage in artmaking (Oksala, 2004; Barrett, 2007) and we need to talk about the logic of practice and a space where partial, locatable and critical knowledge sustains and links all sorts of practices, including scientific and artistic practices. This emphasis on practice is vital to this research as the women who participated talked about their embodied creativity: lived corporeality. *We just do it.*

Further to this concept of experience as evidence – experience as practical knowledge – is the nature of perceptual and sensory experience, and its role in knowledge production. Many of the women in this study talk extensively about the sensory aspects of artmaking – albeit finding difficulty to express this experience to others. A number of women lamented the lack of language to describe this sensory knowledge but instead pointed to the activity of artmaking as a language in itself articulated via the body.

The artistic body: Lived space: I can/I can't orientation. Louise Bourgeois said “For me, sculpture is the body. My body is my sculpture” (Flug Colin, 1982, para. 3).

Finally, I think the artists in this study would also wish me to try to articulate their material or embodied reality; a reality independent and outside language and other

media and systems of signification. The postmodern turn to language does not appear adequate to encompass how I need to present the way women talked about their experiences of being a woman and producing art. They were often highly connected to their body and language was not always a primary form of communication. Art and artmaking require the kind of concrete, situated and materialist understanding of the body that postmodernism does not adequately address. Art is also a system of symbols, but art is produced through what de Beauvoir would articulate as a sexed body. This reinstatement of the body facilitates a move back to try to understand a concrete knowing without essentialising, which Iris Marion Young first explored in 1980 with her seminal essay called *Throwing like a girl*.

Young (1980; 2005) discussed modalities of the female body comportment, manner of moving and relations in space; physical engagement and ways of using the body to perform tasks and the *I can* or *I can't* orientation towards such tasks – *lived space*. This is an 'I can' therefore I am attitude rather than a Cartesian 'I think therefore I am' orientation. We may experience the world in terms of the 'I can', that is, oriented towards certain projects based on our capacity and habituality (Kruks, 2010). Young observed that while a man who throws a ball puts his whole body into the motion, a woman throwing a ball generally restricts her own movements as she makes them and that generally, in sports, women move in a more tentative, reactive way. Young's thesis is that for women, there is some sense that we are confined in space; intentionality is inhibited and ambivalent, rather than confident, and often experienced as an 'I cannot.' There is a restricted freedom in how women can use their bodies in space. Although she focussed on gross motor modalities, Young urges researchers to also consider fine motor movement events. Artmaking is one such area that combines gross and fine motor movement. This project explores these orientations 'I can' and 'I cannot' in relation to women and artmaking – *painting like a girl* – and interrogates the space available for a woman to create.

Lived body and lived space (corporeal and spatial knowing) is also a part of an emergent corporeal/material feminist theorising discussed in Chapter 4, where researchers such as Del Busso (2007), are concerned with topics of embodiment and, echoing Merleau-Ponty (1962/2010), have suggested that all knowledge is produced through bodies or from a specific way of being-embodied-in-the-world. According to de Beauvoir, a woman's body is not her destiny as it determines nothing in a causal sense, but "the body of a woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world" (1949/2011, p. 48).

Salient to this research then, is the strong indication I had from women in the interviews that they were highly connected to their bodies via their artmaking and that

this was crucial to their artmaking process – an embodied artistic process. The mind-body Cartesian split was anathema to many of the women in this research. The hand was an extension of their mind, or vice versa, not a separate entity which produced the images created by the mind. These women, who were engaged in using symbols as communication, were at the same time intimately connected to their bodies, producing their art from sexed bodies, not somewhere outside their bodies in a system of symbols and language.

To highlight the need to consider the place of the corporeal/material in artmaking, 2008 and 2013 Archibald Prize winner, Del Kathryn Barton had this to say when asked to discuss the figure, or body, in her practice.

I actually feel it's everything...I have a sense that the biggest secrets of the universe are 'discoverable' within our own bodies. I'm not a religious person but I do look for meaning in life and I need to feel that. These big questions come back to how we inhabit our bodies with integrity and love and truth. And how do we give honesty to the world through our bodies—that's what I'm exploring through my work.

I feel that I make works as an extension of who I am. Words are incredibly limited—I wish there was a word that encompassed 'being-ness' and 'sexuality' and 'emotion-ness' because that for me is a confluence of a body's life. (Craven, 2011, para. 11-12)

Seeking to Retrieve the Artistic Subject

As I have discussed, feminist research methodology and epistemology have developed over the 20th century with increasing sophistication (Le Grange, 2002) and, some would argue, with increasing inaccessibility (van der Tuin, 2009). However, there is little argument that the available feminist positions have become increasingly polarised. As I had begun this project in the mid-2000s, at the tail end of the flurry of postmodern feminist theorising and research, I felt caught between the political necessity of materialism and political action, and the priority given to discourse and deconstruction. Yet another dichotomous situation arose between believing in the possibility of a self and the possibility of being a woman and thereby rejecting social constructionism, or believing in the notion of self as constructed by discourse and thereby dissolving the self, the category of woman and the possibility of imagination and action. I remained committed to upholding the possibility that we, as humans, have concrete lived experiences as sexed bodies, and maintain a sense of agency – a sense that we could change ourselves and the world we live in – and on the other hand, I wanted to uphold a postmodernist respect for difference and inclusivity.

Epistemology to ontology. Kruks (2001) and Alaimo and Hekman (2008) acknowledge that postmodernism has been very productive in exposing the thinking that constructs women as inferior and subordinate. However, expectations that this would be the theoretical way forward for feminism have not been met. Longino (2007) comments that decentring and depoliticising everything down to the local and the particular, has the illusion of empowering women and crumpling the power base but instead it has fragmented groups who may have otherwise formed a collective action, leaving the power with those already at the centre. Research strategies are still limited to textual and discursive analyses and what can actually be concluded from the observation that something is socially constructed, and that if everything is constructed, can it be deconstructed ad infinitum (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Neuman, 1997)? There is no provision for political action or building theory or advocacy (Hekman, 2008; Heyes, 1997). Ultimately, postmodernism offers a critique of existing structures, not ways to create a new structure. Kruks (2001) and DeVault and Gross (2007) argue that despite postmodern critique, oppression has not ceased to exist and neither has woman, although we now emphasise that oppression has different impacts on different groups of women and inequities have diminished only for a select few women. Equally, presenting women's individual experiences as uncontested portrayals of the real world has not provided the theoretical way forward for feminism. "We share the view among many researchers that the dominant constructivist paradigm for social analysis can no longer address ways of thinking about global political economies" (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 6).

Jumping generations. Feminists such as Alcoff (2000), Del Busso (2007), DeVault and Gross (2007) and Hallstein and O'Brien (2000) suggest it is time to forgo the either/or choice feminists have had to make in the past when doing research and find a way to preserve postmodernism's respect for difference and inclusivity *and* uphold a critical and political perspective in which the significance of embodied existence is given due attention.

Gannon and Davies (2007) maintain that there are many discourses of feminism and we "need to be able to think contradictory thoughts simultaneously" (p. 100), facing the dilemmas inherent in the various feminist positions. Feminism in the 21st century now needs something that bridges the ideas of postmodernism but also maintains an agentic self. Braidotti (2002) urges that we need to be able to think of a new feminism where woman is not the Other of man, but "...a complex and multi-layered embodied subject who has taken her distance from the institution of femininity...a subject in process" (p. 11).

This notion of bridging is advocated by Iris van der Tuin (2009) who urges us to resist the progression narrative, predicated on the negation of previous theory (this is what happened to de Beauvoir's work) and which is prevalent in much of our current obsession, particularly in political and economic discourse, to always be moving forward. She argues that this merely positions us to choose between alternatives by denying any previous validity of either position and suggests we must *Jump Generations*, moving backwards and forwards and, as King (2010) also urges researchers, to "think sideways" (p. 259) in order to harvest all the lessons of previous feminist thinkers, researchers and activists, and in doing so acknowledge the relation between epistemology and ontology.

To explore an emergent set of theories called materialist feminism or corporeal feminism, I must first revisit Simone de Beauvoir to forge a pathway to theorise the artistic subject, and think about consciousness, the body, the sexing of the subject and about agency and its limits, as well as acknowledge a concern for social responsibility. These are all compatible with this project about women and creativity and wellbeing, expression and self-portrayal, and embodiment as a female artist. Thus, I wish to find a way to rectify and use these concepts without discarding all that has been revealed by postmodern theory about power and discursive effects. Equally, recognising the limitations of experience, I needed to reach further than epistemological dilemmas alone and include ontological understandings of the self and ways of being in the world before I could begin to find a path to explicate this research. And this need again came strongly from the women I spoke with about artmaking. "*It's a way of being.*" "*It's who I am.*"

"...creativity...is not a vague escape from reality but the only possible engagement with it" (Cullingford, 2005, cited in Weilgosz & Imms, 2007, p. 54).

Chapter 3: Sketching Back in the Outline of Woman. With a Margin of Freedom – A Space to Create

In the *Second Sex*, de Beauvoir (1949/2011) asks, “If the female function is not enough to define woman, and if we also reject the explanation of the ‘eternal feminine,’ but if we accept, even temporarily, that there are women on the earth, we then have to ask: What is a woman?” (pp. 4-5).

Like so many other creative women associated with famous creative men (Joy Hester, Frida Kahlo, Dora Maar, Camille Claudel, Zelda Fitzgerald), de Beauvoir’s achievements were eclipsed by men she associated with in the French existentialist movement, such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, who wrote philosophy while she was often considered a novelist only (Fullbrook, 1999; Vintges, 1999). Such distinctions reinforce the idea that only men can truly be knowers or philosophers, so along with the question *What is a woman?* come the allied questions of *what can a woman know* and, importantly for this research, echoing Iris Marion Young, *what can a woman do or make?* Revisiting de Beauvoir has offered a way for this project to climb out of the quicksand between contemporary feminist polemics.

To deny that women share any commonalities is absurd and what feminists seek is a framework that assumes that women’s experiences are gendered but that no two women’s subjective meaning of an experience can be identical (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). At the end of the 20th century, in search of such a framework and frustrated by the state of feminist debate, a number of feminist philosophers began to revisit de Beauvoir’s work. In particular the work of Moi (1999) *What is a Woman?*, Kruks (2001) *Retrieving Experience* and serendipitously, the first unabridged English translation of *The Second Sex*, published in 2011, have been prominent sources. This revisiting constitutes a jumping backwards, that Van der Tuin (2009) has suggested is necessary to enable feminist thought and research to flourish in the 21st century – or as Moi has articulated, to steer a course between “the Scylla of empiricism as well as the Charybdis of idealism” (1999, p. 83).

The original translation of *The Second Sex* in 1953 has been criticised by many (Kruks, 2001, 2010; Le Doeuff, 2006; Moi, 1999, 2008) as containing flaws, such as the accuracy of crucial terms used in relation to the sex-gender distinction and to experience. De Beauvoir attested that she based her understanding of women’s situation on descriptions of women’s everyday lived experience, “Philosophy is for me a lived reality” (Simons, 1989, p. 13). Moi (1999) claims that de Beauvoir’s work is valuable because it starts from an ordinary understanding of what a woman is “to grasp the complexity of women’s concrete everyday concerns” (p. 9) – the lived reality that de Beauvoir defined as philosophy.

Revisiting the Second Sex to Retrieve an Embodied Woman

Chisholm (2008) argues that feminist research needs to “restore the centrality of the lived body that de Beauvoir gave it in *The Second Sex*” (p. 3) and “Beauvoir’s existentialist phenomenological approach will provide exactly what contemporary feminists need: non-essentialist, material, historical understanding of the body from a vantage point outside the exhausted categories of identity and difference” (Moi, 1999, p. viii).

De Beauvoir was grounded in existentialism and phenomenology. Heinämaa (1997) describes phenomenology as the study of experience and its meanings. However, unlike traditional phenomenology – seeking to know the essence of the phenomenon, feminist phenomenology rejects the idea of essence – there is no essence just existence. This is consistent with the theories of existentialism which question how we live our lives and the meaning of human existence – how we exist – emphasising freedom and choice. Heinämaa (1997) and Kruks (2001) stress that de Beauvoir’s philosophy is one of the embodied subject, not the disembodied rational, unified and free subject of Cartesian liberal self-philosophy, nor Sartre’s being for itself. De Beauvoir’s existential embodied subject is situated – a body subject entwined with the world, so the subject is not conceived as having acts of free will, but bodily postures or attitudes taken in specific situations. It is what de Beauvoir called a contingent subject with styles of being who has projects in the world – certain orientations. Hence, revisiting Beauvoir requires a retrieval of an embodied and situated subject woman and examination of the questions that swirl around her ability to enact freedom or agency, and in particular for this project, exploring the margins in which a woman is free to create.

Kruks (2001) argues that de Beauvoir offers an important theory of the embodied, sexually different human being – a resource for conceptualising a nuanced and contoured human with the concept of ‘body as a situation’. Sexuality and gender and the body and consciousness are interconnected, “an intersection between the biological and the social without replicating a binary of thought and flesh” (McNay, 1991, p. 129). To be a woman is to have become a woman. For de Beauvoir (1949/2011), “Woman is not a fixed reality but a becoming” (p. 45). “...it is never possible to close the books” (p.46). Heinämaa (1997) proposes that the infamous line extracted from *The Second Sex*, “one is not born, but becomes a woman” has been misinterpreted as a process of socialisation as conceptualised from a Western perspective. Becoming, is however, not the same as socialisation. The body as a situation “allows us to move beyond the divisions of sex and gender, biology and constructionism and nature and culture” (Kruks, 2010, p. 263), facilitating a

consideration of corporeal reality of the body with subjectivity. “The human body is neither sex nor gender, neither nature nor culture” (Moi, 1999, p. 114). Feminist philosophers such as Moi and Kruks wish to create a highly historicised and concrete understanding of woman without relying on a sex-gender distinction, and reinstate an embodied woman with “the concrete, historical body that loves, suffers, and dies” (Moi, 1999, p. 49) – and sculpts!

Researchers and theorists now need to find ways to contextualise broad categories like experience and woman to be able to use them provisionally, or as working foundational categories to prevent a theoretical paralysis occurring (Ferguson, 1997; Kruks, 2001). Just as Morgan (2005) is looking for ways to bring back the body, without reinstating troublesome binaries, Moi (1999) argues for a feminism that is able to use plain language to discuss and address the issues women face in different situations. She cites Wittgenstein’s simple phrase, “The meaning of the word is its use in language” (p. 7). In the most ordinary everyday sense, to be interested in the use of the word woman and understanding what it means to be a woman is not a project of essentialism. Language in everyday use, where concepts have a range of meanings, and rather than an essential core, they are like clusters which change their meanings in different historical and institutionalised contexts. Moi argues that “when thought of in this sense we can make decisions on whether the word woman is being used in an essentialising or non-essentialising way” (p. 28).

Retrieving woman. One of the most influential arguments against restoring this embodied woman is presented by Elizabeth Spelman (1990) in *Inessential Woman*. Mikkola (2006) understands Spelman to mean that women cannot share womanness since womanness is socially constructed and social construction differs from one society to the next. This is why it is so difficult to theorise womanness. However, Mikkola disagrees with Spelman’s argument that because gender is inseparable from race and class and defined in conjunction with other aspects of identity, individual women do not share a womanness (p. 85). “The two claims—that women share the same feature of womanness and that they experience this feature differently from one another—are perfectly compatible” (p. 86). She stresses that gender is not individual, in that women may experience their social positions in any number of different ways and these social positions may affect and shape their identities as women in numerous different ways. As womanness is not defined as an identity of individuals it is not essentialising.

Mikkola also considers the complexity of womanness, saying that there is an assumption that complex entities can be broken down into simple parts and thereby explained. The task is to isolate necessary parts of womanness so that this will tell us

something about what it is to be a woman and what all women have in common. However, congruent with chaos and complexity theory, she asks what if “Women may simply have an extremely complex and, thus, unanalyzable feature of womanness in common that makes them women insofar as this is the case, no necessary and sufficient conditions of womanness can be discerned” (p. 92).

So it is not necessary to reject a realist (generalist) view of gender. We do not have to define her for her to exist and de Beauvoir recognised this point when stating that “in her heart, she is indefinable for herself: a sphinx” (1949/2011, p. 270). McLeod (2009) observes that for de Beauvoir the subject is always in a situation and this is how the subject is formed and continues to form. I am a woman. I exist. I am becoming. “For Beauvoir women exist...” (Moi, 1999, p. 76).

Retrieving the lived body. Heinämaa (1997) argues that to consider lived experience we cannot separate the mental from the physical or the natural from the cultural. The postmodern retreat from the material has ignored attention to lived, material bodies and evolving corporeal practices, such as artistic practices, and Hawkesworth (2007) argues that the situatedness of knowers, the socio-political-historical context, must now also incorporate embodied experience – the material. Kruks (2001) reads de Beauvoir as saying that we don’t just have bodies; we are bodies and we are in the world via our bodies. We have a sense that we are three dimensional. But women are never just women; they are situated also as members of a class, ethnic grouping, sexual orientation, age and so on, which encompass multi-dimensional relations of power. Although these intersections have been emphasised in feminist identity politics this is frequently without reference to the body as another situation.

De Beauvoir (1949/2011) says “the body is not a thing, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and the outline for our projects” (p. 46). Further, Moi (1999) argues “if the body is understood as a situation in its own right, the body as part of lived experience is a style of being, an intonation, and a specific way of being present in the world which encompasses both objective and subjective aspects of experience” (p. 68). The body is one of the vital elements of her situation in the world but it is not enough to define her and it cannot be divided into a natural part and a cultural part. So “Beauvoir considers that only the study of concrete cases – of lived experience – will tell us exactly what it means to be a woman in a given context” (p. 76).

“The body is the basis of my experience of myself and of the world. A situation that always penetrates my lived experience and the body is the medium for having a world. Lived experiences cemented over time through my interactions with the world become part of my situatedness” (Moi, p. 63). Being born a female begins a process

which has specific but unforeseeable consequences – “Each woman makes something out of what the world makes out of her” (Moi, 1999, p. 82) and the relationship between one’s body and one’s subjectivity is contingent – a becoming with possibilities to contemplate what you may become, not just what you have been and similarly what the world you live in may become. Our bodies are the starting points for our actions and practices – the lived body. *We are what we do.*

Styles of being. “Because the body is the instrument of our hold on the world, the world appears different to us depending on how it is grasped...” (de Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 44).

Moi (1999) explains that de Beauvoir looks at how a self emerges over time that has predispositions, habits and tendencies that are not strictly contingent or strictly necessary. A personal style or way of being in the world emerges both as an effect of past performances and as an outline of our projects. Heinämaa (1997) surmises that a style is dynamic and not a set of fixed qualities. It is not a collection of actions but a way of acting, dancing, throwing, laughing – or sketching.

Kruks (2001) believes de Beauvoir developed a theory of an embodied consciousness which is always situated, and where evaluations are always anchored and limited by the sensory and physical capacities of the body. “The body is not seen as an object distinct from consciousness. It is the site of forms of sentient knowing” (p. 330) via perception, and sensory experiences such as touch. This is not a body as a passive recipient of information but one which actively organises the world in accordance with its particular orientation, capacities and projects (see Chapter 13).

Retrieving experience. For Oksala (2004), retrieving experience does not mean a return to a “foundational or mute and original female experience grounded in the commonalities of women’s embodiment” (p. 101), but experience as an event that can never be completely defined or articulated, remaining open to contest. Kruks (2001) also concedes that language is never a neutral medium by which we capture previously unvoiced experience. Experience is altered when spoken about, although the costs of reducing experience to a linguistic creation alone are high. Kruks argues that personhood then becomes merely an attribute of linguistic competency and is denied to the inarticulate, silent or silenced, creating further marginalisation of vulnerable groups.

Longino (2007) contends that a strategy of oppressed groups has been to share narratives and produce a collective critical interrogation of experience and how it is lived. She also points out that Scott’s (1991) theory, which negates the validity of experience as a feminist research tool, delegitimises members of oppressed groups as sources of authority about their lives. This would in fact serve to reinforce oppressive

conditions and create what Fricker (2007) calls testimonial injustice or epistemic insult, when a person's word, and thereby their experience, receives deflated credibility. Being discouraged or prevented from passing on knowledge, breaches the respect for, and the dignity of, the person specifically undermining their capacity as a knower and as a giver of knowledge. Similar to Foucault's theories of subjugated knowledges (1988), this resonates with the exclusion of women who have had an experience of mental ill-health from research projects, a scenario which has only begun to change in the last decade (see Chapter 5: Methodology), and underlines the potential for silencing which is implicit in the postmodern suspicion of experience and of 'woman'.

Experience and becoming. According to Fisher (2000), de Beauvoir attempted to articulate the tension between generality and specificity, and "takes the perspective of the individual subjectivity and elaborates the immediacy, particularity and intensity of (my) experience as a subject. The unique subject-generalised" (p. 28). She maintains that a generalised account need not be universalising or an absolute sense of the generic. But it can be understood rather as "a thread of invariance" (p. 28). Bergoffen (2008) agrees that the general does not necessarily denote universalism, or that a particular example is irretrievably singular. The proposition of an experience being irretrievably singular because of a particular subject position leaves no room for empathic connections or the notion of lived relationality.

In her ethics of ambiguity, Vintges (1999) champions de Beauvoir's view that universal laws cannot exist, but the concrete existence of the situated human being can be a locus for a moral dimension and a basis for action. For it suggests a way out of the impasse initiated by postmodernism's insistence on the fragmented subject and standpoint's need for a unified agentic political body. In de Beauvoir's situated body we do not need to be, indeed are incapable of being, an essentialised woman as we are always in a process of becoming, but equally we are all situated contingently, capable of rowing the same boat towards a unified action (Morgan, 2009; Vintges, 1999).

Retrieving an Agentic Self: Freedom in Constraint

Alcoff (2000) urges feminists to continue to question how far it is possible to intend resistance and how we should consciously chose to resist systems of power? In this case we need to examine the existentialist emphasis on free will with which de Beauvoir has been incorrectly associated. Freedom for de Beauvoir was always contingent, situated and marginal – not absolute or arbitrary. Oppression is never natural, it is made between humans (Linsenbard, 1999).

Kruks (2001) argues that we need to have an account of the subject which incorporates notions of *freedom in constraint*. "Beauvoir's account of embodied subjectivity does not overemphasise the autonomy of the subject but pays attention to

embodiment and the power of circumstance – a socially imbued and hence gendered subjectivity which is not always capable of freedom” (p. 13). De Beauvoir enables us to think about gender as both socially produced and yet actively and individually assumed. As one becomes a woman, there is a notion of constrained or situated freedom. Simons (1989) encapsulates de Beauvoir’s thoughts on freedom, “choices are always made in a certain situation and starting from the same situation, one can chose this or that...the choice itself of course depends on a number of things...” (p. 16).

According to Moi (1999), de Beauvoir’s situated freedom in constraint can be understood on two levels – practically and ontologically. Humans are free practically (socially or politically) only with respect to the political, social, economic, and cultural conditions prevailing at the time. We are situated in the world with others who may severely limit, restrain or completely remove our practical freedom. Human rights are abused. However, de Beauvoir emphasises that no matter how suppressed our practical freedom is, there are margins in which we remain ontologically free. As Kruks (2001) points out, de Beauvoir envisages degrees or gradations of freedom – so some are freer than others – but even in extreme oppression, where all practical freedom is entirely suppressed, ontological freedom cannot be eliminated; severely constrained but not eliminated. Ontological freedom is the freedom to interpret or adopt an attitude or perspective about one’s situation and to choose between at least two possibilities towards one’s interpreted situation. Linsenbard (1999) explains that no situation can completely determine how I will interpret that situation and what project I will form in relation to that interpretation, or how I will carry out that project. Women may currently have fewer possibilities than men but that is different from having no possibilities. If humans are ontologically free they can be oppressed and resist oppression; because we exist in a world among others who attempt to constrain our freedom and diminish our human existence, freedom is contingent, but we do not have to abandon the possibility of achieving the freedom to have a self and the freedom to create.

Grosz (2010) illustrates this point in relation to creative practice, arguing that the freedom to create, make or produce is a luxury that can only be obtained with a certain level of absence of constraint. However, “no matter what the extreme...the human capacity for finding a small space for innovation which is not simply reaction is remarkable. Minor and hidden arts have flourished in such circumstances, so whilst they still require a freedom from they have also shown a striking freedom to” (p. 154). Examples include Viktor Frankl, Austrian psychiatrist and holocaust survivor, who, during his incarceration, wrote on pieces of paper he then sewed into his clothes. Or art created in psychiatric hospitals formed from any materials available such as Karl Brendel’s chewed bread sculptures in the Prinzhorn Collection (Peiry, 2001), etchings

in cupboard doors and cigarette burnings on toilet paper in the CDC. Grosz's notion of *freedom to* is discussed further in Chapter 4 as an important theory for feminism and for artistic practice.

Margins of freedom: Taking action. Ferguson (1997) presents her own version of an engaged social agent valuing social justice, who asks in what sense am I responsible for systemic injustices and what can I do to change these injustices? However, Kruks (2001) contends that such an agent has been forgotten as feminism has retreated from liberation and freedom as values worthy of consideration, partly because women can no longer speak as a united group. Kruks argues that being a woman is not an identity that an 'inner self' can either pick up or discard at will. It is not a strategy or a discursive effect because it is interiorised and taken up in ways that are constrained and at the same time indeterminate. For feminism, this is the margin of freedom which enables action to alter institutional oppression and individual complicity in subordinating practices. Kruks maintains that emancipatory projects imply ethics and responsibility within these margins of freedom. Linsenbard (1999) asserts that revisiting de Beauvoir enables us to uphold and champion human rights and to justify moral action against human rights abuses by considering ontological freedom. For de Beauvoir, the ontological question concerning the meaning of human existence is not removed from the question of lived human experience and the body as lived experience. So an "investigation of women's rights as human rights must consider the meaning of human experience as lived experience, as embodied subjects, and what this means for human obligation, responsibility, worth, dignity, wellbeing and flourishing" (Linsenbard, 1999, p. 147) – and creativity.

De Beauvoir Provides a Bridge

Revisiting de Beauvoir is a bridging exercise and one that enables this project to conceive of an embodied woman with a degree of freedom to act in the world as the world acts upon her, with a margin of space to create. However, while Kruks (2010) commends de Beauvoir's work for the ability to bridge the reductive excesses that spring from the poststructuralist death of the subject and the equally reductive biological essentialism, she also notes "epistemological obstacles to de Beauvoir's thinking, derived from existentialism, that lead to an excessive focus on individual rather than collective liberation and a neglect of the exploitation of women" (p. 123). Similarly, Fisher (2000) acknowledges limitations with de Beauvoir's thinking derived from phenomenology. While this philosophy begins to address the specificity of the lived sexed body, it maintains a focus on the individual experience. For Kruks (2001), the commonalities of embodiment are not limited to spatial and temporal dimensions, but suggest a relation to others that does not have to be always conflictual or

threatening, recognising that others possess sensory fields like mine which I am in communication with. The “body subject” is not only situated spatially and temporally, but also socially (p. 14). Richardson and Harper (2006) argue that simply centralising the role of the body is in itself still problematic for feminism, without sufficient consideration being given to how embodiment is lived out in its specificity within relational networks – lived relationality – and for how art is made within communities of practice.

What de Beauvoir does not cover sufficiently for this project then is the woman in community, or as Lloyd and Gatens (James, 2000) discuss, what Spinoza calls the ‘body in relation’ that takes the focus of philosophical thought from the homogeneous subject to the heterogeneity of the social, and the focus of politics from individual rights to collective responsibility. What is also missing is an adequate exploration of temporality and spatiality – lived time and lived space – dimensions reported as particularly pertinent to artmaking by the participants in this research. Fisher (2000) is also interested in these four dimensions of human experience: Lived body (corporeality); Lived space (spatiality); Lived time (temporality); and Lived relationships (relationality). Contemplating lived experience via these dimensions (Lived body, space, time and relations) and how they intra-act, is explored in detail in Chapter 4, and creates a scaffold around how the research interviews are curated and presented to begin to understand the artist’s project in the world.

Fonow and Cook (2005) note that detailed methodological discussions of the ontological and epistemological shift from the *body as object* to the *body in relation to the material realm* are just beginning to emerge and the parameters are thus far vague, with emerging feminist theorists now asking how can we rethink the materiality of human corporeality and talk about the body, not just as a situation, but as itself an active force (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008)? Theorists, such as the feminist quantum physicist, Barad, and the feminist philosopher, Braidotti, are interested in theories and technologies where nature and culture interact and they reject yet another binary, that of epistemology and ontology, in favour of moving towards “onto-epistem-ology” – the study of practices of knowing (Hekman, 2008, p. 103). The move is one which views subjectivity as a complex and open-ended set of relations and situations, thus echoing de Beauvoir, but moving beyond by exploring multiple dimensions (space-time-matter) in relation.

Chapter 4: Out of the Quicksand: Emergent Corporeal or Neo-material Feminisms

In 2010 Coole and Frost introduced their anthology, *New materialisms: Ontology, agency and politics*, with:

...our existence depends from one moment to the next on myriad micro-organisms and diverse higher species, on our own hazily understood bodily and cellular reactions and on pitiless cosmic motions, on the material artefacts and natural stuff that populate our environment, as well as socioeconomic structures that produce and reproduce the conditions of our everyday lives. (p. 1)

When van der Tuin (2009) asks 'What does the new materialist conversation consist of?', Karen Barad may reply that language has been given too much power and that she is not only interested in the ways in which the postmodernists theorise 'how *discourse* comes to matter' but also in the new materialist question 'how *matter* comes to matter' (2008, p. 129) and for this thesis, I am interested in how *artmaking* comes to matter. In 2008, Alaimo and Hekman compiled an anthology called *Material Feminisms* aiming to "bring the material, specifically the materiality of the body and the natural world, into the forefront of feminist theory and practice" (p. 1).

Elizabeth Grosz and Moira Gatens (Dodds, 2010) also seek to understand the ethical significance of being, perceiving and theorising the world in and through human embodiment, exploring what 'lived bodily experience' means for being people and how we understand our ethical responses to one another – embedding the individual in community with attention to Lived body, Lived space, Lived time and Lived relations. Alaimo (2008) positions ontology as not just about the study of being, but also about the underlying beliefs about existence that shape everyday relations to self, others and the world. It encapsulates how we "articulate the meaning of our lives both individually and collectively and how we negotiate these issues in an increasingly complex interplay of technological changes, genetic modifications, climate change, virtual worlds, militarisation and global capital politics" (p. 239).

As van der Tuin (2009) explains, a feminist materialism framework neither refutes nor affirms the previous achievements or paradoxes that feminisms have espoused in theory or practice, connecting, in a non-dialectical relation, empiricist and postmodern feminism, and sharing characteristics with feminist standpoint theory, while being non-identical to it. So across and between, aligning but not attempting to synthesise, feminist epistemological classes come together to form a new approach called materialist feminism (Hemmings, 2009). Rosi Braidotti (2005) has claimed that "feminist philosophers have invented a new brand of materialism, (also known as corporeal feminism) of the embodied and embedded kind" (p. 177) or a "re-setting of the agenda with micro-investigations of 'life itself'" (p. 178). This is not the same as

materialistic feminism based on Marxist feminism, but is a series of “innovative theories that combine social construction with an understanding of the ontology and agency of the material world” (p. 5). The material and the discursive cannot be separated. “...a quest for...reconnecting life and thought...it is a joint commitment to re-thinking selfhood as an intensive, multiple and discontinuous process of interrelations” (Braidotti, 2002, p. 69).

Braidotti's notions of *figuration*, or the non-unitary multilayered nomadic subject engaged in processes not concepts, prove useful to this thesis in conceiving of a nomadic artistic subject capable of thinking of *as if*. Together with Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), I will explore the notion of what it means to be enmeshed in the world, which will then lead to an examination of Elizabeth Grosz's thoughts about *Feminism, materialism and freedom* (2010). In order to think about and research creativity diffractively, the following discussion challenges the theory of representation and the information processing model and follows the notion of entangled intra-action, considering humans as embodied brains and thinking bodies.

Making Matter Matter

Coole and Frost (2010) insist the turn to the material cannot be without problematising the notion that matter or material experience is naively representational or naturalistic, and requires a reappraisal of “questions about the nature of matter and the place of embodied humans within a material world” (p. 3). Alaimo (2008) recognises that there are implications of moving towards materiality and placing the body in a central position, even when researchers don't underestimate the power of social and political forces. How can we talk about these bodies and the materiality they inhabit without reverting to biological destiny? She proposes transcorporeality which makes humans inseparable from the environment; reciprocal.

Coole and Frost (2010) also consider whether matter itself can be conceived as lively and exhibit agency? Bio-political and bio-ethical questions around the status of life and the human arise if materialism is conceived as a complex, pluralistic, relatively open process and humans are immersed within materiality's productive contingencies. They assert that with “New Materialism embodied humans are an active and integral part of all matter including nonhuman. Materiality is always something more than mere matter...an excess, force, vitality, relationally, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive and unpredictable” (p. 9). Bodies are now viewed as complex and ever-transforming, which exhibit active responses to change and contingency. The human is enmeshed and it is not possible to conceive of nature or the environment as a passive background for the exploits of the human or the body as a blank slate waiting

for the inscription of culture. The environment is not an inert, empty space or a resource for human use and industrial production. Humans adapt to environmental conditions but when they alter their surroundings, nature responds in ecological changes, "...reality...is agentic. It pushes back, it effects the result" (Hekman, 2008, p. 112).

Matter becomes. Expanding on de Beauvoir, Coole and Frost (2010) go on to discuss the view that Matter becomes rather than Matter is. "Cosmic forces assembling and disintegrating, objects forming and emerging within relational field, bodies composing their environments in ways that are meaningful to them and subjectivities being constituted as an open series of capacities that emerge ambiguously within a multitude of organic and social processes" (p. 10). Such ideas are consistent with current theories of particle physics which have also changed regarding how the composition of matter is viewed. Physicists and philosophers are no longer talking about substances and predictable states but forces, energies and intensities in complex, random processes. Coole and Frost (2010) assert that chaos and complexity theories transform ideas about how matter moves and these theories create a context for contemplating a diffractive methodology. Underlining these theories are the assumptions that the natural environment is far more unstable, complex, fragile and interactive than once thought. It is thought that there is a relationship of acting on and becoming rather than being. There is a continuous redefining and reassembling of key elements that allow systems to continually evolve into new and unexpected forms (see also Alaimo, 2008; Barad, 2007).

Rethinking the Body (Corporeality) as Entangled Existence

To reconsider the body it is necessary to think of enmeshed embodiment and embodied experience, locating the body as a primary source of knowing the world. Where conscious and awake thinking modes have been privileged, the human body is viewed as a passive receptor and active calculator of sense data, but the role of the body has been underplayed in creativity and imagination (see Chapter 13). Barad (2007) discusses Haraway's view of optical systems and argues that all eyes are not passive but are active perceptual systems. Braidotti (2011) reconfigures the body as being actively and continually in touch with its surroundings, entangled in existence and genuinely experiencing rather than merely recording. With a unique sensitivity to its environment, the body as a sensor, is "an integrated site of information networks...a messenger from thousands of communications systems, cardiovascular, respiratory, visual, acoustic, tactile, olfactory, hormonal, psychic, emotional, erotic, etc. etc." (p. 63). This resonates with what many of the women in this research told me about how they experienced the world and then how they engaged in artmaking – an active

participation. "...not fixed but continually emerging out of an ever changing relation to the world, sky, ocean, earth, other bodies, objects, sensory experiences and tasks" (p. 62) – tasks like artmaking.

The body is not in opposition to mind, spirit or reason (Lloyd, 1984); everything is both natural and manufactured. Spinoza's *mind as the idea of the body* enables a reconceptualisation of the imaginary and the possibility of a sociability of inclusion (James, 2000). When one imagines, when one has inadequate knowledge, this isn't just a matter of something in your head, but is actually something to do with your body. So, for example, depression is a way of knowing something; joy is a way of knowing something. These kinds of knowledge are thoroughly embodied. "To know is not simply to have something happening in your brain. It is to exist in a different way than the way you existed before you knew that thing" (James, 2000, p. 57). Living bodily sensation has to be experienced not just thought about and Kirby (2008) wants to conceive of a thinking body "...the body is thinking material" (p. 221) – an entangled existence.

Agency and Entanglement: Agential Realism

But how are we entangled in existence? Barad talks about intra-actions between phenomena that are material, discursive, human, nonhuman, corporeal and technological, without privileging one over the other and brings this together to understand ways to make matter matter. This is the basis of her theory of agential realism and how she maintains we are of the world not in the world.

It is through specific intra-actions that a differential sense of being is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency. That is, it is through specific intra-actions that phenomena come to matter—in both senses of the word. This ongoing flow of agency through which "part" of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another "part" of the world and through which local causal structures, boundaries, and properties are stabilized and destabilized does not take place in space and time but in the making of spacetime itself....Meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words... 'Humans' are neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming'. (Barad, 2008, pp. 135-136)

"Indeed, it is through such practices that the differential boundaries between "humans" and "nonhumans," "culture" and "nature," the "social" and the "scientific" are constituted. Phenomena are constitutive of reality. Reality is not composed of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but "things"-in-phenomena" (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008, p. 5).

Barad (2008), like de Beauvoir, believes we are always becoming and "practices of knowing and being are not isolatable, but rather they are mutually

implicated. We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because 'we' are *of* the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming (p. 147). "We are of the universe—there is no inside, no outside. There is only intra-acting from within and as part of the world in its becoming" (Barad, 2007, p. 396).

Agency as what we do – not something we have. Barad (2008) asks what possibilities exist for agency, for intervening in the world's becoming, and how do the issues of responsibility and accountability remain prominent? Materiality disrupts agency as the property of a discrete, self-knowing subject and relocates it within a complex relational field because the human is acknowledged as having effects on the social, political and environmental situations and vice versa. Bodies communicate with other bodies and there is a need to acknowledge how discursive and material forms are inextricable yet irreducible (Coole & Frost, 2010). Society is simultaneously materially real and socially constructed. Material lives are always culturally mediated but they are not only cultural. Thus, Barad says the space of agency is much larger than that postulated by former theories and the concept of collective agency is reinstated and is pulsating with potential. Barad (2008) summarises her theory

...the universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming. The primary ontological units are not 'things' but phenomena—dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations. And the primary semantic units are not 'words' but material-discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted. This dynamism *is* agency (p. 135)...agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has...— it is 'doing'/'being' in its intra-activity ...Particular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world's becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering. (p. 144)

Questioning Representation

Vision is ubiquitous as the dominant sense of our times (Heywood & Sandywell, 1999), and "...both art and aesthetics reside in the generative tension between sight and insight" (Davey, 1999, p. 3). Predominantly, theories of art, creativity and expression are predicated on the idea that human consciousness resides in the cranium in the brain, ignoring the body and the world the body resides within. These theories are based on a representationalist view of the world, the painter, the object and the painting, and on explaining the gaps between them – what is represented, who is doing the representation. But what if there is in fact no gap? The particular painting could not have been painted before and cannot be painted again – every meeting matters. What if it is impossible to separate the thing that thinks from the thing that is

thought about, and equally if an art work cannot be thought of as existing independently of the artist conceiving it. As Barad (2008) has argued, *both* traditionally realist approaches to science (mirror of nature) and social constructivist ones (mirror of culture) pursue a correspondence theory of truth based on representationalism – a theory of reflection. “What compels the belief that we have a direct access to cultural representations and their content that we lack toward the things represented...the representationalist belief in the power of words to mirror pre-existing phenomena is the metaphysical substrate that supports social constructivist, as well as traditional realist, beliefs” (2008, p. 121).

Barad’s (2008) theory of agential realism and applying a diffractive methodology to the idea of creativity presents a direct challenge to the metaphysical underpinnings of representationalism. As representation is a key area of debate in art theory and particularly feminist art and aesthetic theory, Barad’s theory is highly salient to this project. By questioning the very nature of representation, Barad provides an innovative theory which challenges language as an adequate basis for all views of representation and moves towards what Spinoza and Braidotti are seeking in an adequate understanding. A mediated world, which Barad argues has hindered taking account of the material world, whether via the lens of consciousness, language, culture, technology or art – holds nature at bay in “a metaphysical quarantining of the object world” (Barad, 2007, p. 374).

Barad (2008) goes on to explain:

...there are two distinct and independent kinds of entities—representations and entities to be represented. The system of representation is sometimes explicitly theorized in terms of a tripartite arrangement. For example, in addition to knowledge (i.e., representations), on the one hand, and the known (i.e., that which is purportedly represented), on the other, the existence of a knower (i.e., someone who does the representing) is sometimes made explicit. When this happens it becomes clear that representations serve a mediating function between independently existing entities. This taken-for-granted ontological gap generates questions of the accuracy of representations. For example, does language accurately represent its referent? (p. 123)

Barad (2007) dissolves the presence of a mediator (theory, words, thoughts) between the object and the subject and in doing so removes the need to prioritise either the immediate givenness of materiality or the social constructionist discursiveness of the world. Barad thinks diffractively; she asks readers to imagine a spectrum of difference instead of a reflection of sameness or difference by representation. There is no mediator between knowledge and the world. We are

involved in the world via intra-action between phenomena (p. 197). Barad's theory of corporeal materialism and diffraction avoids both the essentialised subject of empiricism and the subject fixed within a discursive net by positing "a fluid, ever-changing, becoming" subject with porous boundaries and "makes it possible to take the empirical world seriously once again, but this time with the understanding that the objective referent is phenomena, not the seeming 'immediately given-ness' of the world" (p. 141). Thus, diffraction, not representation, forms the theoretical framework for this research.

Seeking Diffraction

Barad (2007) and van der Tuin (2011) acknowledge Donna Haraway as the first feminist thinker to propose diffraction as an alternative metaphor to the perennial metaphor of reflection employed to theorise knowledge. Whereas reflection is about mirroring and sameness, diffraction is about attending to patterns of difference and overlaps. Reflections bounce back, diffractions pass around and through and create patterns of difference – "diffraction is not merely about differences in any absolute sense, but about the entangled nature of differences that matter" (Barad, 2007, p. 36). Reflection (and representationalism) offers an illusion of an essential fixed position but diffraction offers a more subtle vision and, as discussed, it disrupts the notion that representations and the objects that they intend to represent are independent of one another. The focus is shifted from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality – mirror of nature/culture – (or in the case of 'mad art' mirror of the soul) – "to matters of practices or doings or actions" (p. 28).

By explaining the physical phenomena of diffraction, Barad (2007) posits a question of methodology. Diffraction is a feature of wave behaviour – water, sound and light all exhibit diffraction and when diffraction involves light there is colour, a phenomenon that also greatly interests artists. Barad describes "the full display of its intricate patterns and reverberations with all the vibrancy, richness and vitality of this remarkable physical phenomenon" (p. 30), illustrated in everyday diffractive occurrences: waves combine as they overlap, spread out and bend when they encounter an obstacle like a pier; a pebble is skipped across a dam; oil spilt in a puddle; the iridescence of a spider's web. A diffractive methodology appears apt for a research project interested in artistic practice, and is also resonant with de Beauvoir's methodology of exploring and describing everyday experiences of lived lives.

However, Barad's methodology of diffraction is concerned with more than just human everyday experience, as it situates humans as being of the world, not in the world, and questions how time and space may operate. Diffraction, she says, holds "the key to dilemmas in quantum physics such as the wave-particle duality paradox"

(2007, p. 29). Traditional notions of physics theorised that only waves as disturbances could overlap at the same time to create diffraction patterns. Since it was believed that a particle could not be at the same space at the same time, particles could not form diffractive patterns. However, just as under some circumstances light will behave like a wave and in others like a particle, the same has been found to be so for particles – electrons. Quantum physics has revealed that particles *can* also create diffraction patterns, such as in the mother of pearl shell – embodied diffraction. Bohr’s indeterminacy principle is enacted, which challenges traditional notions of space and time and matter, going “to the heart of the nature of nature” (2007, p. 29).

Space/time/matter responds to states of ‘here’ and ‘there’ and ‘now’ and ‘then’ as mixtures of possibilities. When both light and matter can behave like a wave at times, and at other times behave like a particle, it is possible to be in the same place at the same time, resolving the space between object and subject and dissolving the notion of representation.

Nonetheless, Barad (2007) warns against misappropriating quantum physics in the name of using the authority of science to legitimise one’s view. She maintains that she is not trying to use an analogous methodology that pitches the atom as analogous to a human. But she wants to identify, examine, explicate and explore philosophical issues that quantum physics forces us to confront. She argues that researchers and theorists need to reassess the best practices from all social, political and physical theories to bring together the social and the natural and clarify the relationship between them. That is, not forcing them together and collapsing differences but allowing integral aspects to appear and “take account of *how* both these factors matter (not simply to recognize that they both do *matter*)” (p. 30).

The brittlestar. Barad (2007) employs the extraordinary sea creature, the brittlestar to illustrate the idea of diffraction and the porousness of the body in relation to the material world, and to question notions of ‘exterior’ and an ‘interior’, ‘human’ and ‘nature’, ‘mind’ and ‘body’, ‘art’ and ‘science’. The brittlestar builds up successive layers of calcite or micro patterned crystals as both optical apparatus and skeletal support. The many micro lenses on its body surface optimise light from one direction and appear to act as a compound eye. “Brittlestars don’t *have* eyes; they *are* eyes.” It has no lens as line of separation, “no mediator between the mind of the knowing subject and the materiality of the outside world.” It is a living optical system and “as an animal without a brain. There are no optics of mediation, no noumena and phenomena distinction, no questions of representation” (p. 375). For Barad, the brittlestar is not operating as a system of geometrical optics that has language and representation as

the lens that mediates between the object world and the mind of the knowing subject, or between the artist, artmaking and the audience.

The brittlestar also challenges notions of exteriority and interiority in other ways. With the ability to respond to danger by breaking off pieces of its body, which can wriggle and omit light after they have broken away, Barad (2007) wonders if this is a piece of the environment or an offspring? The brittlestar is constantly changing its geometry and topography, an ongoing reworking of its bodily boundaries. Such contemplation, she argues, also epitomises her agential realism theory, and that humans are not so unlike brittlestars for there is no position for our viewing that is located outside or apart from the world – there is no absolute outside or inside and the past and future are enfolded through one another, “Diffraction marks the limits of the determinacy and permanency of boundaries” (p. 381). So “differentiating is not about Othering, separating, but...about making connections and commitments” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, para. 39). Barad (2007) muses that this is true of electrons, brittlestars and humans. The brittlestar “literally enacts an agential realist onto-epistemological life of entangled practices of knowing and being” (p. 378).

Barad’s account of the world is to be wholly entangled. There are no separate domains for nature or culture, nonhuman and human, body and mind, epistemology and ontology and ethics. The nature of knowledge is the nature of being and vice versa. Knowing does not occur by standing at a distance and representing, but from a direct material engagement with the world. Not entwined, as this implies cohesion of separate things; not an interaction as this also implies a mixing of separate things. There are intra-actions and entanglements. Furthermore, the human body is not the natural and fixed dividing line between the external world and self-interiority. There is no outside world, we are of the world and in the world as “we are part of that nature we seek to understand” (Barad, 2007, p. 26); neither the subjects nor the objects of knowledge practices can be taken for granted. In other words, the methods, techniques or practices we use in research are part of the intra-actions which create the knowledge which is always becoming – not fixed. Barad’s diffractive methodology encompasses a universe in its becoming. Such thinking offers infinite possibilities for our lives in the future or, as de Beauvoir said in 1949, “The books are never closed”.

Ode to Athena: Reimagining Artistic Identity – Artistic Style of Being

What are the implications of working diffractively for the notion of claiming an artistic identity? Over the centuries, women have struggled to have their work taken seriously as art and have employed a number of strategies to pursue lives as artists. A significant part of this project encompasses how women related to the identities they spoke about in the interviews and in published sources.

To the ancient Greeks, personality was polyphrenic where people possessed many ways of seeing the world and did not possess one overriding identity, but comprised a multi-faceted orchestration of many selves – a homage to Athena, the patron of weaving and other crafts. “Metaphorically, we speak – or sing – ourselves as a chorus of voices, not just the tenor or soprano soloist” (Mishler, 2004, p. 8). In mental health, epistemological underpinnings persist which privilege the notion of monolithic aspects of ontology or ways of becoming and being human; or the monocular – having one way of seeing, and monophrenic – having one personality. This is particularly important for research with women who have experienced mental ill-health and the mental patient identity; women who have also had their stated experiences assessed, diagnosed, treated. These women have travelled through an inherently gendered health system, which still attributes behaviours to women within socially subscribed and sanctioned parameters and provides limited identity parameters (artist being generally outside the boundaries).

As “feminist scholars have begun to examine the complexities of multiple co-existing identities in women’s lives, and have demonstrated the need for an epistemological stance that captures the dynamic and changing quality of identity” (Ali, 2006, p. 345), concern rests with how to maintain a continuous or temporal self which is always becoming and can assume multiple projects both individually and collectively. A word of caution must be inserted here, for working with the idea of multiple identities is fraught in the area of mental ill-health due to some descriptions of the experience of psychosis being akin to fragmentation of the self or the problems posed by dissociative personality disorder. Frosh (2007) argues for the importance of maintaining the vision of a subject in fragments without adopting the extreme position in which fragmentation is celebrated. “The history of psychosis is as good a place as any to turn to for evidence that being broken into bits is not a subject position to be advocated” (p. 640). However, he also advocates maintaining a wariness of anything that moves us towards adhering to a single truth and the kinds of psychoanalytic approaches to research that find a set meaning in the data. This includes any “approaches to qualitative research that claim to see ‘underneath’ a narrative and deliver the true significance of what the subject is saying” (p. 641). A similar point can be made about how art created by people who have experienced mental ill-health has been framed and interpreted.

“What type of being is it that symbolises itself as *being*?” asks Colebrook (2000, p. 81) discussing Lloyd’s notion, that rather than thinking of identity as defined through the imposition of representation, the expression of identity is an activity of a particular being’s becoming. She also discusses how Gatens urges readers to consider how we

became what we are, not in order to live what we have become, but rather to consider the possibilities for what we may become. Vicki Kirby cited in Barad (2008) explains:

I'm trying to complicate the locatability of human identity as a here and now, an enclosed and finished product, a causal force upon Nature. Or even...as something within Nature. I don't want the human to be in Nature, as if Nature is a container. Identity is inherently unstable, differentiated, dispersed, and yet strangely coherent. (p. 146)

Rather than fragmentation and instability of the self, a number of writers are returning to webs and networks for thinking about identity (Ali, 2006; Elliott, 2005; Ferguson, 1997; Fine, 2010; González, 2008; Griffiths, 1995; Meyers, 2005; Mishler, 2004) or what Kruks (2001) and Moi (1999) call a subject of praxis – we are what we do, and what the women do in this project is make art.

Reimagining an artistic self. As Ellis and Flaherty (1992) warn, there is a fear about separating out the 'I' and the 'me', for the implications may be to install an internal observer, thereby locating women's distress as purely intra-psychic and thus dissolving the wider implications of social, discursive and material practices. Using the 'I' can thus indicate a private unitary core which does not change when the public 'me' takes on different positions. But who I am potentially shifts with each action or brush stroke. Taking this further, Barad (2007) argues that there is no inside and outside, 'I' is intimately entangled in the world. It is not separable from me or we or us or them. Barad proposes "that there are no singular causes, no individual agents of change and responsibility is not ours alone but entails ongoing responsiveness to self to other, to here and there to now and then; the full extent of the intra-connectedness of being. Everything is performative and has agency" (p. 391). Barad's agential realism means there is no discrete 'I' that precedes its actions. Each intra-action matters and each intra-action reconfigures the world in both what will be and what will be possible.

Echoing de Beauvoir's concept of projects in the world, there is an infrastructure of self and communities of practice in which identities operate (Griffiths, 1995; King, 2010; Stapleton, 2001). Self-definition comprises an 'I' which is relational, socially constructed and corporeally construed; an 'I' that is continually in flux – sculpting a self. The individual can only exist through the various communities of which she is a member. And identity is continually in a process of construction by those communities which are at the same time continually changing. Plurality is the norm – identity as process not the property of the individual.

For Barad (2007) identity formation "is a contingent and contested ongoing material process, identities are mutually constituted and reconfigured through one another in a dynamic intra-relationship. They are continually altering – everything is

always intra-acting into something else. Gender, class, community are constituted through one another, enfolded into and produced and threaded through one another” (p. 240). Alcoff (2005) also proposes, identity as being a “horizon of agency”, as “an opening out, a point from which to see” (p. 42). It is here that Braidotti’s (2011) nomadic subject, where self-definition relies upon the notion of an ever-shifting relation with human and nonhuman weaving in and out of space and time, becomes interesting for this project. The nomadic subject is in a constant state of “in process” or “becoming”, what Braidotti calls “as if”. Braidotti is not concerned with the exceptional qualities of genius, but rather the relationships between embodiment, technology, gender and human and nonhuman, and I suggest, perhaps how an artist may embody her culture. Indeed an ode to Athena.

Reimagining a Space to Create: Human Capabilities, Agency and Freedom in the 21st Century

Barad and Braidotti have opened up possibilities to envisage an artistic self again, but she still requires a space, with a degree of freedom, to create. Feminists continue to debate the equality versus equity in relation to human rights frameworks, with many favouring an equity focus where humans have access to what they need, not just what the existing dominant group currently has. Consistent with a feminist materialism, this approach refocuses to consider the actual material conditions in which women live day-to-day to provide a basis for assessing human rights.

Human rights to human capabilities. Some feminists have also argued for using a human capabilities model which considers human rights in terms of human capabilities and creating conditions where people are able to use these capabilities (MacKenzie, 2009; Moi, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000). Instead of looking at individual characteristics that are artificially sex differentiated, we should be looking at the qualities or requirements that are needed in particular circumstances for men and women to act ethically or to complete a task successfully. What are the material conditions that optimise humans’ potential to explore and practice their spectrum of capabilities contingent upon their situations?

So, in this case, if the ability to express ourselves creatively is thought of as a human right or an area of human endeavour which is worthy of enhancing potential capabilities, what are the conditions conducive to human artmaking? If you happen to be an artist and have had an experience of mental ill-health, is it a human right to have your artmaking and artwork viewed as a legitimate expression of human creativity, not as a manifestation of an underlying illness? Do you have the right to position your art however you choose, and to have it received without epistemic insult? Is it also a

human right to live in a society which is willing to assess, and then aim to nurture conditions to enhance members' creative capabilities?

Human capabilities in an enmeshed existence. Material feminism displaces cultural relativism because it does not accept that all ethical positions are equally valid, advocating instead that we are able to act by comparing the very real material consequences of various ethical positions. The focus is shifted from ethical principles to ethical practices which unfold in time and take place in particular contexts. The material consequences of one form of ethics can be more conducive to human and nonhuman flourishing than those of another (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008).

Coole and Frost (2010) emphasise that the renewed interest in materialism has created a practical politically engaged social theory which is capable of critical analysis of actual conditions of existence and their inherent inequality, without relying solely on discursive analysis to critique the inequality. For instance, global capitalism in a broad sense can be analysed in terms of its diverse localised effects on everyday lives. They contend that human rights mean nothing without the ability to concretise them in absolute time and space, and assess the material conditions in terms of equity and the material effects in everyday life. They believe this observation accounts for the renewed interest in phenomenologies of ordinary, corporeal experiences such as those developed by de Beauvoir. The space for research, such as this project, is therefore opened up to look at women's ideas of artmaking in relation to their wellbeing and to the material effects in everyday life regarding the conditions that are or are not conducive to enhancing artistic capabilities.

A space to create: Agency and 'the freedom to'. Barad maintains the space of agency holds the possibility of an open future. But she says not anything and everything is possible at any given moment. Intra-actions iteratively reconfigure what is possible and what is not – possibilities do not stand still. So they are constraining but not determining – similar to de Beauvoir's position, new possibilities open up as others that might have been possible are now excluded – possibilities are reconfigured and reconfiguring. Grosz (2010) also wishes to rethink agency in different ways to the traditional views of autonomy, agency and freedom determined by the functioning and oppressive power of the dominant other.

Grosz (2010) proposes:

...instead of linking the question of freedom to the concept of emancipation or to some understanding of liberation from, or removal of, an oppressive or unfair form of constraint or limitation...I develop a concept of life, bare life, where freedom is conceived not only or primarily as the elimination of constraint or

coercion but more positively as the condition of, or capacity for, action in life. (p. 140)

Thus the distinction is made – freedom *to* not just freedom *from*. To explore this, she maintains that the subject's freedom requires exploration via its immersion in materiality. She asks the question “what is the female or feminist subject capable of making and doing?” (p. 141). In this way her work resonates with this project.

Grosz (2010) does not advocate ignoring conditions of oppression but argues that if feminists only concentrate on a conception of freedom that is linked to the controlling power of the other, whether that be enacted by class or race or sex, the concept of autonomy is lost. If freedom is removed or bestowed upon us by others then it is only ever about rights granted to us rather than capacities within us. It is a reactive freedom. Therefore, it is not sufficient to concentrate only on freedom *from*, for, while this addresses wrongs of the past it remains tied to the options offered by the present and its prevailing and limiting forces. It does not provide a direction for the action of the future and leaves no space for the invention of the new. Echoing de Beauvoir, Grosz wants to concentrate on “freedom as the ability to act and in acting to make oneself even as one is made by external forces” (p. 142). By enlisting the philosopher Henri Bergson, Grosz (2010) emphasises the subject is not the same subject before and after an act, before and after the alternatives have been posed and chosen and the precise circumstances cannot be replicated, which is consistent with Barad's theory of agential realism – every meeting matters. The self alone is the author of an act “...and it will express the whole of the self.” These acts are “...integral to who or what the subject is.” This is not a spatial ordering but an inherent immersion and coherence of a being in time... for life is as much becoming as it is being” (pp. 144-145).

Grosz (2010) argues that because acts come from or even through us, and having been undertaken transform us, they carry the notion of possibility. She describes freedom not as a quality or property of the human subject, but something that can only be characterised as a process, an action, a movement that has no particular qualities, “freedom has no given content; it cannot be defined” (p. 147), concurring with Barad (2008) who discusses agency not as something someone has but as what we do and what the world does to us – intra-action. Therefore, if freedom is located in acts rather than in subjects then the capacity to act is largely structured by the ability to harness and utilise matter for one's own purposes and interests. It is here that the relevance to feminism becomes evident as the range of choices available to women as a group is more restricted than to men as a group. However, Grosz argues that the question of freedom is never just a matter of expanding and obtaining access

to the choices that already exist. Instead, it is about transforming the quality and activity of the subjects who choose and make themselves through how and what they do.

This is a freedom which is linked to innovation and invention within the realm of actions and processes and events that are not contained within or predictable from the present – that, which emerges, surprises and cannot be anticipated in advance...it is not a property or right bestowed or taken away by others but a capacity or potential to act in accordance with one's past and potential to act in a manner that surprises in the future. (Grosz, 2010, p. 152)

Freedom is always a question of degree rather than absolute right. It is attained rather than bestowed and it functions through activity. Grosz says the problem for feminism in the 21st century is no longer only about women's lack of freedom or the constraints that women endure in their lives. The problem is how to expand the variety of activities that women are able to undertake, to be able to act differently, explore new interests, perspectives and frameworks not yet explored or even invented. And this is consistent with a human capabilities framework where conditions are examined in terms of conduciveness to developing and using capabilities. Grosz wonders how we can "enable more action, more making and doing, more difference...how to enable women to partake in creating a future unlike the present" (p. 154).

An Ambient Context

The broad views summarised above also coincide with ways of thinking about artmaking, as expressed by a number of the participants in this research – ideas about the body being an integral part of artmaking, or as an artist being part of a larger system, being connected to something more significant than that merely dominated by human concerns only. However, whilst it may be acceptable for research participants in, for instance, Csikszentmihalyi's (1996/2013) research (all renowned in their respective fields), to propose that being engaged in an activity that produces 'flow' also produces the feeling that they are part of some greater totality or cosmos, I am concerned in this research about how such statements are placed and heard with the overlay of mental illness presiding over the reception. In the Australian vernacular, there are phrases for those who see the world in a different way from the mainstream; those who do not accept the world as it is presented and who look further than the surface, behind the cupboard door, under the carpet, or at the back of the tapestry. These phrases are usually derogatory – *mad*, *loony*, *a sandwich short of a picnic*, *a kangaroo loose in the top paddock*, and as Melbourne poet Sandy Jeffs (2004a) puts it, a whole thesaurus of madness created by a cruel mind.

The strength of the mental illness overlay, in eclipsing all utterances for those diagnosed with a mental illness, is evident in *Vita: Life in a zone of social*

abandonment. Biehl (2005) describes Vita, an asylum in Brazil, as a place where the homeless and the mentally-ill live in abject abandonment and are left to die, "...a place where people go when they are not considered people" (p. 2). It is here that Biehl meets Catarina, a woman taken to Vita by her relatives after the birth of her third child. Catarina has been voicing her concerns about severe pain in her legs since the birth of her first child, and has been treated with psycho-pharmaceutical medication and sent to psychiatric hospitals on several occasions before arriving at Vita.

As Biehl continues to visit Catarina in Vita, he begins to understand the stories of her life, are not the ravings of a woman who "speaks nonsense, she is mad (*louca*)" (p. 5), and that her insistence that she has not lost her mind but instead has a physiological problem, requires further investigation. "If I will count on the doctors to tell me what I feel, I will remain incapacitated, because they don't know the reason of what I am, of my illness, of my pain" (p. 87). Biehl arranges a series of tests and Catarina in fact has a neurodegenerative condition called Machado-Joseph disease. Her concerns were consistently ignored as "... her voice had been annulled by psychiatric diagnosis" (p.3).

A similar scenario is explained by Hilary Mantel, Man Booker Prize winner for *Wolf Hall* (2009). Talking about the health issues she had experienced, she said that physical pain was seen as psychosomatic "because of the pressure of operating in a man's world...I was told my symptoms were caused by ambition" (Edemariam, 2009, p. 24), reverberating with Freudian connotations of penis envy. Mantel emphasises that such assumptions nearly killed her as she was subsequently medicated by a psychiatrist, and she laments that if 'they' didn't listen at first then they listened even less when she was on medication. "Once you are labelled as mentally ill and that's in your medical notes, then anything you say can be discounted as an artefact of your mental illness. So you are trapped in a cycle of invalidation" (Edemariam, 2009, p. 25). Similarly, once you have the label of mental illness then anything you paint or make can be seen as an artefact of mental illness. Hilary in fact had endometriosis.

The experiences of Catarina and Hilary are significant for this research, as it is not only words that women speak that are deemed 'mad' but also what they do and make. If the space from which women can create is already more restricted than that for men, then if the artist also has a diagnosis, the space shrinks further. Cognisant of this reduced space, many women in this research, particularly those who identified as artists, were wary of having their art practices and works, labelled as 'mad' art, or viewed merely as products of art therapy.

Expressing views, or making art, that does not collate with mainstream Western views may elicit unfavourable reactions and a testimonial injustice occurs, as the

speaker or artist is notably sidelined as odd, eccentric, out of touch or indeed mad, effectively shutting down the possibility of offering *this is what I see, this is what I see*. But what if such thoughts – being part of the cosmos for instance – are indeed examples of ontological sensibility, a sense of our enmeshed existence, or the entangled connectedness of things? What if artmaking is one way of revealing this to us? Such contemporary theorising, as presented in this chapter, thus provides an ambient context where women in this research can place their thoughts regarding creative life and artistic practice alongside emergent theories of material feminism, quantum physics and neuroscience.

Researching Diffractively

In conclusion, the past chapters have summarised my exploration of the current state of feminist thinking and research in relation to the contested areas of woman, experience, identity and self, agency and freedom. I was seeking a path to establish a way of discussing and conceptualising women as artists, some of whom assumed an artistic identity and others who actively rejected this notion. From de Beauvoir to Barad, this project is now positioned to consider ways of being or styles of being, as an artist, as a woman and as a person with an experience of mental ill-health. It is also positioned to consider agentic embodied women who engage in the tactility of artmaking and create via a degree of freedom, which is always contingent and situated, as part of a world which is imbued with inseparable discursive and material practices – entangled matter and meaning. The quest of making and becoming can be referenced to material bodily experience (engagements with matter) and material living conditions (personal, relational, financial etc.) as constraints of freedom. The encounters of everyday life can be assessed as to whether conditions enhance or suppress capabilities, including artistic capabilities. "...subjectivity can be understood as a set of linkages and connections with other things and other bodies, both human and non-human" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 135). I can listen to women's ideas of expressing the 'I' or a self because the self has not been deconstructed but is embodied, entangled and enmeshed in everyday artistic articulation. This analysis has provided a contextual bed from which to explore Braidotti's nomadic subject as an artistic subject; and I can listen to thoughts of how it is to be an artist – or as de Beauvoir would say, the day-to-day artistic happenings of a number of women in Victoria in the first decades of the 21st century.

Meskimmon (2003) urges us to consider not *what is an artist/subject*, but how does one become an artist/subject, allowing a shift from the object to the processes and practices of artmaking, from an ontology of being to an episteme-ontology of becoming and making – an exploration, not of artistic representations as a system of

reflections, but in terms of the notion of diffraction and thereby a myriad of possibilities for becoming and creating. Grosz inspires us to consider a world which conceives of a *freedom to*; retaining, but also moving beyond the concept of freedom from – a world that enhances capabilities, including artistic capabilities – a world that may be welcomed by many women artists.

Chapter 5: Doing the Research: Diffractive Methodology

“Like the diffraction patterns illuminating the indefinite nature of boundaries – displaying shadows in ‘light’ regions and bright spots in ‘dark’ regions – the relation of the social and the scientific is a relation of ‘exteriority within’” (Barad, 2008, p. 122). This Chapter completes the first section of this thesis which has explored the feminist research process itself, tracing a history of feminist theorising across a range of disciplines including philosophy, psychology, history, art, mental ill-health and quantum physics. At times, the tensions between and within areas of feminist thinking appeared insurmountable to this research process and crippling to further action. The strengths and weaknesses of various positions have been laid bare and the preference for a corporeal or materialist feminist framework has been discussed. This Chapter explains how such a philosophical framework may be applied as methodological scaffolding for conducting this research. The methodological concerns discussed here apply to the whole project comprising the three studies. However, in this chapter there is a particular focus upon the research interview process. For clarity, more detailed discussion of research methods for the exhibition and the collage are contained within the relevant chapters.

The methodological implications of this research were unclear in the beginning of this project. The ethical, epistemological and ontological possibilities of exploring an under-researched area were not fully evident to me when the research began. Nor were a number of important publications regarding emergent theories of corporeal feminism available to inform this research until the first decade of the 21st century.

Reading and researching diffractively “breaks through the academic habit of criticism and works along affirmative lines” (van der Tuin, 2011, p. 22). Barad (2007) further explains that this approach is characterised by reading insights from different areas of study through one another not against one another. She explores a cacophony of critical social theories – feminist, critical race theory, queer theory, postcolonial and poststructuralist theory – through one another and distilled through quantum physics. Although this research does not reach nearly as far as Barad's project, it follows her lead in approaching the topic of interest – *Women, creativity and wellbeing – What does art do for the artmaker?* – from many different angles, analogous perhaps to how an artist might approach the composition of a new painting. Barad argues that diffractive methodology respects the entanglement of ideas and other materials in ways that reflexive or representational methodologies do not. Jones (2006) urges researchers to present their research with the complexity we associate with literature and works of art more generally. I take these insights to mean that it is

appropriate to employ a multiplicity of methods to not only collect, but also analyse and present the research.

I am adapting, rather than adopting, a diffractive methodology. This is necessary because, to my knowledge, it is an emergent methodology that, apart from Taguchi (2012) and Jackson and Mazzei (2012), has primarily been applied only to theoretical projects thus far. "...to apply these ideas (Barad's) to empirical, analytical research requires an elaborate conceptual toolset embracing the material, social and subjective worlds alike. And this may prove to be a 'practical' shortcoming of the application of this ambitious approach" (Hojgaard & Soridergaard, 2011, p. 347). Indeed, one of the difficulties I have encountered with applying this approach resulted from the huge amount of data I have compiled from diverse sources. How to present these findings has been rather like twisting a kaleidoscope – colour in motion. The diffractive methodology is resistant to categorising and rather than seeking consistent patterns and themes, as in a thematic analysis, the project traces patterns of difference and patterns of overlap relevant to women's artmaking and their interactions with mental health services, and reveals something of the actual texture of daily life and the process of artmaking. The methodology "transforms the analytic foci in a number of ways" (Hojgaard & Soridergaard, 2011, p. 348), where the aim is to recognise and attribute multiple forces to how things are enacted and multiplicity in the enacting practices.

Diffractive Methods as Interferences

Research methods are not passive measuring devices. Barad (2007) observes that reflexivity is a parallel notion to reflection and representation – a method of self-accounting and accounting for the effect of the theory and the researcher on the research. However, she argues that this critical method of self-positioning remains caught in the geometrics of sameness. With a diffractive methodology, where diffractions (interferences) are aligned to differences, the methodology attends to the relational nature of differences – and the effects our different knowledge-making practices have on the world. Barad clarifies by explaining that a diffraction pattern is not a map where differences appear but where the effects of differences appear, diffractions do not displace the same elsewhere; there is no mirror. Scientific methods are always interferences, not passive measuring devices and the methods we use in research are not mediating between an object and its representation. For Barad there is no need to conceive of such mediation when we think of diffraction, not representation. The methods we use are constitutive of the things we seek to know. What we call a method is a material discursive apparatus intra-acting (p. 27). Barad argues that scientific practices are examples of intervening in the world's becoming,

rather than representing 'things as they are'. Artistic practices can also be thought about in this way as part of a complex web of practices, not an endless series of representations. "Affective practice...builds in ongoingness and...patterns in process.... Practice is both a noun and a verb...site of repetition – a practice - the way I, or we, do things...." (Wetherell, 2012, p. 23).

Methods: Agential cuts: What you measure brings it into being. "In the language of science there is no *I*, no *you*, no *we*. The subjective is prohibited..." (Irigaray, 2002, p. 247). Irigaray posits that to speak or to research is never neutral. Scientists measure the world to name it and make laws for it, such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), but ignore that they are also *in* it. Diffractive methodology seeks to understand the world from within, as part of it, and highlight the indefinite nature of boundaries. Measurement practices are an inseparable part of the results obtained and are situated in all aspects of the research – methods, methodology, description, epistemology, and ontology. "How we measure something (what apparatus we use) changes the nature of the phenomena observed or described (Barad, 2007, p. 93)....Methods do not just detect and observe but contribute to the production and reconfiguring of difference" (p. 125). Barad does not presume the separateness of anything and stresses that what you measure brings it into being. We are part of the nature we seek to understand and we are part of the phenomena we seek to describe. "...a measuring apparatus does not disclose values but rather it is the specific material configuration that gives definition to the notion of the property in question" (p. 261). She uses the example of a walking stick. When held tightly it is a walking aid and when held loosely it becomes a tool of observation. Matter can be known differently depending on the apparatus it is known through. Quantities are only determinate if the appropriate conditions for their measurement exist and therefore only measurement resolves indeterminacy.

American artist Ann Hamilton's (2006) ideas about artmaking are relevant here, "Being of a culture that has always held in suspicion unproductive time, things not utilitarian, and daydreaming in general...it is challenging to articulate the importance of supporting experiences that don't do anything obvious, aren't easily quantifiable, resist measurement, aren't easily named are categorically in-between".... But she maintains that "Every act of making matters...how we make matters" (p. 45). Applying this to a research context, Paget (1983) puts it another way by saying that the questions she asked artists about their experience of making paintings created a precise anchor, the particular paintings of this particular painter seen and experienced by a particular interviewer interested in artistic experience. Knowledge accumulates and interviews thus create knowledge. Separations, boundaries and fixations emerge from intra-acting

and agency has real effects. These are what Barad (2003, 2007, 2008) refers to as agential cuts. “We are responsible for the cuts we help enact. Agential separability rejects the geometrics of absolute interiority and absolute exteriority or determinism and free will and opens up a much larger space that is a dynamic and ever-changing topology” (2007, p. 178). We are responsible for the research we undertake and the intra-actions involved.

Intra-acting responsibly means understanding that ‘we’ are not the only active beings – though this understanding never reduces our responsibility. “Particular possibilities for (intra-)acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsibly in the world’s becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (Barad, 2007, p. 178). Every meeting matters.

Revisiting voice and reflexivity in feminist research interviews. “There are a lot of assumptions that go along with research because once information about you gets documented it can get passed around like an object without you attached to it anymore” (Gray, 2007, pp. 415-416).

Since a diffractive methodology challenges ideas of reflection and representation, there are two important and interrelated topics that must be reconsidered in relation to conducting feminist research – ‘giving voice’ and ‘reflexivity’.

The importance of attention to voice and giving voice has been common in feminist research for decades (Dallimore, 2000; Marx, 2001) and interviews are often said to provide a space for voice. However, research as a voicing mechanism has been challenged not only by feminist researchers questioning its effectiveness, but also by people being researched. Whose voice are we presenting and how does the person fare in this research endeavour? This is especially important for marginalised groups and the claim ‘to give voice to’ is often felt as patronising or tokenistic – particularly when the data collated is not received well (Morris, 1998). Fricker (2007) emphasises that voice is not just a matter of speaking but of being heard, and in a research context it is about how the information is analysed, presented and then received or listened to – all stages of the research process; recruiting, collecting, collating, analysing, presenting and disseminating – impact upon what happens to the contributions of the research participants. Listening and hearing the women is a double process (Ripa, 1990).

Gray (2007) grapples with some of the complexities surrounding a feminist imperative of ‘voice’ in her research with a group of women who had experiences of mental ill-health. She argues that the woman’s voice goes largely unheard when spoken from ‘madness’. Art created by people who have an experience of mental ill-health is also frequently positioned to give voice and lauded as a medium in which

people can express that which can't be said in words; an alternative opportunity to have a voice.

However, many feminists have cautioned against a notion of voice as an isolated narration of lived experience or that researchers can simply 'give voice.' Some have emphasised the 'silencing' consequences for marginalised groups of being spoken for (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fine, 2012; Gray, 2007; Lather, 2001; Spivak, 1988; White, 2001). Others, such as Kruks (2001) and Moi (1999), argue that there are circumstances where it is necessary to speak for and act on behalf of others, such as sex slavery which renders the group of women unable to speak out for themselves. The aim is not to speak for but speak *about* recognising a multiplicity of women's experiences that may overlap in some aspects and are radically different in others; neither identical nor wholly distinct. Thinking through Barad's diffractive methodology, women's experiences would be seen as entangled, and not separable but encountering obstacles and forming patterns of differences and patterns of overlap in and through time and space; space-time. Looking for overlaps between women's experiences is not to essentialise or deny difference, but rather an attempt to find a path to become more open to others lives. This research project is thus not claiming to be representative or reflective but exploratory and entangled with the intention of speaking about – not for – women who have experienced mental ill-health and who have made art.

Reflexivity has also frequently been employed in feminist projects to expose power relations in the research process. However, adding the personal may end up appearing as a 'confessional' and may actually increase the authority of the researcher over the reader, diminishing the space for others to participate (Elliott, 2005; Haraway 2008; Moi, 1999; Zavos & Biglia, 2009). The researcher interprets and creates at every junction of the research process, and must be wary of presenting her own interpretations as academic research findings (Hawkesworth, 2007; Marx, 2001).

Similarly, Liamputtong (2007) recommends that researchers consider what they are prepared to reveal about themselves in the interview setting. The interview process can be intensely personal. A balance is required between the participant revealing all and the researcher nothing, and the researcher revealing too much and reducing the space for participation. Approximately half of the women in this research asked me if I was an artist. I generally replied that as a researcher and writer I was interested in how artmaking influenced their lives as I have a long history of talking to women about how they spent their time in non-traditional areas of work.³

³ Co-Director of Directory of Women in Trades and Services. 1999; 2002; 2005.

Collecting and Presenting Data: A Serious Attempt to Understand the Artist's Project in the World

De Beauvoir created a “descriptive analysis of the lived experience and situation of women, grounded in a discussion of thematic, historical, and literary influences...” (Fisher, 2000, p. 34) and she used a combination of empirical data, interviews, memoirs, conversations and other sociological texts as material for critical analysis (Chisholm, 2008). Traces from many different sources, including practices such as weaving and needlework can be woven together to find ways to highlight women's everyday lives across many cultures of the world (Chaudhuri et al., 2010).

Inspired by Barad's notion of entangled existence and de Beauvoir's attention to the study of concrete cases – of everyday lived experience, I have collated a large amount of material from diverse sources. I have talked to artists and people who did not call themselves artists, people from the mental health and cultural arts sectors, formally and informally. I have watched movies, visited exhibitions, curated a travelling exhibition with public floor talks and artists' forums, read autobiographies, biographies, novels, letters, poems and academic texts. Data sources were wide and varied; including artworks and accompanying materials for the exhibition, archives, published sources, unpublished sources, and research interviews exploring 32 women's lived experience of artmaking and mental ill-health. Presentation of this research is equally varied, with a touring exhibition and associated materials and events (see Chapter 7), a collage of published contributions from and about women artists (see Chapter 12), and interviews presented as art-life summaries, word portraits and ‘I’ poems (adapted from Gilligan et al., 2006 – see Appendix A).

Given the scarcity of first-person accounts of a life of artmaking as a woman and as a visual artist generally, and as a woman and an artist with an experience of mental ill-health specifically, I have also woven contributions from women who are writers, musicians, poets throughout this thesis to enrich the attempt to understand the artist's project in the world. For while the creative processes and methodologies may differ, the vagaries of an artistic identity, artistic pathways and sustaining an artistic practice have many similarities that can cross-pollinate the study of what *artmaking means to the artist*. The envisaging, establishing and sustaining of an art practice for a woman has cultural, social and political parameters that influence a career and a life of making whether you are a writer, visual artist or musician.

Furthermore many artistic people do not practice in only one spectrum. Yayoi Kusama, best known for her polka-dot installations is also a writer, film maker, performance artist and sculptor. Patti Smith is not only a musician, but also a drawer, writer and poet. Charlotte Perkins-Gilman painted as well as wrote, as did Zelda

Fitzgerald who was also an accomplished dancer. Virginia Woolf wrote an entire novel – *To the lighthouse* - imagining the life of a painter, perhaps modelled on or informed, by discussions with her sister, the painter Vanessa Bell. The two sisters discuss the challenges of embracing an artistic life extensively in letter exchanges. Or as Lacourarie (2002) says, Woolf painted this book with great attention to colour, tone and form.

Similarly many of the 32 women involved in this research – and particularly those that self-identified as artists – were engaged in multiple artistic practices. For example, Janis, who appeared primarily as a painter in this research had also self-published two books, plays the guitar and trombone locally and has been employed as an actor. Taylor made art and wrote poetry; Alice was a musician and printmaker; Margaret called herself a cross media artist including painting, installation, writing and performance.

Researching with Potentially Vulnerable Participants

In 2004, The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) specifically stated that women should not automatically be excluded from research on the basis of sex. Although the NHMRC has updated guidelines for ethics in human research with more nuanced guidelines for participation (2014), it appears women with an experience of mental ill-health are still considered vulnerable and there is surprisingly little research which includes their contributions. Perhaps this is because users of mental health services have traditionally been regarded as unreliable sources (Lapsley, Nikora & Black, 2002), and as Dunn, Candilis and Roberts (2006) surmise, novel and unexpected ethical challenges are likely to emerge. Unexpected ethical challenges were encountered in this research and the ethics process was extensive, requiring eight discrete ethics submissions (see Appendix B: Interviews and Ethics).

Liamputtong (2007) discusses overlapping vulnerability in research participation, noting the dearth of resources for undertaking sensitive research with vulnerable people. Participants may be susceptible to coercive influences and may not be cognisant of the consequences of disclosing distressing experiences (Hyden, 2008). However, Liamputtong (2007) argues that it should not be assumed that all people with an experience of mental ill-health are vulnerable as research participants and many may wish to have the choice to participate. But the notion of risk in psychiatric research is unclear. Roberts et al. (2006) discuss minimal risks as “those in which anticipated harms are not greater than those ordinarily faced in everyday life or in doing routine examinations” (p. 153). The controversy exists in whose ‘ordinary life’ is the benchmark. Risk is a matter of perspective. Taube and Burkhardt (1997) suggest “Only

the participants can decide or evaluate the effects of disclosure on their wellbeing” (p. 65).

Prior to the 1990s, the common perception was that people with serious psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia, were incompetent to give consent (Ganzini et al., 2005). A spate of studies now engenders optimism for the possibility of assisting people with impaired decisional capacity to make their own choices (American Psychiatric Association, 2006; Appelbaum, 2006; Dunn & Jeste, 2001). Dunn, Candilis and Roberts (2006) advise that consent forms should be designed in a simplified format which aids comprehension and contain a full description of procedures, foreseeable risks and benefits, and the option to withdraw from the process without prejudice at any time. Obtaining, and giving, informed consent is also an ongoing process and providing corrected feedback is beneficial (see Appendices B, C, D, E, F for discussion of ethics and consent in this research).

Defining Research Concepts/Terms

Wellbeing. Wellbeing is a notion central to this project. It is also a ubiquitous term with many scales to measure the concept. Designers of such tools have increasingly sought to encompass a more holistic picture of wellbeing than merely the absence of illness. However, the growing body of recovery literature in psychiatric research indicates that there is frequently a discrepancy between what those who subscribe to the biomedical model may describe as mental health and how people who have or are experiencing mental ill-health articulate wellbeing (Fossey et al., 2004; Lapsley, Nikora & Black, 2002; Pepper, 2005). There is also a need to trouble the term ‘recovery’ to ensure that it acknowledges that change has occurred via the experience of mental ill-health and that there is no assumption of an essential person or core self that can be recovered wholly intact or returned to as before – every meeting matters and we are changed by every meeting.

Following Ridgeway (2001) and Knowles (2000), who conducted research with people who had an experience of mental ill-health and tried to avoid the lexicon of mental health in their research, I did not seek diagnostic information from the women and major research concepts were not defined before this research began. The participants’ own terms shaped the character and content of how I eventually present this research. The participants’ definitions for wellbeing, mental health, mental ill-health and creativity are presented in Chapter 8: A Dinner Party.

Distinguishing art production domains for recruiting research interview participants. “Art is not therapy. An artist is not a therapist. Art therapy is not art” (Anne Riggs, in Freeman-Greene, 2009, p. 18).

It is vital to clarify that this research is not attempting to evaluate the efficacy of attending a supported art program. Although 25 women in this research attended supported skills-based art programs and classes within mental health services, many of these women also made art in a combination of other settings, and seven did not attend any programs at all but maintained an art practice at home or in a private art studio. The research is an exploration of the meaning and role of making art in a variety of production contexts, including the studio, the garage or at the kitchen table.

The following provides a broad overview of how arts and health is administered in Victoria to elucidate the art program context. The sectors linking arts and health are Art Therapy, Arts in Health Care settings, and Community Arts and Health. Outside the health sector there is Community Cultural Development. Mills (2003) discusses the way the arts have been incorporated into policy areas in Australia and differentiates between concepts of the art as tool and the arts as transformer, an important distinction. Instrumental approaches (art as tool), implement policy by using the arts to achieve policy goals such as better health outcomes. In the community arts and health sector art may be used as a tool for health promotion (Dyer & Hunter, 2009), and the mental health sector often operates within a recovery paradigm (Van Lith et al., 2009; 2011). Transformational approaches allow creative activity to help determine policy and any attendant benefits are not predetermined. Funding is not contingent upon targeted health outcomes (see Marsden & Theile, 2000; Theile & Marsden, 2003; 2008).

Mental health services have a long history of using art as a tool – diagnostic, therapeutic, diversional, or as Price (2008) notes, as rehabilitation. Research indicates that most non-arts government agencies have applied the arts with an instrumental focus and psychometric measurements of change in participants, such as self-esteem, emotional literacy and reduced social isolation, are common (VicHealth, 2003). Whilst, the intention may not be to impose a mental health focus or arts as therapy orientation on funded organisations, programs are still required to use disability language to secure funding for art programs, a person needs a diagnosis and referral to access an art program and demonstration of value beyond the obvious cultural products that result is required. Showing health outcomes is easier to achieve by employing an arts and health model and identifying specific health goals, rather than using an art as transformative agent model, where the outcomes are more nebulous. However, many of the artists don't want to be defined by their disability and don't want their art to be defined by this either (Wreford, 2008).

Art therapy uses art as a tool and is a distinct area that will not be covered in this thesis. For a feminist interpretation of art therapy, see Hogan (1997; 2001; 2003) and Gilroy (2008). The assertion in this thesis is not that art therapy is ineffective or has

no place in mental health care – a whole body of scholarship attests to the use of art in trauma and its role in healing (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Freeman-Greene, 2009; Vernazza, 2006) – however the focus of *Canvassing the emotions* is on the potential for “the transformational possibilities...” (Mills, 2003, p. 21) in artmaking. This thesis explores the role and meaning of artmaking for women across the lifespan, not just within a mental health care setting. The mental health service settings where some of the women made art were skills-based arts programs as opposed to art therapy programs (see below).

Recruiting Agencies: Scoping

The first stage in recruiting potential participants involved identifying mental health services across Victoria that provided some form of visual artmaking opportunities. Non-government agencies, via Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services (PDRSS), are predominantly responsible for conducting art programs that exist in Victoria. All regions in Victoria, as defined by the Department of Human Services in 2006 (13 metropolitan and eight regional) were contacted in relation to their visual art programs. Many services had no artmaking options available to consumers. Others may have run one-off art projects which were dependent upon the availability of staff with the skills and initiative to drive them. From the numerous agencies that provide services to people with an experience of mental ill-health in Victoria, I located 10 services (seven metropolitan and three regional) that had an ongoing commitment to providing art skills-based visual artmaking opportunities.

Gatekeepers may view people with an experience of mental ill-health as being too vulnerable to participate in research and will often keep researchers out (Liamputtong, 2007). I encountered this resistance with four agencies and ultimately six agencies were involved (three regional and three metropolitan) with each providing written confirmation of their consent to participate after reviewing the research proposal via specific internal ethics committees and processes. A further source of recruitment was available via my research activities at the CDC. Women who had previously been in contact with the Collection were sent letters to inform them about the project and were invited to contact me for further information and to discuss potential participation. Finally, several women contacted me seeking to participate in the interviews after viewing the exhibition.

Arts-based practice (ABP). Skills-based art programs can potentially be transformative and explicitly focus on the acquisition of artistic skills. Art Therapy, however, has the exploration of boundaries as one of its main goals – unlocking the inner emotional world of individual participants and working with what you already know is not necessarily creative. ABP is concerned with pushing or dissolving boundaries,

and explores what you know and also what you don't know. ABP does not aim to treat but offers an "...opportunity to 'just be with'..." (Marsden & Thiele, 2000, p. 65). For this research, I sought participants who were attending skills-based art programs or who were maintaining an art practice in spaces not associated with mental health services.

All services involved in this research, employed artists to conduct sessions in visual art skills-based learning. One of the artists who ran an art program was also a consumer of the mental health service. Another service employed a consumer on a part-time basis, to conduct art classes. Three of these practitioners were trained as art therapists, although each was clear that they had been employed to teach art skills not conduct therapeutic sessions and thought it was vital to clearly specify what you are doing in any given program; is the aim to unlock emotional states or is it a skills-based art program without a goal of long-term therapeutic change for individual participants? "People need to know what they are signing up for" (personal communication, September 9, 2007). However, although the arts practitioners were clear about their role, during my visits to agencies across Victoria, it was evident that a lack of clarity persisted about what art programs in mental health services were seeking to achieve. Graham (1994) identified that arts-based practitioners were often mistakenly identified as art therapists when arts programs in mental health services are seen to produce therapeutic results for an individual, which is also the aim for art therapy. A tension is created when the rationale for the program is not explicitly identified prior to commencement and the participants and management are not clear regarding the purpose of the artmaking (Putland, 2003).

Two of the metropolitan services had dedicated art studio spaces for art sessions. One of these provided dedicated art studio space to each artist. A third metropolitan service had a dedicated art space, although small and at times overcrowded. Two regional services had converted outdoor sheds into artmaking spaces and both also ran other sessional art classes (with guest artists) in spaces within their buildings, as did the third regional service. These spaces, which at certain times of the week were used for purposes other than artmaking, meant that art materials were required to be packed up at the end of each session. All three regional services had organised a variety of communal art projects within their local environments and had succeeded in involving the broader community in the arts project. Several of the metropolitan services were also active in staging a variety of art events, including exhibitions and community projects.

Recruiting Participants

Taube and Burkhardt (1997) suggest that where a person external to the agency proposes research, the agency should make the initial contact with potential

participants. In this project, the role of the agency was to facilitate the broadcasting of the *Invitation to participate* in the research amongst the women who attended or have attended art programs in the service (see Appendix C). I also conducted group information sessions at each agency prior to recruiting participants. As the interviews began, I noticed a snowballing sampling effect, where word of mouth or chain referral led women to seek information about the project and subsequently participate.

Wirshing, Sergi and Mintz (2005) recommend that researchers need to advise people experiencing mental ill-health who are deciding whether to participate in research, to take their time when deciding – weigh up the pros and cons – and that they may wish to consult with family, friends or other support people. Accordingly, all women who were interested in participating were also offered the option of having a support person present during the interview. Two women chose this option. Women who arranged an interview received a Plain Language Statement (see Appendix D). I also reiterated the aims and procedures of the study at the time of the interview and viewed informed consent as an ongoing process (see Appendix E).

The participants: Demographics. Thirty-two women chose to participate in the research interviews. Seven women were not associated with mental health services. Twenty-five women were attending skills-based art classes of different types via supported mental health services in Victoria. All women identified as having had an experience of mental ill-health at some point in their lives. Some women identified as practising artists, others considered themselves to be emerging or aspiring artists. Other women had never considered themselves to be artists but just “dabbling in arty/ crafty stuff”. Some women were producing art in the studios or spaces provided by the services, other women were producing art in their homes or studios and sometimes their homes were their studios. Some women produced art in all the spaces they had access to, home, studio, health service, friend’s garage, kitchen table.

Table 1.

Demographic information for interview participants

Location: 12 metropolitan; 20 regional

Age: Range = 27 - 78 years: Average = 46 years.

Participant Age (years)	No. of participants (total - 32)
20-29	4
30-39	4
40-49	12
50-59	8
60-69	2
70-79	2
Artmaking Spaces – Level of Involvement	No. of participants (total - 32)
• Never involved with mental health art program	2
• Not currently involved/had contact in the past	5
• Currently involved with supported art program	25
Supported Artmaking – Program Type	No. of participants (total - 25)
• Supported art studio	6
• Supported Art Class (art skills-based)	8
• Women's Art/Craft groups	11
• Both supported art class & women's art/craft	1
Other Communities of practice	No. of participants (total - 32 across multiple sites)
Home based practice only	6
Art school	3
Community art class	1
Community-based arts projects	2
Artists collective	1
Make art at home as well as other spaces	26
Teaching art	4
Worked as paid artists	6
Art training – tertiary/TAFE/CAE	12

The Interviews. A Life of Making

From 32 interviews and written material provided by five of the women interviewed, I sought to produce a picture of women's experiences of artmaking at a given time and place within Victoria. I was interested in how they came to artmaking, how they had breaks, discontinuities, fusions, and how/if they returned to it, or never left it, or discovered it at a turning point in their lives – and most importantly what this artmaking meant to them.

Over a two-year period (2007-2009) the women were interviewed individually. Interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. The interviews were informal with a semi-structured questioning format, and borrowed from an opened ended life history approach (Baker, 2003; Knowles, 2000; Liamputtong, 2007; Maynes et al., 2008; Ridgway, 2001). All began with the invitation to *tell me about the role and meaning of art in your life from your earliest memory to now*. In many cases women took this question and followed it throughout the entire interview, configuring and reconfiguring an art story in chronological sequencing. In other cases a series of general prompting questions such as *how do you think artmaking has influenced your state of mental health?* were used to keep the interview flowing (see Appendix F: Interview Questions). Interviews were conducted at the participants' venue of choice, ranging from mental health services, to cafes and participants' homes. Participants were compensated \$20 for travel and time contributions. Two women declined this offer. Between two to four days was spent at each art service. I also spoke informally to staff, other consumers of the programs, managers and art instructors.

Organising and reporting interview findings. Cognisant of the work regarding data analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006), Gilligan et al. (2006) and Mishler (2004), I listened to over 50 hours of 32 taped interviews and then transcribed the interviews in handwriting as my European recording system was incompatible with transcribing equipment available in Australia. I then typed the transcripts with each transcript taking up to two days to complete and 20 to 30 pages of text of between 15,000 and 20,000 words each. The advantage of this triple process was that I gained an intimate familiarity with the data. However, the amount of data generated was enormous.

For researching meaning making practices such as artmaking, Wetherell recommends, "Going beyond a traditional categorical analysis by not focussing on interpretation, signification or representation; not coding, gridding or positioning, but allowing an overlap, retreat and surge forward the aim is to encourage an ebb and flow of attention to...meaning making practices and their entanglements with bodies..." (2012, p. 56). As a researcher, I have found reporting women's varied views a

challenge. I do not wish to replicate the over analysis of women and their art productions, either insidiously or explicitly. Given the persistent interpretation of women's art in the mental health field – for diagnosis, treatment, or as therapy (see Chapter 6) and women's art generally, delicate, feminine, a pastime, accomplishment or a hobby, it is vital that this thesis does not replicate these interpretative approaches by assuming a quasi-art critique or mental health practitioner overlay. What was gathered via interviews, exhibiting and the collage of information has not been gathered and curated in the one place before. This material is novel and demands to be listened to closely without too much static interference from the researcher, rather like how an artist's statement accompanying an artwork is generally more informative and interesting than a curatorial essay on the artist's intent.

Analysing and presenting this data walked the tightrope of ethical practice in maintaining the confidentiality of participants without losing their unique contributions and producing something that was accessible to an audience which retained solo voices but moved together as a cappella; encouraging a dance between the general and the particular. It is necessary to balance the need for confidentiality with a respect for the person who does not wish to be obliterated by the condensing and filtering of the many words spoken in response to the interview questions.

In applying a diffractive methodology, I am not looking for themes, as this implies an overarching container in which to put women's comments. I am not looking for commonalities in their practices or work as each is unique to time, place, space and circumstances and contingent upon race, class, culture, etc. I am looking at patterns of difference and overlaps when women are aspiring to, establishing and maintaining an artistic identity and an artistic practice or a life of making. Their words are more like a series of dots or points clustered in some areas and scattered around elsewhere – there are patterns of difference and overlap and not just similarities, but connections, webs, intra-actions. "...wave-clusters of experience mentally traversing time and space..." (Beer, 2004, p. xvii). Winterson (2004) reminds us that we are wise to remember that "the sense is in the pattern and the pattern is always changing. The pattern looks different in different lights" (p. x).

I was interested in how artistic identities or a sense of being artistic was achieved and sustained or alternatively whether an artistic identity had even been contemplated. How did women negotiate social identities including those of woman, artist and mental patient? In order to make sense of the large amount of data generated from the research interviews, the findings section is divided into three groups according to how women self-defined artistically. In this sense the data is curated initially by the women themselves. This is important to give the self-defined

artist the space to tell an artmaking story, which was significantly more developed than those who defined as makers for instance. Many of the women interviewed were potentially accustomed to relaying their mental health story which is required in a variety of circumstances, particularly in mental health service settings. However, as reported during and after the interviews, having the opportunity to tell a life art story was novel for the majority of these women (see Appendix B). Identity is not only how we might think about ourselves but also defined by what we do – and this organisation by self-defined artist, aspiring artist and maker responds to both how the women thought about themselves in relation to artmaking and also what they did – their practice. The groups are arranged by those who:

- Identified as artists (Artists = 10 women)
- Aspired to be an artist (Aspiring artists = 9 women)
- Did not self-identify as artists or aspiring artists (Makers = 13 women).

This is a continuum and there is slippage across, between and through these arbitrary groupings. Within these groups the women's responses are organised around artistic identity, artistic pathways, artistic practice and importantly, the question *What does artmaking do for the artmaker?* Finally, women's responses are organised around Lived body (corporeality), Lived space (spatiality), Lived time (temporality), and Lived relations (relationality). The data has thus been extensively curated and by organising the vast amount of data in this way I am attempting to recognise multiple dimensions and multiple forces in how things are enacted – how time, space, matter and meanings come together into existence via the process of artmaking and are reconfigured by each and every intra-action – each and every brush stroke, each and every stitch.

Anonymity: Identifying participants. Donna Lawrence and Sara Wilson, two exhibitors in the exhibition wished to have their artworks and accompanying wall text attributed. They were also attributed as co-writers in a published article and their works are included in Chapter 7. However, anonymity was required for the other 11 exhibitors in the exhibition and their artworks could not be included in this thesis (see Chapter 7). Anonymity was also required for the 32 women who participated in the interviews. Because research interviews generate large amounts of sensitive data, richness is lost in favour of confidentiality, and changing names and omitting data, is necessary (Hyden, 2008; DeVault & Gross, 2007). Women were asked to select a pseudonym. Where no preference was nominated by participants, I have used a strategy suggested by one of the research participants, Artemisia, and followed the activist artist group, the Guerrilla Girls, by assigning deceased women artists' names to the research participants to preserve their confidentiality. Assigned women artists' names were taken from Burke (1980).

Cartography

To engage and lead the reader through the rest of this thesis, I evoke Judy Chicago's seminal art installation – *The Dinner Party*. This huge triangular table, created from 1974 to 1979, a collaboration between Chicago and other artists in America, has place settings – napkin, utensils, goblet, a painted plate – and a table runner embroidered with the names of 39 women from history and mythology. The floor tiles supporting the table are inscribed with the names of a further 999 women. *The Dinner Party* (1979) was exhibited at the Melbourne Exhibition Buildings in 1988 for the bicentennial year and a dinner party organised by the WAR was attended by over 1,200 women.

Now in 2014, all women referred to in the following chapters, whether first person or third person from published sources, interview participants or exhibitors, are invited, as Chicago may urge, to 'come to the table' and take 'a place at the table' to participate in 'table talk' and 'bring to the table' their thoughts on their artmaking.

I wish to clearly articulate that this project is an exploration of women's art practices in the Western world only, and in Victoria, Australia particularly, and acknowledge that there are likely to be vastly differing issues for culturally and linguistically diverse groups of women, rural and remote women, refugee and migrant women and Aboriginal women – both in the areas of artmaking and in mental health. However, if this is a beginning of a conversation about women and art and wellbeing in the Western world, using Judy Chicago's concept of the Dinner Party, it is rather like imagining many women across time and cultures sitting down together to examine the state of being an artist and a woman. Not everyone could make it to this dinner, but for those that are here, what would they eat for dinner? How might the tangential threads of multiple conversations overlap? How would they disagree? What would they advise young women considering a future that involves artmaking? And at the next dinner party, (as Barad instructs us to consider what is excluded from mattering) how will it be possible to invite a greater range of women to offer more diverse understandings of women's art practices across cultures and the role it may play in their lives?

The conversation will take place across and through time, backwards and forwards. As the host, I will attempt to facilitate what Flick Grey (2011) requested at the beginning of this thesis – the start of a conversation which pays attention to women's lived experiences, across matter, space, time, and relations. As always, in groups some women will have a lot to say and others less. Some may just listen as they concentrate on crocheting the Barrier Reef or the beautiful maths of coral (Wertheim, 2012). The conversation will begin with visiting the exhibition *Canvassing the emotions* (see Chapter 7). Thirty-two women will then come together for a dinner party to set

some of the parameters for this research, such as their definitions of creativity. Smaller groups will then form based on how each woman has defined her artistic self – artist, aspiring artist or maker – to discuss a life of making. The Dinner Party will reassemble to include a collage of women with and without an experience of mental ill-health, to share their ideas on what artmaking does for the artmaker (Chapter 12). The event and thesis will conclude with advice to other woman about living a creative life.

Section Two: An Exhibition: The Interviews: A Collage

Chapter 6: Background to Study One: An Exhibition: Portrait of the Artist as a Mad Woman

The common theory of the artist as one possessed is well known, but I think it is truer to call the artist one in possession; in full possession of a reality less partial than the reality apprehended by most people. The artist cannot occupy middle ground, and the warm nooks of humanity are not for her, she lives on the mountainside, in the desert, on the sea. (Winterson, 1995, p. 168)

The Individual Artist and Mad Genius Revisited

If it is difficult to be taken seriously or expect support as an artist's wife, muse or lover, or as an artist and a mother, what if you are a woman, an artist, perhaps a mother and also have a diagnosis? This chapter explores the challenge of making art and having an experience of mental ill-health, and just as exhibition catalogues and wall text provide contextual material for a gallery audience, this discussion prepares the reader for Chapter 7: The Exhibition, by travelling through time and space to trace a genealogy of cultural, historical, and material conditions which influenced women's ability to make art.

Examination of the lives of women artists who have an experience of mental ill-health reveal that whilst the mad genius artist myth has been tolerated at various historical periods, it has never been the case for women, apart from a few notable exceptions such as Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath. In *Art and Lies*, Winterson (1994) contemplates the lives of women as artists via one of her female protagonists named Picasso, an aspiring painter, who struggles with all the assumptions of gender and creativity as she attempts to avoid the three options open to women artists of all kinds – failure, modest success, and madness.

For women, claiming an artistic identity is intimately entwined with the practice of artmaking and also madness, as discussed in Chapter 1. In the 19th century, women were being advised to lay down their paintbrushes and take the rest cure, as artistic ambitions, as well as any other intellectual ambitions, were dangerous to health. Towards the middle of the 20th century it appears the discipline of psychiatry changed its mind and now encouraged women to paint away their madness, leaving artistic ambitions still safely contained and stifled under the mental health umbrella, where the art produced did not require serious contemplation.

Appignanesi (2008) wonders how many women have suffered at the hands of the 'mind doctors' and contemplates the medicalisation of unhappiness. I contend it is also necessary to contemplate the medicalisation of women's art productions. As the title of this research suggests, *Canvassing the emotions* is one way of viewing art

made by people with an experience of mental ill-health, and indeed expressing emotions may be the intention of some artists, some of the time. However, to reduce artworks to their emotional or psychological content is a one-dimensional view. When art productions are reduced to therapeutic manifestations of emotional responses to life, this becomes a further complication for women artists who experience mental illness and who have historically been associated with the emotional. The challenge, as confirmed by a number of women interviewed for this research, then becomes a question of how to wrestle their art practice and works from under the mental health therapeutic art umbrella.

Art under Psychiatric Surveillance

Not all people with mental ill-health produce art, nor do they produce good art or bad art, because within the mental health framework they are largely seen to produce mad art, psychiatric art or psychopathological art. Under the mental illness lens, there is no need to consider whether the art is good, so it is then exempt from critique regarding its artistic merits. The methods employed by the mind doctors to keep women's imagination under surveillance have varied widely from prescribing rest cures to curb the intensity of women's creativity, to bringing women's artistic productions into the therapeutic regime. Psychiatric responses to women and creativity have spiralled around control of the imagination.

On being artists. As discussed, women have historically been denied creative identity and recognition as artists, and their struggle to forge a creative identity has often been equated with madness. Women such as Woolf and Plath are reread posthumously in the light of a madness prism overlay. The works are therefore assessed diagnostically and reductively. The content is drained to leave only that which is regarded as therapeutic or symptomatic of disorder. The work is removed from all political context and rendered 'mad art'. Fox (2008) argues that ultimately adding a diagnosis does not help to understand the art or the person or their lived experience, but that it does constitute another form of categorising that increases stigmatisation. The following extracts explore how women have struggled to have their art taken seriously when a medical framework is imposed upon their lives and their artmaking.

Mad Women Artists: Making Art Makes you Mad

As Astbury (1996) argues in her book *Crazy for you*, "medicine, and psychiatry especially, have been instrumental in forming women's conception of who and what they are...both defining and delimiting women's mental, physical and emotional abilities for them" (p. 5) and, surely, their creative ambitions too. For centuries an astonishing array of 'cures', ranging from leeching, clitoral massage, hydrotherapy, insulin coma to clitoridectomy, have been employed by the medical profession to combat the mental ills

suffered by women (Appignanesi, 2008; Astbury, 1996; Maines, 1999; Showalter, 1985).

At the centre of many of these theories and treatments was the idea that for women to have an intellectual life was unhealthy and treatments were designed to curtail any such ambitions, and, as I shall outline, quell the imagination. Thus, the life of an artist did not escape such surveillance and the prescriptive regime controlling appropriate behaviour for women. Charcot's famous photographs of women 'hysterics' existed as images of women in excess and operated as threats and as an example to other women as warnings to stay within conscripted boundaries of acceptable behaviour (Didi-Huberman, 2003; Wolff, 1990). "Impossible standards of conduct, appearance and morality inevitably lead to frustration, rage and (sometimes) to more severe emotional and mental problems. Looked at this way, it is not difficult to accept 'madness' and badness' as legitimate responses to gender roles traditionally imposed on artistic women" (Kerr & Holder, 1999, p. 141). Such pressures and a thwarted desire to make art conspire to create very challenging conditions for maintaining an artistic self or indeed a healthy self.

The treatment of women's mental ill-health, and the motivation behind many of these extraordinary attempts to treat female madness, have been explored extensively (Appignanesi, 2008; Astbury, 1996; Chesler, 1972/2005; Gilbert & Gubar, 1979; Russell, 1995; Showalter, 1985; Ussher, 1991). I will not cover familiar ground in this thesis, but instead attempt to incorporate what has been learnt from these texts and link this to women's creativity. To further inform this research, I also read over 30 striking first-person accounts of women's experiences of mental ill-health including Dawson (1961); Greenberg (1964); Grant-Smith (1922); Harrison (1941); Heaslip (1972); Jeffs (2000a & b; 2004; 2009); Millett (1990); O'Brien (1958); Plath (1963); and Ward (1946).

Sexual violence, the hysterical personality and women's imaginations.

"More than any other psychiatric concept, the doctrine of hysteria around 1900 established a relation between illness and femininity. Hysteria as sickly bodily manifestations caused by the imagination was formulated by the German neuropsychiatrist Paul Möbius..." (Nolte, 2007, p. 60). And, the imagination of women became something to be treated, tamed and controlled and a particularly troublesome aspect of women's imaginations, allegations of sexual and physical abuse, was a dangerous feature managed by treatment. "Women who dared disclose sexual violence were thus often labelled hysteric or mentally ill" (Nolte, 2007, p. 61).

Via the shifting conceptual sands of psychiatry (Morris, 1998; Ratcliff & Kirkby, 2001) the nature of treatments and theories of mental illness have changed since the

19th century, and what Showalter (1985) has called the ‘female malady’ also changed its name over time – hysteria, neurasthenia, schizophrenia, or depression. However, new treatments and deinstitutionalisation have had little effect upon cultural images of women as mental patients. Women’s overrepresentation in mental illness statistics and admissions to psychiatric hospitals (Gerrand, 1993; Pilgrim & Rogers, 1999), founded on overmedication, inappropriate admissions and biases in diagnostic and wellness concepts (Mowbray, Lanir & Hulce, 1986), remained intact into the 20th century and currently (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012). Significantly, so too the lack of attention to the role of sexual violence and trauma in mental ill-health also remains (Astbury, 2008; Astbury & Cabral, 2000), and many would argue these underlying factors continue to influence women’s mental health status and creativity today. Poet, Sandy Jeffs, describes a childhood littered with domestic violence and sexual assault. “My childhood was awful. I have often wondered whether its crushing weight was what tipped my fragile mind over the edge?” (2009, p. 18).

In the time leading up to the 20th century, it was not only the sands shifting beneath the conceptual ground of Western psychiatry, but also of philosophy, physics, psychology and art. The advent of modernism meant many artists strove to become conduits for the new ideas of modernity, “artists rejected old academic methods, opting for spontaneity, bursts of colour, simplified forms, and even new and sometimes shocking subject matter” (Adair, 2005, para. 8). Art came under suspicion as being the work of madmen and degenerates, and coinciding with these changes in the later decades of the 19th century, there was also increased interest in the ‘art of the insane’ beginning with Lombroso in Italy (Dax, 1998). In 1922, Hans Prinzhorn published the first detailed study of the art of patients from the (Prinzhorn Collection) at Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic and other psychiatric hospitals throughout Europe. According to Rhodes (1994), this publication and increased interest in the Prinzhorn Collection had an immediate and resounding impact within European artistic communities. Prinzhorn’s assertion that creativity was not the sole domain of the cultured and educated, but an undeniable human trait present in a range of circumstances, led to an increased interest in the creative potential of madness. However, the convergence of interest in art and psychiatry was not an alignment that necessarily favoured women’s art practices or artworks.

In the 1950s, art programs were introduced to psychiatric institutions in Britain and Australia and Charcotian portraits of women’s madness were no longer required – women could now draw and paint their own portraits of madness for the mind doctors to analyse and scan for diagnostic minutiae amongst the paint stokes. The works could also be collected to educate about the vagaries of mental illness, and the doctors

became the interpreters of insanity for the uneducated general public (Robson, 2000). The imagination was still safely in the hands of the experts, especially if the imagination led to allegations of sexual or physical abuse.

Put Down your Brushes: Quelling the Imagination

Barriers to women's artmaking were not just the day-to-day practicalities of gaining time and space to make art, or the prejudice about whether what was made was really art, but also the significant hurdle of continuing to make art when all indications were that such a practice may send you mad. In late 19th century America, the neurologist Weir Mitchell championed the 'rest cure' for neurasthenia. Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935), the author of the *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), was one of Mitchell's patients, and in 1887 she was advised to go home and "live as domestic a life as possible...to have but two hours' intellectual life a day," and "never to touch pen, brush or pencil again" (1913, p. 1, cited in Martin, 2007, p. 736). Of which she said:

I went home and obeyed those directions for some three months, and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin...Then, using the remnants of intelligence that remained, and helped by a wise friend, I cast the noted specialist's advice to the winds and went to work again – work, the normal life of every human being; work, in which is joy and growth and service, without which one is a pauper and a parasite – ultimately recovering some measure of power. (Perkins Gilman, 1913, para. 5 & 6)

Perkins Gilman was not the only artist being advised to drop her paintbrush; the seclusion and enforced idleness of Weir Mitchell's cure was also adopted enthusiastically by the medical establishment in Europe, including Freud (Martin, 2007). Emily Carr, studying at the Westminster school of arts in 1902, had what was described as a mental and physical breakdown which was diagnosed as 'hysteria'. Emily's prescribed cure was to stay away from her overbearing older sister and "also stay away from painting" (Bailey, 1994, p. 28).

The creative lives of the painter Vanessa Bell and her sister Virginia Woolf are documented via the extensive number of letters and diaries the sisters wrote to each other. What Woolf called her "madness, insanities, illness and the glooms" (Dunn, 1998, p. 240) are more well-known than Vanessa's who also had a period of extreme mental anguish after a miscarriage and wrote that her painting was "the only real cure for unhappiness" (p. 252). "...art is the only thing; the lasting thing, though the others [marriage and motherhood] are splendid" (p. 5). But what is less well known is that, like Perkins Gilman, Woolf was often instructed to rest and not work. "Doctors and those close to her, enforced treatment of her breakdowns with confinement, intellectual and emotional deprivation, drugs and overfeeding" (p. 192). Virginia, like Charlotte, was

“desperate at not being allowed to work” (p. 193) and wrote, “I feel that by writing I am doing what is far more necessary than anything else” (p. 5) and that “To be prevented from writing, was to be cast into the pit of Hell” (p. 157).

While many artistic women no doubt endured this rest treatment, others received more severe sentences and found themselves undergoing institutional psychiatric care, particularly if they did not have the support of families willing to care for them at home or were not wealthy enough to be able to rest for weeks. What was your fate if you were poor and artistic or rebellious and artistic too?

Unconventional Girls – Being Artistic and Visiting the Madhouse

According to Power (2008), rebellious acts of arrogance and cruelty are accepted as reflections of artistic greatness in men, while female artists are mad and known only by their first names, Frida, Zelda, Sylvia. Rebellion in girls was not well tolerated and we see a string of artistic women, like Berthe Moriset (Chadwick & de Courtiven, 1993) and Niki de Saint Phalle (2002) depicted as bold and unruly in their childhood. Leonora Carrington was described as a “spirited and intelligent young woman of her time and background, who was unbearably constrained by society” (Carrington, 1944/1988, p. 5). Some of these artistic young women, who were described as rebellious, would end up in psychiatric institutions or having psychiatric treatments.

Aloise Corbaz, known as the Countess of Suburbia (Cardinal, 1994) entered the psychiatric asylum in Lausanne in 1918 when she was 32 and spent the majority of the rest of her adult years in asylums. Her treating psychiatrists wrote, “although little is known of her youth she had always been self-assertive, overbearing and at times difficult to handle” and as a young woman she was often agitated during menstruation, “becoming at times extremely disagreeable to other members of her family” (Schmidt, Steck & Bader, 1961, p. 59). Her work was critiqued in the following manner by treating doctors, “frustrated sexual desire played a major role in her productions” (p. 63) and “Her paintings consistently depict women with opulent bodies and an abundance of hair...Undoubtedly the disorder has a sexual basis due to the pronounced erotic content of the drawing” (Cardinal, 1972, p. 162). So, again we see the cult of the personality operating where there are more presumptive suggestions made about her life than information about art practices and achievements.

Aloise was one of the few women documented to be given space and materials to pursue an art practice within the walls of a psychiatric hospital. However, in the first half of the 20th century, few women were able to sustain any sort of art practice behind the walls. Dr. Bettina Brand-Clausen noted that only 20 percent of the contributors of artworks to the Prinzhorn Collection in Germany are women, despite women

constituting the majority of patients at the hospital. She observed that women were not socialised to express themselves spontaneously via the visual arts, even inside an institution. Thus while men in institutions for the insane "...asserted their identities through notions of world domination, technological innovation or philosophical and religious speculation, women put their energies into women's work, wrote religious verses in notebooks and kept quiet" (Brand-Clausen, 1996, p. 12).

The French artists Camille Claudel (1864-1943) and her peer Séraphine Louis (1864-1942) did not continue an art practice within the walls. Claudel's life as a sculptor ceased as she was admitted to an asylum; whether through disinclination or lack of access to materials is difficult to ascertain as little is reported about her artistic life thereafter (Higonnet, 1993). Bouchareb, Brehat and Dumont's (2013) film, *Camille Claudel 1915*, based on letters exchanged between Camille and her family, seems to suggest the former. During Claudel's relationship with Rodin, she assisted with modelling and carving Rodin's works but also did her own work, some of which was later attributed to Rodin (Higonnet, 1993). After the relationship ended, Claudel's talent for sculpture remained unacknowledged; "she shut herself in an unkempt studio, collected cats, annoyed the neighbours. She raved about Rodin, accused him of stealing her ideas, of maligning her, of spying on her. The imbalance in their relationship had been magnified into madness." (Higonnet, 1993, p. 27). In 1913, her brother obtained authorisation to have her admitted to a psychiatric asylum against her will, where, despite persistent requests to be released in letters to her family, she spent the next 30 years until her death in 1943.

Also born in 1864, was Séraphine Louis, an obscure, self-taught French artist, until the biographical movie *Séraphine de Senlis* (Poylo & Provost, 2008) was released in 2008. "Mystical, prone to visions, this artist painted, she said, at the behest of the Virgin Mary. Ever more mysterious enlaced flowers, leaves, and fruits thrived in the heaven bound 'garden of paradise' that grew out of the ramblings of her unconscious mind" (Spaak, 2010, p. 210). Séraphine was deeply connected and aware of the rhythms of nature around her and scavenged materials to make her art. She reportedly used a concoction of collected materials – blood from calf livers, candle wax, anointing oil, river weeds, moss and wild herbs as well as the industrial paint Ripolen. Séraphine painted "... on pots, plates, cardboard, tin and canvases" and according to Musées de Senlis (2008), the composition of her paints remains unknown. She mixed these ingredients into spectacular hues to make her dazzling paintings which have an unusual vibrant and pulsating beauty.

In 1912, Séraphine became the housekeeper for Wilhelm Uhde, an influential German art collector and critic who encouraged her to pursue her painting. Forced to

leave France in 1914, Uhde did not see Séraphine again until 1927 when he again became her patron and provided her with funds for artmaking. Partly as the result of this unaccustomed money, Séraphine's life began to spiral out of control and her eccentric behaviour, once tolerated by the residents of Senlis, culminated in admission to an asylum in 1932, at the age of 68, where she died 10 years later. Although she was encouraged to paint in the asylum by Uhde, she did not pick up a brush again, stating that "everything opposes it here" (Séraphine of Senlis, 2012).

So, unlike Aloise who was able to sustain an art practice of sorts in a psychiatric institution, it would be interesting to know why Camille and Séraphine never painted or sculpted again within the institutions – when everything opposed it. It was a time before art therapy, and therefore access to art making materials, was used in psychiatric services – a time before art was officially sanctioned or encouraged. Perhaps, like outside the walls, the rest and confinement regime was meant to soothe the woman, not excite her senses, as some believed exercising the imagination would do – a life of containment not a life of creation. Equally, it may have been that as these women were not accorded their due worth as artists outside the walls, it was highly unlikely that they would be shown that consideration inside the walls.

Art from within the walls. Zelda Fitzgerald, married at 19 to the writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, was admitted to a psychiatric asylum in 1930. She spent the rest of her life in and out of psychiatric institutions until she died in a hospital fire in 1948. Fitzgerald pursued a number of artistic interests which, according to her daughter, began with painting, then ballet at a Russian school in Paris, then writing and back to painting (Brucoli, 1991). However, the rest cure was still applied in the 1930s. As Adair (2005, para. 15) reports, Zelda was prevented from working during her first stay in an asylum as the doctors were 're-educating' her to accept her position as a wife and mother." She didn't resume painting until her release in 1931. Remarkably, she did continue to write within the institution; however, her achievements were now compromised by the perception that it was more therapy than art – the work of a mad woman.

Reactions to her first significant exhibition in 1934 in New York thus tended to focus on her artworks as an expression of her mental illness rather than artistic intent, as mirrored in the exhibition title, *Parfois la Folie est la Sagesse – Sometimes Madness is Wisdom*. Furthermore, since Zelda was clearly working within a modernist framework, a genre already noted as crazy work in mainstream culture, Adair (2005, para. 16) asks "What chance then did an actual asylum inmate have for an unprejudiced evaluation of her work?"

Similarly when Zelda Fitzgerald wrote *Save me the waltz* (1931) in the psychiatric institution, the reception of her writing was also "tainted by the madness

overlay” (McKetta, 2009, p. 56). Scott’s reaction to her book was to reinforce the idea that Zelda was “sick, sick, sick”, and to ensure that the novel went no further until he had read and critiqued it (p. 57). She had “moved into what Scott felt was his literary territory and he tried to stifle her voice” (Cline, 2004, dustcover). As Peers (2008) argues, “modernist creativity of the early to mid-20th century seemed to be framed by silenced and censored women” (p. 6) – some like Zelda silenced permanently by incarceration and a ‘mad art’ lens.

American artist and feminist Alice Neel (1900-1984) also spent time in an asylum from 1930 to 1931, after the death of her first child in 1926 and subsequent loss of her husband and second child leaving New York to return to Cuba. Known predominantly for her many portraits, Alice Neel did not like the term portrait painter, preferring instead to be known as a ‘collector of souls’ (Hoban, 2010). But, like Frida Kahlo, the events in her life were deemed more compelling as a subject for commentary than her day-to-day art practices.

Born in England, a generation after Fitzgerald and Neel, Leonora Carrington (1917-2011) is another painter who, at the age of 23, spent time in a Spanish asylum in 1940. Carrington eloped to Paris in 1937 with Max Ernst, a leader of the surrealist movement and decades older than her. Carrington “fulfilled the Surrealist fantasy of the child-medium who excites the lover’s imagination and moves him to fresher, stronger visions” (Suleiman, 1993, p. 7). In 1940, Ernst was arrested and detained as an enemy alien in France and Carrington escaped to Spain where she was admitted to Dr Morales’ sanatorium in Santander. Andre Breton encouraged Carrington to write *The House of Fear: Notes from Down Below* (1944/1988) as she now “had achieved one of the most desirable ambitions of Surrealism, the voyage down into madness” (Warner, 1988, p. 16). “She had truly experienced the dementia Breton and Paul Elard had only been able to simulate in *l’Immaculate Conception* of 1930...” (Warner, 1988, p. 18). Warner notes that whilst Carrington’s madness confirmed her as a Surrealist heroine, this recognition ignored the cost to her, when in fact her book is a testimony to the harrowing nature of psychosis and she relays a graphic description of the horrors of Cardiazol convulsive drug therapy. Carrington escaped from the asylum in 1940 and fled to Lisbon where she sought refuge in the Mexican Embassy and subsequently moved to Mexico where she continued to paint until her death in 2011.

Unica Zürn (1916-1970) was a German visual artist and poet who, like Carrington, wrote a book – *The House of Illnesses* (Zürn, 1958/1993) – about her experiences of the psychiatric hospital, with encouragement from her surrealist associates such as Breton and Hans Bellmer, with whom she began an intimate relationship. Some of the artists in Paris at the time were experimenting with Surrealist

“automatic” drawing technique and taking mescaline, under the guise of researching human consciousness. According to Oisteanu (2005), Zürn’s participation in these experiments with hallucinatory drugs led to a series of mental crises and subsequent hospitalisations from 1957 until she died by suicide in 1970, after the end of her 17 year relationship with Bellmer (Rupprecht, 2000). Unica had written about leaving the house of illnesses and returning to her life where “not the slightest thing had changed. It filled me with melancholy. I had grown used to constant changes in the House of Illnesses. Imagination lived and reigned there. Here in the world, habit ruled with rigid hands” (Zürn, 1969/2000, p. 41). For Zürn, perhaps traversing into the world where imagination reigns free was an oasis from habit, rigid rules, common sense and domesticity – all the boundaries associated with women’s prescribed roles and perhaps antithetical to an art practice, particularly one within a surrealist context.

Pick up your brushes again: Psychiatric art as tarot card. Mirka Mora recalls when she was seventeen living in Paris in 1945, “I was troublesome to my mother,” and after Mora quit school, her mother took her to “a doctor who gave me electric shocks at the back of my head...after two sessions I realised my mother and the doctor were not right and refused to get more electric shocks” (Mora, 2000, p. 22).

Although Mora escaped the path to psychiatric internment, this was a time which coincided with a shifting of the alignment between art and psychiatry. Instead of trying to suppress or banish the female imagination, the mind doctors now began to put women’s creative imaginings to work under the guidance and scrutiny of art as diagnostic and therapeutic tool.

The ‘art of the insane’ became the catalyst for Jean Dubuffet to define the movement known as Art Brut in 1948 (Thevoz, 1994). This art was considered raw or ‘uncooked’ by cultural influences and was conceptualised as art in its purest form because it came directly from the artist’s own impulses (Beier, 1989). Art Brut was not considered completely synonymous with Psychiatric Art, as pure intuitive and original expression could also be found among other marginalised individuals such as visionaries and eccentrics. The criterion for works to be included in the Art Brut collection was strict. Creators were not to be tainted or distorted by culture and thus could not be trained or have contact with art culture. The art itself was made for an imaginary audience or “*himself*”, the artist (Peiry, 2001, p. 30). Aloise Corbaz was one of the few women represented in Art Brut Collections.

Maizels (1996) suggests that in the first half of the 20th century, it was the artistic community that predominantly responded to ‘Psychiatric Art’, while psychiatry largely ignored its importance. However, by mid-century, albeit for widely divergent reasons to the artistic community, psychiatrists in Europe increasingly began to view

the “pictorial works of psychotics as a mirror to the soul” (Schmidt, Steck & Bader, 1961, p. 33) and a large body of Psychiatric Art was exhibited in Paris at the First International Congress in Psychiatry in 1950 (Gisborne, 1994).

In 1946, Dr Cunningham Dax also introduced art programs at the Netherne Asylum in Britain (Scull, 1979). This is considered to be the first instance of art being used as a therapeutic tool in mainstream psychiatry (Koh & Fox, 2003), and he would later introduce art to psychiatric settings in Australia in the early 1950s. However, works produced by those with a mental illness via art therapy and art workshops were rejected as Art Brut pieces, as such production was considered to be highly directed, not spontaneous or compulsive and not executed in private – all essential criteria to be considered true examples of Art Brut (Weiss, 1992). Thus, the art and psychiatric communities began to differ in their views, but art had begun its trajectory to becoming a tool used in mental health.

One of the recipients of this enthusiasm to put art in the service of mental health was the French artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002) who, in a psychiatric hospital in Nice in 1953, was advised to paint to help her heal (de Saint Phalle, 2002, p. 31). I first encountered de Saint Phalle at MAMAC in Nice in 2005 on a study tour to Italy to investigate what has been called outsider art, raw art and psychiatric art. Advertising her exhibition, a huge banner with the words *my psychiatrist told me to paint away my illness* hovered over some of her sculptures of the Mammoth Nannas series. Here was an unexpected hook which led me to also visit her extraordinary sculpture park, *The Tarot Garden* (de Saint Phalle & Pietromarchi, 1999) in Tuscany.

De Saint Phalle (1999) recounts a childhood where she tries to forgive her father “for trying to make me his mistress at the age of eleven” (dustcover). After expulsion from one school she was soon in trouble again. “After the incidents with Father...imaginative revenge, I painted all the fig leaves of the Greek statues at Brearley with red paint” (p. 64). The headmistress suggested Niki should either have psychiatric treatment or leave school. “Mother told me I was to see a psychiatrist and said, ‘We know you are not like other little girls and want to help you’. I was worried that I might be insane” (p. 75) “since I had a nervous breakdown at 22 and all those electro-shocks...” (p. 127).

So unlike Perkins Gilman or Woolf before her, who were ordered to forget their work, put down their pens and brushes, or Séraphine and Claudel who could not or would not make art within the institution, or Carrington and Zürn who were treated by psychiatry to remove their madness on one hand, and urged to celebrate their madness as a Surrealist achievement on the other, de Saint Phalle was encouraged to embrace the brush as therapy for her madness. Unlike Fitzgerald or Zürn, de Saint

Phalle's stay in the hospital was short and she went on to become an artist without the madness albatross attached to her artworks and, as part of the French avant garde scene, she garnered acclaim for her experimental shooting paintings of the 1960s.

Mora and de Saint Phalle went on to become professional artists of note after their encounters with psychiatric treatments and remained relatively divorced from the pervasive stereotyping of the mad women of art. However, many other women who aspired to be artists suffered a new way of having their artmaking denigrated or trivialised, where art became a tool for therapy under the psychiatric spectrum of treatments for mental illness. Women's art did not need to be taken seriously as artmaking, as it was now therapy; a therapeutic tool, a diagnostic aid.

Resisting the art is therapy paradigm. Mora strongly rejected 'art therapy':

This is a term used by so many doctors but 'art therapy' is not an expression I agree with as it does a disservice to professional painters and artists. I apologize for attacking the established rules for deciphering a mind in distress, but I feel as a professional painter that art and therapy should not be confused. (Robson, 2006, p. 4)

Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, who voluntarily checked herself into Siewa Psychiatric institution in Japan in 1975 (Reilly, 2009) and remains there today, has also never subscribed to the art as therapy paradigm. "At the hospital there are art therapy programs such as calligraphy, karaoke singing, movie appreciation and painting classes. Being the only professional artist in the hospital, I take no part in those activities. Every day I create artwork either at a small place allotted me at the hospital or at my studio" (Turner, 1999).

Kusama left Japan as a young woman and became part of the avant garde art scene in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, being mentored by Georgia O'Keeffe, Louise Bourgeois and Yoko Ono.

For art like mine – art that does battle at the boundary between life and death, questioning what we are and what it means to live and die – this country was too small, too servile, too feudalistic and too scornful of women...My art needed a more unlimited freedom and a wider world. (Kusama, 2011, p. 93)

Kusama, like many other women featured in this thesis, began making art from an early age and, as an insatiable drawer, she often drew what came to her in hallucinations (Rule, 2010).

I have seen a number of hallucinations since childhood, dots, nets, patterns, and colours...one day, after gazing at a pattern of red flowers on the tablecloth, I looked up to see that the ceiling, the windows and the columns seemed to be plastered with the same red floral pattern. I saw the entire room, my entire

body, and the entire universe covered with red flowers and in that instant my soul was obliterated and I was restored, returned to infinity, to eternal time and absolute space. This was not an illusion but reality itself. (Kusama, 2011, p. 69)

By the 1970s, the Japanese media were calling her “the queen of scandal. The shameless artist and the naked provocateur” (Kusama, 2011, p. 214). Perhaps her art practices and interest in questions of time, space, infinity and eternity were viewed as ‘mad’ acts not art acts.

Like Kusama, Del Kathryn Barton (1972-) also experienced sensory hallucinations in childhood. These episodes, as she describes them, placed a “very large space between me and the surface of my body. I was a long way back in my body. This feeling of not being present, of not being able to be present” (Turley, 2010, 2.48min). Barton discusses how she doubted her ability to be able to actually grow up and function as a normal adult and her fear of ending up in an institution.

For an exhibition in 2007, the catalogue describes her works as giddily covered with adornment, fecund and alive, where all the space is occupied with energy and “Possessing a profound horror vacuii, or fear of empty space” (University of Queensland Art Museum, 2007, p. 2) – a term used frequently in analysis of what has been termed *psychiatric art*. However, this is not how Barton herself views her works as she characterises her artmaking as a fantastical, fluid and dynamic relationship between the figure and the landscape, perhaps also resonating with how Barad would discuss human existence and meeting the universe halfway, and how Yayoi depicts the world via her infinity nets. Barton also describes her vivid dreaming life as an energy that flows into her practice. The relevance of dreams and artmaking is discussed in Chapter 13. Reminiscent of de Saint Phalle, Barton also paints what it is to be a woman in a female body – the corporeal aspect of being. For Barton, “the stakes are very high, but I think that they have to be; the work means everything to me” (Turley, 2010, 27.08mins).

The artists above recount the vital role of artmaking in their lives, but not all contemporary artists have managed to avoid the illness overlay. It could be argued that many women have not been able to maintain an art practice in times of mental crisis and de Saint Phalle and Kusama were already established artists before residing in a psychiatric hospital. Kusama had artistic credibility and funds to negotiate a space to create art – not as therapy inside the institution. Many aspiring and emerging artists may have entered psychiatric care and watched their artistic aspirations and practices dissolve. Few would have the funds to have a separate studio and would not have been able to pursue this option whilst being treated for a mental illness? Artist, John Perceval, was given a studio of his own whilst in the Melbourne psychiatric hospital

called Larundel in the 1970s. I could find no records of such a luxury afforded to any women artists who spent time in the psychiatric institutions of Victoria.

I return to 2009 and 2012 Man Booker prize winner, Hilary Mantel who, as discussed in Chapter 4, had undiagnosed endometriosis and was treated with antidepressants and anti-psychotic drugs that she reports actually made her psychotic, until she was sent to hospital where she wrote a story about a woman who believed her baby was a changeling. Her psychiatrist's instructions were to stop writing (Anderson, 2009). It is surprising to see a form of the rest cure (put down your pens and brushes) still operating in contemporary times as a hurdle women must still surmount in order to have their concerns and their art taken seriously.

Chapter 7: Study One: The Exhibition: Canvassing the Emotions: Women, Creativity and Mental Health in Context⁴



Sara Wilson, *Mona Lisa*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm. Collection of the artist.⁵

Defining the Artworks and the Artists

'But I don't want to go among mad people,' Alice remarked.

'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.'

'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.

'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.'

The Cheshire Cat (Carroll 1865/2004, p. 87) thus defines 'madness', echoing the reasoning that has often been applied to artworks created by people who experience or have experienced mental ill-health. This art has been conceptualised and exhibited under a range of guises – 'Art of the Insane', 'Psychiatric Art', 'Art Brut', 'Outsider Art', 'Marginal Art', 'Art Therapy' – each with its own nomenclature and each denoting and predetermining the lens through which the audience views both the artist and the artworks.

The propensity to categorise, define and control operates in the fields of both art and psychiatry. Definitions of art and who is or can be an artist are highly political, and considerable and passionate debate continues about what constitutes Psychiatric Art, Art Brut and Outsider Art (see Maizels 1996; Rhodes 1994). Cardinal (1994) called this debate 'term warfare'. As discussed in Chapter 6, some argued that such art was

⁴ Sections of this Chapter have appeared in Northfield, S. (2008). *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* [Exhibition catalogue]. Melbourne: Cunningham Dax Collection and Northfield, S., Lawrence, D., & Wilson, S. (2010). *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health: An exhibition. Women Against Violence: An Australian Feminist Journal*, 22, 4-17.

⁵ Artwork and artist's statements by practising artists Donna Lawrence and Sara Wilson who chose to have their artworks and statements attributed.

Artist Profile: Donna is an award winning practising artist who has exhibited regularly over the past 25 years and has been involved in a wide variety of community arts festivals and projects. Artist Profile: Sara is a practising artist and visual arts student. Sara has exhibited works regularly over the last decade.

raw or uncooked by cultural influences (Beier, 1989; Peiry, 2001). Others viewed the artwork as “a mirror to the soul” (Schmidt, Steck & Bader, 1961, p. 33) or as giving clues to psychiatric status (Dax, 1958: 1965; Robson, 2000: 2002).

This Chapter explores Ames’ (1994) assertion that such debates have not included the artists concerned, who have thus been denied an active role in defining themselves. Moreover, there has been little documented examination of the meaning or function of such artmaking to the creators, or to the role it played in their lives (Jadi, 1996; Metcalf, 1996; Pepper, 2003; Spaniol, 2001). Similarly, the exhibiting of art created by people who have experienced mental ill-health has typically been underpinned by either psychiatric or aesthetic considerations, with little reference to the wishes or intentions of the artists themselves, or to the cultural/historical context. It could be argued that a psychiatric mode of display has traditionally perpetuated stereotypes by reproducing an illustrated version of the DSM (Henzell, 2003). Equally, attention to purely aesthetic elements separates the artworks from the artists, and they become objects ripped from context, giving no clues to the kind of experiences inhabited. Douglas (1996) notes the works provoke more questions than answers.

This Chapter discusses the complexities of exhibiting artworks by women who have experienced mental ill-health and/or psychological trauma. The artworks span six decades from the 1950s to the first decade of the 21st century. The production sites vary from art produced in psychiatric institutions to works produced in studios by contemporary practising artists. The first part of this Chapter explores the intersection of women, creativity and mental health within the cultural, theoretical, ethical and historical contexts in which the exhibition was embedded. The second part documents the processes followed in preparing and presenting the exhibition. The exhibition sought to respect the women’s artworks and experiences via a framework of non-assumptive inquiry and reference to the artists’ intentions. This innovative exhibition acknowledged women’s contributions to the cultural and historical landscape of Victoria and invoked echoes from the past to provoke thoughts for the present (and future) around women, creativity and wellbeing.

Sketching the Unfolding of an Exhibition and a Thesis

The idea for this project germinated in 2003 when I visited what was then called the *Cunningham Dax Collection for Psychiatric Art*, in Melbourne. At this time, the artworks in the collection had predominantly been completed in the psychiatric institutions of Victoria between the 1950s to the late 1990s, when the institutions in Victoria finally closed their doors (see Doessel, 2009, for a comprehensive overview of mental health services and deinstitutionalisation in Australia). In 2003, these works were referred to as psychiatric art, with the dominant paradigm for considering these

artworks being psychiatric determinism. Didactic gallery cards led the viewer through mental symptomology apparently evident in each work of art. Carmen Lawrence in her opening speech for the National Women's Art Exhibition in 1995, commented that when entering a gallery she always asks 'where are the women' (Kerr, 1995). On this visit, I too searched the display; however, unlike other galleries, most of the works on the walls had no names to identify the artists displayed, and no clues as to what the artists' lives might have held other than their artworks which were viewed via a lens of mental illness.

In 2006, I began the process of curating a touring exhibition of women's artworks selected from the renamed CDC. As one of only a handful in the world, this Collection now held approximately 12,000 works that were created in circumstances ranging from psychiatric institutions through to the studios of contemporary practising artists. I thus began to ruminate over questions concerning not only *where are the women behind these works*, but *what do we know about the women who made art in psychiatric settings? What do we know about women artists who had an experience of mental ill-health? And crucially, what do we know about the role of artmaking in their lives and their artmaking practices and processes?* The responses I received when voicing these questions were consistent. "I know nothing of the 'women and psychiatric art'". "I didn't know of anything specifically written on this subject" (Dr Eric Cunningham Dax, personal correspondence, April 12, 2006). "There exist not many researches on files of women. And we also just started to look into the files and at the biographies, as far as we discovered them" (Dr. Bettina Brand, curator at the Prinzhorn Collection Heidelberg, Germany, personal correspondence, December 5, 2005). In serendipity, the Prinzhorn Collection went on to create a travelling exhibition of women's art in 2006-2007, and I curated the CDC travelling exhibition of women's art in 2008-2009. Both were considered novel explorations of this area in mental health contexts, albeit on opposite sides of the world.

The use of art in mental health settings has a long history, as discussed in Chapter 6. When Dax arrived in Melbourne in 1952 and took up the role as Chairman of the Mental Hygiene Authority of Victoria, one of the reforms he instigated was to introduce art programs to psychiatric institutions across Victoria. The art "activities are ...prescribed by the doctor, not as recreation or entertainment, but as a definite form of treatment" (Dax, 1955, p. 60). According to Dax, "artistic merit is not important. The objective is to allow patients to express feelings freely and to show in their creations the thoughts that are often difficult to put into words" (Dax, 1998, p. 6). Art works were viewed as a direct representation of clinical symptoms, only to be understood within a treatment regime overseen by the expertise of the psychiatrist (Robson, 2000). This is

primarily how art continued to be viewed and exhibited in psychiatric hospitals in Victoria over the next five decades, despite several initiatives, such as artists from Arts Access running a skills-based art program at Larundel Psychiatric Hospital in the 1980s. This skills-based art program eventually moved out of the institution in 1995 and became Splash Art Studio run by NEAMI – a psychosocial rehabilitation organisation.

Stickley, Morgan, Hui and Bertram (2007) argue that international literature has only just begun to question the efficacy of art therapy, which still remains a part of the armoury of psychotherapeutic treatment regimes available in Australia, despite all psychiatric institutions having been closed. The legacy of the art as therapeutic tool is powerful and remains so in 2014.

When I began this research project in 2006, as I read and visited galleries and became immersed in the topic, I began to realise that what the artists were saying was far more complex than just *this is good for my wellbeing* and in fact, people were actively disputing this framework, arguing that linking creativity with madness is a way of lowering the status of the artists and the art. Sydney performance artist, WART, was interviewed in relation to the exhibition called '*For Matthew and Others.*' She emphatically denied the connection between her work and the therapeutic link: "Don't call this therapy. It's what I do. It's who I am" (O'Brien, 2006). Mental health advocate, Simon Champ, comments that framing art created by people with an experience of mental ill-health solely in a therapeutic context belittles their artistic talents and creates a ghetto from which all such art is viewed. He urges viewers to respect the art and artists and view the work and practice outside the prism of mental illness (Champ, 2006). Melbourne cartoonist Merinda Epstein also questions psychological readings of artwork which ignores the makers as artists, as they are then only valuable for what they have produced on a psychological level and this reading applies to all areas of life, "I get really cross when my politics is 'pathologised' and then 'therapised' (2005, para. 6).

In Denmark, a psychiatric hospital at Aarhus houses a Museum of Art containing works produced in the hospital over the past century. Lejsted and Nielson (2006), art historian and psychiatrist respectively, comment that after many years and many viewings of thousands of art works, their work has led them to conclude that the premise that subject matter, motif or manner of execution is specific to a particular mental illness is untenable. The art cannot be used as a diagnostic aid. They argue that whilst the piece of art undoubtedly reflects the person's experience, it does not necessarily reflect the illness. Mental illness is more likely to affect production where people might display periods of prodigious activity and at other times be unable to work. Medication will also influence production. The authors do believe that art can be

of great therapeutic benefit but they do not subscribe to the art as therapy regime of “well organised art-work followed by psychological analysis with a therapeutic rather than an artistic intent” (p. 368). They believe there should be far more emphasis on the artistic production.

Framing an Exhibition

The touring exhibition, the first of its kind in Australia, presented the art within a different framework from those traditionally applied to the artworks. The lens of a feminist analysis was applied to the CDC, the artists and the artworks – one that explored both historical and social context for understanding women’s productions and the meaning of artmaking to the artists.

The nature of treatments, theories of mental ill-health, and societal attitudes have changed dramatically since the 1950s. Women’s mental health has increasingly been construed in terms of the socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances in which they live, and their responses to the wider social environment (Astbury 1996; Astbury & Cabral, 2000; Australian Women’s Health Network, 2007; Department of Human Services 2006; Taft, 2003). As Astbury (2008, p. 4) commented in the exhibition catalogue, one of the most significant changes over the period covered by the exhibition “has been the belated awareness of the critical importance of violence and trauma to psychological functioning”. Research indicates that women who have experienced intimate partner violence are twice as likely to be diagnosed with mental ill-health (Department for Health and Ageing, 2009). The health burden that is created by gender discrimination, poverty, social position and various forms of violence against women can no longer be ignored as gender-specific risk factors on women’s mental health (Krug, et al., 2002; Office for Women, 2007; VicHealth, 2004). Focusing upon and searching for illness within the individual is now unsustainable as the dominant way of understanding women’s mental health.

The focus and search for illness in an image is equally unsustainable as a way of viewing the artwork of people who have experienced mental ill-health. The works in this exhibition were therefore not presented to show symptoms of mental ill-health, but were displayed as examples of women’s artmaking, highlighting their ability to be creative in daunting circumstances, both physically and emotionally, and to offer everyday perceptions of the world in which we live.



Donna Lawrence, *See Beyond This*, 2006, oil and acrylic on canvas, 110 x 100.4 cm. Collection of the artist.

Donna Lawrence: Artist's Statement (2006)

I believe visual artwork can be aesthetically pleasing as well as politically motivated or intellectual. I aim for both of these elements in my work. I believe artwork can be empowering in its shared meaning as opposed to simply its aesthetic qualities. It can allow some people to feel a significant adherence to a group of similar minded/experienced people, and lead others to experience empathy and gain knowledge, concerning the occurrences of others. Similarly, I hope that my work will reach people who have experienced mental illness, and people who have not. It is ultimately an issue that affects us all.

Figure 1. Donna Lawrence – See Beyond This image and artist's statement

The Context: Art by Women who have Experienced Mental Ill-health

Given women's historical lack of visibility in art generally, it is not surprising that artistic contributions from women experiencing mental ill-health have been virtually ignored. References to individual women's artistic productions appear infrequently in the literature amongst the scores of male representatives, or 'Masters' and *masterpieces*; a discourse that excludes women. Similarly, male creators who have experienced mental ill-health overwhelmingly populate gallery exhibits (Brand-Clausen, 2006; Salmon 2005).

Peers (2008, p. 6) has suggested that, "Women with creative and intellectual ambitions were often assumed to be suffering symptoms of madness, or in danger of straining body and mind to such a degree that insanity would be the inevitable outcome." In response to this positioning of artistic women and the apparent lack of artist perspective and context, a primary focus of this exhibition was the study of women as producers of art, and the study of the nature of the society in which it arose. Pollock (1988) argued that feminist inquiry places art and its institutions on a continuum with other economic, social, and ideological practices affecting women's lives and artistic production, and in this case, mental illness and its institutions were also interrogated.

Johnson (1998) claims that in order to understand the lives of women living in institutions, it is necessary to understand the nature of the institution itself. Cohen (1992) asserts that women have been institutionalised from ancient times to the present, for reasons often based upon control of women's sexuality and their socio-economic and political subordination. For example, Peterson and Wilson (1976) note that women in Europe have entered institutions such as convents since the 5th Century for a variety of reasons: as political prisoners, as a vocation, because they were widows, illegitimate, had physical or intellectual disabilities, exposed to domestic violence; or they were forced by relatives. There was also another reason why women entered convents. It was a respectable option for women wanting to pursue a life other than marriage and childbearing, and was particularly attractive for women artists. Convents provided the best working conditions, materials, training and support and were the centre of intellectual and artistic life for such women. A rich array of women's art – manuscripts, needlework, tapestries and sculptures, were created in these institutions (Chadwick, 2002).

In the early 16th Century, Italy became the centre of a social experiment with the creation of a network of women-only institutions designed to shelter problematic women such as penitent prostitutes, victims of rape and vulnerable women (Cohen, 1992). The influence of these ideas and the creation of these institutions penetrated well beyond Italy and have shaped Western societies' responses to perceived social problems (Cohen, 1992). Such institutional responses to women who did not fit prescribed social roles informed the later development of asylums for the mentally ill, and provide a context for the production of art in institutions such as psychiatric hospitals in Australia.

The historical and societal context: Women making art in 20th century Australia. Undoubtedly, the position of women as artists has changed since the 1950s in Victoria, when Mora (2000) and Burke (1995) depict Melbourne as a very

conservative place to be as an artist and a woman. The Melbourne art scene in the time leading up to Dax arriving and introducing what he termed 'psychiatric art' was thus not particularly conducive to enhancing the position of women as artists.

In 1930s Melbourne, there were a number of vibrant artist colonies such as the Reeds' Heide, Justus Jørgensen's Monsalvat, the Boyds at Warrandyte, an active Contemporary Art Society (CAS) and a publishing group called the Angry Penguins. There is some information about the women involved in the artist colonies at the time – Joy Hester at Heide, Sonia Skipper at Monsalvat, and Alisa O'Connor as one of the few women, along with Hester, who was involved in the CAS. O'Connor was also a founding member of the Australian Union of Women. Skipper's book *My Story: tales from a pioneer of Monsalvat* (2005), describes "My indignation at injustice began early...about the things that girls weren't supposed to do like buying beer at a bar or being expected to do the menial work in the studio, like cleaning up at the end of the day or getting the lunch ready..." (p. 43). Skipper died in 2008, but despite a significant role in Melbourne art history, most of her works have not been collected.

In a complex web of relations, artists from the various colonies formed relations in and around each other. Arguably, Joy Hester is the only woman from these times to have gained any recognition as an artist – albeit not until recently. In the Angry Penguins publication of 1943, John Reed writes "Joy Hester: Peroxidal blonde in her early 20s: former student at the Melbourne Gallery; natural and prolific draughtsman; exhibits with CAS; writes poetry; married to painter A. L. Tucker" (Burke, 1995, p. 19), effectively emphasising her relationship with a noted artist, and her appearance and therefore her sexuality. Chadwick (1990) describes how, in the 18th century, not all women artists were ignored or derided but a select few were permitted to achieve a level of prominence as artists as long as they stayed within prescribed images of femininity, grace and modesty. It was also advantageous if the women artists were beautiful and had glamorous friends, a tradition that Mencimer (2002) traces well into the 20th century. A tradition that was also evident in Melbourne in the 1940s and 50s where again a select few "women artists of the time...who achieved eminence in their own right were also invariably beautiful...physical beauty in a woman seemed to be a necessary prerogative of the time" (Jones, 2004, p. 225).

In the first half of the 20th century, within modernist culture, potentially the movements of expressionism and surrealism may have been a time when women's contributions would become more valued, having been stereotypically associated with the expression of inner thoughts, emotions, and the unconscious. In fact, surrealism brought the objectification of women to new heights. Despite the 'new freedom' of modernism and the identification of liberated non-conformist women with the

surrealists, woman were fetishised and fragmented in often quite violent imagery – for example, deKooning and Picasso (Kirby, 1992). Alisa O'Connor (1982) describes it this way, “the succession of raped, dismembered and humiliated figures...the woman is an object and loses her humanity.” So the young woman artist senses “that her own sex is recognised as no more than a vehicle to express alienation, fragmentation or plain hostility” (p. 30).

During the Second-World-War large numbers of Australian women entered the work force to alleviate labour shortages, constituting a move away from conventional roles for women. However, according to Burke (1983/2001), the times were oppressively conservative in the decade that followed. In Australia, painting in particular was seen as a virile occupation (Damousi, 2005; Maguire, 1988/9) and was often “...informed by the extreme fascination with sexuality and Freudian psychiatry that proved so potent in the 1950s Melbourne” (Peers, 2001). Erica McGilchrist, a founding member of WAR, began to exhibit her work in the 1950s and taught a weekly painting class at what was then known as Kew Mental Hospital (Peckham, 2010/11). Peers (2001) critiqued the paintings in McGilchrist's Kew Mental Home series as an exploration of the nexus of the surveillance of both women and the insane, *The Airing Court* (1954) and *Patient at Kew Mental Hospital* being evocative examples. However, Maguire (1988/9) observes that nearly all the women who were trying to live by art at this time in Melbourne were only able to enter the art community through marriage, and there was a high mortality rate among women artists and artists' wives.

Thus, if it was difficult to have work taken seriously as an artist and a woman in Australia in the interwar years and the 1950s, even when, or perhaps despite, being intimately involved in the artistic communities of the time, with a psychiatric diagnosis it would have been virtually impossible. The appearance of art programs in the psychiatric services in Victoria did not improve women's opportunities to become artists or to be recognised as professional artists, as artmaking now became a therapeutic tool servicing a health rather than an artistic agenda. Art could be relegated to therapy and thereby jettisoned beyond the boundaries of serious art. The works became effectively bound by their creator's psychiatric diagnosis in perpetuity.

Theoretical and ethical considerations for exhibiting.

The Cunningham Dax Collection raises many disturbing questions for those who view it: what is normal, what is sickness, what is aberrant, what is creative, who is an artist, what role does art play in society, what is the relation between artist and audience? The questions go ricocheting backwards and forwards like the swinging silver balls on a 1970s desk toy, each question setting others in motion. (Peers, 2008, p. 6)

The exhibiting of art created by people who have experienced mental ill-health has many layers of complexity, and grappling with the theoretical and ethical implications of displaying works was a central feature of this exhibition making process. Exhibiting works by contemporary artists who have given consent to participate in an exhibition and who are available to negotiate the terms of their involvement can be ethically transparent. However, the majority of the older works in the CDC are sourced from psychiatric institutions and the maker is viewed as a patient or creator rather than an artist. In many cases these works do not have artist attribution: either the artist is unknown or unaware that their works are held at the Collection.

In relation to exhibiting these works Dr. Eugen Koh (Director CDC) stated:

...unlike the works selected for other collections around the world – which often concentrate on the ‘bizarre’ or the ‘psychotic’, or are exhibited for their aesthetic value and ‘skilful execution’ – the works in the Dax Collection have been chosen to illustrate aspects or symptoms of mental illness, or for their ability to highlight subjective experiences of mental illness. (2002, p. 2)

More recently, Koh (2008, p. 86) indicated that the CDC “provides curatorial opinions from both art history and psychological perspectives to give viewers greater choice about how they approach the works and to ‘permit the creator’s voice to be heard’”. Whilst this may be achieved where contemporary artists are willing to provide biographical and artistic commentary, it is less clear that this is the outcome for the works and the artists who have no input into the exhibition-making process – the artist’s voice can be overshadowed by the clinical discourse.

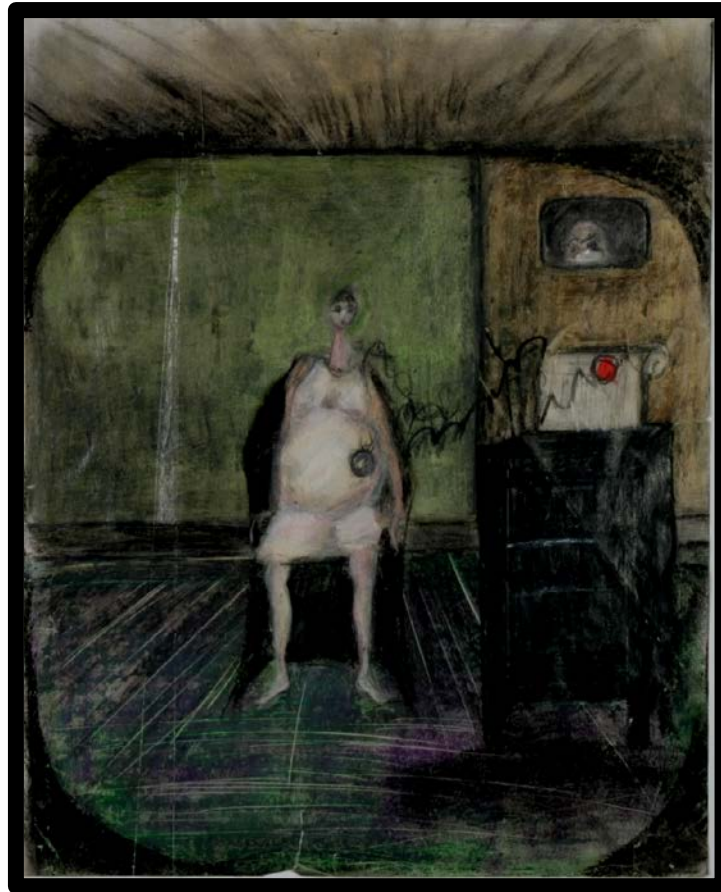
The question essential to this exhibition was *how to display the artworks of women who have experienced mental ill-health in a manner which respected the artistic integrity and agency of the artists and offered viewers a glimpse of the women’s lived experiences via a framework which neither pathologised nor romanticised the images?*

Being female does not predispose the artist to present work from a feminist perspective; however, the very experience of becoming and being a woman in Australia can influence the art produced in response to this experience. Although gender binds women artists into a marginalised group in culture and in cultural representations of women, gender alone would rarely encompass all the concerns of individual artists (Deepwell, 2002). Women’s art is not one kind of practice, type of work, or focus on a particular medium. As the exhibition-maker, I was aware of the potential ghettoising effect of exhibiting the works under ‘women’s art’ and instead tried to present a labyrinth of possible meaning for each viewer to unravel. The exhibition did not focus on the ‘feminine’ quality of the work, but as an facilitator of cultural debate.

Nor did it focus on otherness – psychiatric/outsider/woman; women artists have always been outsiders in a male profession and have only recently begun to find acceptance as artists. Woolf (1927/1977) illustrates the position of woman as artist with the character Lily Briscoe reported to be based upon her sister, Vanessa Bell. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsey considers Lily as an artist and concludes “one could not take her paintings very seriously” (p. 13). As Borzello (2000) comments, “So hundreds of women artists have been hidden from history, misattributed and forgotten. Despite this, women throughout time have shown resilience to this and produced art” (p. 16). The works in this exhibition provide testament to this resilience.

This exhibition aimed to share the stories and illuminate the complexities of being a woman experiencing mental ill-health and producing art in Australian society. Reading for instances of resistance, the curatorial framework aimed to subvert the psychiatric gaze which attempts to define and dictate what is normal and what is deviant. Historically, the defining privilege has belonged to the West and the male, and in the case of art created by people who have experienced mental ill-health, the clinical ‘expert’. Conversely, the *Canvassing the emotions* exhibition focused upon women’s depictions of themselves and other women – women painting women, and subjects and images depicting the experience of becoming and being a woman in Australian society.

Canvassing the emotions also sought to disrupt the location of women solely within the domain of ‘the emotional’. The works in this exhibition were displayed as imaginative responses to the circumstances in which women live/d rather than unblemished manifestations of illness or as ‘mirrors to the soul’. While art may express the emotions and personal struggles of individual women artists, and may reveal something about the artist’s experience of mental ill-health, these works may also reflect experiences of being a woman, of various forms of violence against women, exploration of sexual identity, the medicalisation of women’s bodies, the impact of institutionalisation, and the impact of being labelled as having a mental illness, with the attendant aspects of treatment and stigmatisation. The works also reflected cultural and artistic influences specific to time and place, and offered a variety of options to consider what was being conveyed.



Artist's name withheld by request, No title, undated (donated 1996), pastel and gouache on paper, 40 x 32 cm.

Artist's Statement

Please find enclosed two pastels that I completed a couple of years after the birth of my first and only child. As you can see they are not pleasant pictures, but they helped me to express my outrage at the hospital environment, and the institutionalised authoritative power of the staff. I found the whole experience to be deeply humiliating – which I believe contributed to a feeling of depression and eventual separation from my partner. I don't want these images back; you are free to dispose of them. The process of making the pictures was very therapeutic.

Figure 2. Artist name withheld – Untitled work image and artist's statement

The historical and ethical context: Clinical records versus art. The conditions in which the works were created and collected in psychiatric institutions in Victoria are complex and it is not known how the majority of artists viewed the opportunity to engage in artmaking. The distinctions between programs in the various institutions remain unclear (Robson, 2006). Some were run by artists and conducted as skills-based initiatives. Others were run via occupational therapy departments and were considered therapy. However, works produced in institutions were predominantly

viewed as therapeutic or clinical records, not art, and were seen to be made by patients not artists.

The pictures...were all freely constructed, no artistic instructions or suggestions as to content were given to the patients. The productions were confidential, and were never hung on the walls, nor were shown to others or discussed, except when the person so wanted...the works were created purely for therapeutic purpose and this was explained to the patients beforehand... (Dax, 1998, p. 3)

It is impossible to confirm how or by whom this verbal contract was relayed to each patient and whether their understanding of this contract was ever verified. There is also nothing to tell us about how the creators felt about the lack of control over their works or how they felt about the status of their works – art works or therapeutic materials – since the doctor, not the creator, had already defined this.

It is surmised that women may have felt even stronger barriers to viewing themselves as artists or their works as art, as the larger society outside the institution rarely provided opportunities for women to consider themselves in this way (Hoorn 1994; Parker & Pollock 1981). Lapsley, Nikora and Black (2002) reported that women recovering from mental ill-health found it hard to assert their individuality against the expectations of traditional roles for women. Additionally, had women been assertive enough to ask for their works, after being informed that they belonged to the hospital and that they were clinical records and not art, they would have had few options to store their works. Daily living conditions in the institutions at this time have been reported as being overcrowded and squalid, and secure spaces for personal items were not provided (Coleborne, 2003).

The works made in psychiatric institutions were thus not available to the public domain to engage in the merits of the art versus art therapy debate, or even the fine versus decorative art, or the enduring art versus craft dichotomy. Such art made by women was safely confined behind the walls of the institution and, like the art made by women in the domestic sphere, could be considered 'different' from that made in art school or at the studio. The conditions of production thus defined the status of both the creator and the works. Furthermore, due to legal and ethical constraints, in the absence of the patient's name and any commentary, the context of being produced in a psychiatric institution potentially dominates the individual's story within the work when displayed.

The CDC has recognised the ethical dilemma in displaying works without creator authority and considers the balance between the need for public education and the rights of individual creators. The CDC has moved from a one-dimensional reading of the works via a medical model, to a vision of a multi-dimensional approach. The

Collection now adopts the view that the creator owns both the intellectual and material property, whilst the Collection is the carer of the works (Lee, 2004, p. 8). Whilst this direction expanded the reading potential of the works, and the Collection includes statements from contemporary artists, the thoughts of the artists who produced works in psychiatric institutions were still largely missing, as was the wider societal context in which their works were produced. Accordingly, a major curatorial focus for this exhibition was to contact all of the artists who were selected for the exhibition, to ascertain their intentions prior to the works being exhibited. This was a significant departure from established practice, as the CDC did not attempt to trace or contact artists who had completed works in psychiatric institutions.

Contacting and involving the artists: The dilemma. Lapsley et al. (2002) asked people with mental ill-health about their recovery journeys and found that having agency, or believing that one can control or at least influence the circumstances of one's life, was a key element in recovery narratives. Their research is salient in the context of this exhibition, because as Peers (2008, p. 6) stated in the exhibition catalogue, we "... cannot be certain of how artists regarded the "harvesting" of their work for the Collection. Were they happy, proud or distraught?"

In this project, I considered the power of the artist to make decisions about their artwork as a potent aspect of the exhibition-making process. It was important to contact the artists to seek their input on acknowledgment, display, reproduction, interpretation, future intentions and perhaps their wish to have work returned to them. Permission to exhibit and input into exhibition design and direction could be sought from the artists. The opportunity to discuss the meaning and role of artmaking in their lives and to comment upon specific artworks could also be extended to the artists selected to appear in this exhibition. If attempts to contact were not pursued, the artists would be denied the right to decide on any or all of these matters.

There were potential psychological and social risks connected with contacting the artists, such as igniting memories of a potentially traumatic period of their lives and the intrusion upon privacy. Equally, there were also risks associated with not contacting the artists, including the possibility that the artists would view the works without prior knowledge that they had been collected and were now held in the CDC. There were also a number of unique challenges – potentially some artists were deceased, elderly, had moved or changed name at marriage, were unable to give consent, or there were simply no details available.

Notwithstanding the risks and challenges, I considered the effort to contact and include the intentions of the artists to be vital, not only for the reasons outlined by Lapsley et al. (2002) and Peers (2008), but because without this personal input the

works would continue to be dominated and defined by a psychiatric framework. Furthermore, the exhibition would lose the opportunity to add the rich perspectives of those women who have experienced mental ill-health and actually produced the work.

Exhibition Making

What makes a great exhibition? asks Marincola (2006, p. 9), depicting the exhibition as being “strategically located at the nexus where artists, their work, the arts institution, and many different publics intersect”.

Data sources. My aim was to explore historical material which encompassed women of all ages and backgrounds who had received psychiatric services in Victoria and who had accessed art production facilities, particularly at Beechworth, Ballarat, Royal Park and Larundel psychiatric hospitals. I sought access to records held at the Public Records Office Victoria, Museum Victoria, State Library Victoria and the Department of Human Services – Archival Services. This access was denied and since the closure of all of Victoria’s stand-alone institutions by the year 2000, access to records from the psychiatric hospitals in Victoria has become increasingly difficult (Coleborne, 2003). This is a history which is lost as the last of the institutional buildings in Victoria are bulldozed and metamorphose into new housing estates.

Archival records at the CDC became the primary source of data to inform the exhibition-making process. I searched the material for descriptions of art production contexts and women’s descriptions/case notes regarding participation in art production. Contextual questions posed to the data included: *Who was offered access to art production and by what criteria? What materials were women offered to produce their art? What subjects did women depict? How often were art production opportunities available? In which institutions? Who conducted the art sessions? What happened to the creative works? Who had art training prior to treatment in a psychiatric setting? What were the reasons women were admitted to psychiatric settings and what treatments were administered? What were/are the curatorial parameters for inclusion or exclusion in exhibiting and archiving Psychiatric Art Collections? Which works were/are available to be displayed, studied and reproduced?*

White (2001) asks, where texts are not available, how do we access the experience of those less literate or from cultural and diverse backgrounds or indigenous communities or in this case, women who made art in psychiatric institutions. As Caine (1994) explains “the very things that rendered prominent women of interest to biographers, their exceptional natures, their unusual experiences, and their great achievements, made them relatively useless for those historians seeking to re-create and to understand the day-to-day struggles of women whose lives were largely unrecorded” (p. 6) and consequently women’s stories were often told as the collective

within categories such as *immigrant women*, *working class women* or *mentally ill women*.

Swartz (1999) contends archival sources “do not offer easy access either to the past, or to reflections of the present in the past” and “images are often broken up, scattered or sometimes too dim to read” (p. 152), or are often silent on women’s experience of mental illness. In Australia, Gerrand (1993) confirmed this in her study of women in Victoria’s psychiatric institutions. In Matthews’ book, *Good and Mad Women* (1984) the primary source material for her study were the case-notes, between 1945 and 1970, for 60 women in Glenside Psychiatric Hospital in South Australia. She observed that the only voice was that of the medical profession and not the women themselves, “Eventually, I was able to see the horror was partly produced by the method of recording” (p. 25). Matthews concluded that these documents, or what she calls ‘captured biographies’, privileged hospital case-notes as records of the social and psychic reality of being a woman. A more recent example can be found in the *The Weekend Australian* (2010) where journalist Lanai Vasek writes about being given the files that document her mother’s mental illness and her own time in foster care. She describes the experience as “like trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle with foreign pieces that don’t quite fit together. It was my life through someone else’s eyes: without the emotion, without the minute details that can change the way an event or person is perceived” (p. 12).

Similarly, the data at the CDC yielded very little in response to my points of interrogation outlined above. Materials available at the CDC were variable in their content and completeness. Some women had large files that appeared to span their entire psychiatric ‘career’; others merely had a brief file card. The method of file collection was as random as the method of picture collection. What was consistent was that, like Matthews and Gerrand’s experience, the entries in the files were invariably written by the health professionals in the institutions. Comments directly from the women patients were rare – the occasional letter or “phrases recorded in quotation marks” appeared in the archives as pinpoints amongst reams and reams of medical, psychiatric and behavioural observations. There were no corresponding notes on artistic history or practice, other than perhaps a passing reference to a patient having been an art student at some point. What there was, in many cases, was detailed examination of artworks in relation to their diagnostic significance or whole series of paintings being grouped and classified in an attempt to find themes which could subsequently be used to diagnose types of mental illness from artistic markings. Details about how these sessions were actually run, by whom, how often, how people were referred to such sessions and what constituted the difference between art classes

and art therapy classes were also very sketchy. If there was little on the day-to-day art practices of women artists in general, there was even less about women who had an experience of mental ill-health. Mostly the artworks were the only traces of women's lives as artists and mental patients.

Selecting the works. There had been no analysis of the works in the collection to indicate works made by women. I began with the task of sifting through almost 10,000 works to verify what had been created by women. Over 4000 works were located, created by 355 women who produced works in the psychiatric institutions of Victoria from the 1950s to the late 1990s. Contemporary practising artists who had donated works to the CDC were also included. With little supporting data to accompany the art, works that highlighted the issues which shaped the lives and experiences of these women and their artmaking guided the task of selecting approximately 50 works from over 4000, spanning six decades. Strength is the unifying word I would nominate for this exhibition. This is not a descriptor that has typically been bestowed upon women experiencing mental ill-health or psychological trauma. However, as I sifted through the works, it was strength of conviction, strength of protest and strength of imagery that I found. I also found humour, anguish and political awareness as the art positioned women as the speaking subject (Chadwick 2002) – women portraying women.

Women have been historically depicted as demure, nurturing, passive, dependent, selfless and eroticised for the gaze of others via many portraits that can never quite look the viewer in the eye. Since the feminist movement, however, women have used art to stare down, confront and act against the very systems that once excluded them. I was aware that many of the images I was sorting through were indeed staring back and confronting me to recognise and respond to both personal anguishes and political commentaries upon the wider social and political issues which impact upon women generally and the artist personally.

Where possible, self-portraits were selected, although there are very few works in the CDC where the artists have indicated that the image is a visual portrayal of self. The negotiation between what was omitted and what was displayed was inevitably a stating of curatorial preferences. Cognisant that what was missing was as crucial as what was displayed, I generally selected works from women who had a body of work in the Collection rather than those who had only one or two pieces. Additionally, I searched for works that had a thread of intention from the artist – a title, a word, a signature – a hint of what they wished to convey. As Peers (2008) noted, "Nor can we be certain of what the artists' intentions were, unless they occasionally provided written notations or very clear visual symbolism. The word 'NO' states an unambiguous

narrative in one work, as does the title of a work from 1962 '*Escape from Morality*' (p. 6). The majority of the works in the CDC completed by women are from the 1960s and to a lesser extent the 1950s. This balance was also reflected in the work selected for the exhibition.



Sara Wilson, *The Blue Lady*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 129.4 x 69 cm. Collection of the artist.

Sara Wilson: Artist's Statement (2007)

[This]...was the first painting I did after my first admission to hospital. I felt so washed out of emotion (hence expression or lack of....) and frail. But I also felt turbulent on the inside. This is why the eyes are so livid. The blue lady is featured in lots of my paintings. She represents me in my dreams and artwork. Also she is what I feel I should look like in society but don't. She had the burning pain that is reflected out of her eyes. The cool, guarded skin and exterior expression, that contains the inner destruction yet wards off people on the outside – the public.

Figure 3. Sara Wilson – The Blue Lady image and artist's statement

The artists and their works. Thirteen artists and 49 works were selected to represent various periods of time (1950s to now) and production sites, from Victorian psychiatric institutions to contemporary practising artists (see Appendix G: Exhibition Catalogue). A variety of mediums was included – textiles, etchings, paintings, and sketches. Then began the task of tracing the 13 artists selected. Of the five contemporary artists, from the 1990s and 2000s, three were contacted and agreed to be involved with the exhibition. One was found to be deceased and attempts to contact the remaining contemporary artist were unsuccessful. Attempts to trace the five artists

from the 1960s were also unsuccessful. The three women with artworks from the 1950s were found to be deceased.

The records held at the CDC for the eight women artists from the 1950s and 60s, who were either deceased or untraceable, were generally scant. Being unable to speak with these women about their art practice or the role and meaning of artmaking in their lives, their intentions for their art works remain unknown. It was documented that several of these women had art training in their lives outside the institution and two of the women from the 1950s had more extensive files than the others. However, even what did exist provided only a glimpse of their lives. These records are psychiatric representations of women, via a medical discourse replete with diagnoses, symptoms, comments on behaviour and attendant treatment regimes, not the thoughts of women themselves. Accordingly, since this exhibition was not concerned with the linking of diagnostic categories to specific artworks or artists, no labels from these records were included in the exhibition display boards.

Two of the three artists from the 1950s have works that were not completed in art programs. The extraordinary textiles, the image etched in a wardrobe door and the image daubed with lipstick – may indicate examples of particular women's desire to create with materials available to them within the confines of rural psychiatric institutions in Victoria. As Rozsika Parker (1996) noted, "From suffragette banners to domestic quilts, women have inscribed textiles with the stories of their lives, as a source of pleasure and as a weapon against constraint" (p. 192). In the Exhibition Catalogue, Peers (2008) comments upon these artworks:

The titles of the works *Modern Art* 1955 and *Enchanted*, c 1950s, offer some clues as to what this artist was thinking, backed up by stylistic elements. They capture the idea of woman as outsider, as mystic, as witch, as sexual – the artist's notation that she painted *Modern Art* in lipstick was surely intended to carry a charge other than indicating a lack of art materials...Her other notation on the wood panel work *Enchanted* also refers to the visionary quality of art. The tight, ordered line and the crisp delineation of faces reference the formality and order of female self-presentation in the 1950s. (p. 7)

The other artist from the 1950s has over 200 works in the Collection, including portraits, landscapes, depictions of events in her community – which she often described as sagas – and images of world events such as the Berlin crisis. It is unclear whether all or any of these works were completed in art programs. "The set of gouache drawings from the 1950s impress through their unique reflection upon life in that era. They are both otherworldly, and yet deeply tangible, in their images of current affairs" (Peers, 2008, p. 7).

The images from the five young artists who made works in the 1960s are likely to have been completed in institutional art programs. However, despite this production context, Peers (2008) observed that:

The “swinging sixties” also makes an unmistakable impact in terms of the more overtly sexual imagery, suggesting the liberated social life of the period. The idiosyncrasies of the visual culture of the period greatly influence the 1960s works, particularly in the use of high colours, acid green, orange, shocking pink and deep purple, by artists. Likewise psychodelia is present in the swirling linear rhythmical line work. Popular graphics of the period ...also inform certain works...as does the high art image of Munch's *Scream*. The artists from the 1960s displayed in this exhibition are mostly younger women than those selected from the 1950s, suggesting the intensity of public and social scrutiny of a challenging and new youth culture. The generally disturbing and volatile nature of a social landscape with rapidly changing parameters of acceptable behaviour had a particular impact upon women. (p. 7)

We do not know if any of the women in this exhibition identified as feminist, however these works can raise feminist issues even if the artist does not position herself within this framework. We also cannot know the events and experiences that led to these women being in psychiatric institutions, we can only imagine what life inside the walls was like. The records rarely include references to artmaking practice outside the institution and we can only wonder if any of the artists continued to portray their lives, community and the world visually. These artworks remain the most poignant record of commentaries and artistic responses to lived experience. Presenting the work to allow multiple readings where it is impossible to gain authority from the artist, acknowledges that these works embody both an individual and a collective history, and that individual examples may illuminate the experiences of many women with mental ill-health at a particular time, place and social circumstance.

Of the five contemporary artists, three women (Donna Lawrence and Sara Wilson and another artist who chose to remain anonymous) loaned works for the exhibition and provided both wall text and catalogue material. These later works could thus be exhibited with some autobiographical details, thoughts on their artmaking processes and commentary on particular works as desired by the artist. Artist fees were paid where the artist could be contacted.

Exhibition supporting materials and display protocols. Along with attempting to trace the older artists and removing diagnostic labels, several other aspects of this exhibition differed from previous exhibiting procedures at the CDC. One of the major departures was that the works were grouped by artist – there was no need

to select just one work to highlight an aspect of mental ill-health. The works were also displayed in a chronological timeframe to reflect cultural influences of time and place upon art, psychiatry and what it is/was to be a woman in Australian society – the historical and social context from which they came and a shared cultural heritage.

The exhibition was shown throughout Victoria at five venues which enabled a varied demographic to access the artworks. Women's perspectives located within historical, social, and political context were incorporated within display protocols and the Exhibition Catalogue. Catalogue essays were commissioned to enhance critical debate regarding being a woman and an artist, being a woman and experiencing mental ill-health, and the interwoven aspects of creative production. Extended curatorial comments were limited to the catalogue. (See Appendix G: Exhibition Catalogue and Appendix H: Exhibition Postcards).

Artworks were hung at the average Australian woman's height (161.8cms - Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013) where possible. Consultations occurred with women's agencies to ensure the exhibition was relevant and meaningful to viewers. Women's services information brochures/leaflets were available at the exhibition. Free community awareness public programs and public floor talks were offered parallel to the exhibition at each of the five locations, and a half day symposium called *womenmakingartmakingwomen* was held at Victoria University. No works were offered for sale.

The wall text was vitally important to provide some contextual information regarding the women's lives and to illustrate how art and creativity can be a source of empowerment at a personal and political level for women. The wall text and exhibition labels incorporated women's text where available. In the absence of any commentary from the artist and no diagnostic labels, the artworks themselves provided the most potent traces of the women's intentions.



Donna Lawrence, *Untitled*, 2006, oil, encaustic and collage on canvas, 100 x 75 cm each.

Collection of the artist.

Donna Lawrence: Artist's statement (2007)

Seeking help from the psychiatric community can sometimes be antithetical to really gaining assistance. Diagnosis is sometimes seen as the be all and end all to psychiatric assistance, oddly enough when the DSM IV doesn't give us a definitive answer to our illnesses.

*Figure 4. Donna Lawrence – *Untitled* image and artist's statement*

To the Public

It was most appropriate that this exhibition was shown in 2008, the year of the Centenary of Women's Suffrage in Victoria, giving women access to a creative and alternative view of women's history. The exhibition offered material that facilitated women's connection with this history, including the mechanisms that have worked to exclude women's active participation in public and civic life, such as mental ill-health and the perceptions and biases that have historically marginalised women, whether about voting, mental health or artmaking. The exhibition highlighted the visual images of women who are not well known and whose stories have never been told or are lost, articulating a body of work that does not 'fit' past histories and indicated how women responded artistically to the social, political and economic issues of the times.

The exhibition was first presented to the public at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre (QVWC), Melbourne, in February 2008, and was opened by Mary Crooks (AO) Executive Director, Victorian Women's Trust. In March 2008, the exhibition was shown at the Third International Congress on Women's Mental Health (ICWMH), Melbourne. It then toured to regional Victoria – Bendigo – for Mental Health Week in September 2008, and was launched by the Director of the Ballarat Art Gallery, Gordon Morrison.

The show returned to Melbourne at Level 17 Gallery, Flinders Lane, Victoria University to coincide with the celebrations for 100 years of women's suffrage in Victoria in November 2008, and was opened by the Victorian Government Minister for Women's Affairs, The Hon. Maxine Morand. Finally, the exhibition travelled to Kyneton in regional Victoria for International Women's Day celebrations in March 2009. Touring the exhibition was supported by six successful funding submissions.

The exhibition, with over 2,700 viewers, also received considerable media coverage, including *ABC Radio 774* and *The Age*, engaging both general and professional communities in dialogue and debate on the cultural and artistic contributions of women who have rarely had their history made visible, and contributed to conversations concerning social inclusion, marginality and creativity.

'I've been down here a few times. It's great because it shows things that affect women's mental health' (QVWC viewer, February, 2008).

'Some of them are achingly beautiful and others are quite confronting. You can feel the pain jumping off the walls' (QVWC viewer, February, 2008).

'These so speak to me as a woman, young, having my first child, scared and feeling helpless' (ICWMH viewer, March, 2008).

'The 60s influence is so clear. Some of these would have been very radical for the 60s' (Bendigo viewer, October, 2008).

'Absolutely beautiful and moving. Wonderful to see the work out in the world' (VU viewer, Nov, 2008).

As Jill Astbury (2008) wrote in the exhibition catalogue:

We do not know the diagnoses of the women whose art is shown in this exhibition nor whether they experienced sexual or other forms of violence. What we do know is that a large percentage of women who have received inpatient treatment has experienced significant trauma in their lives. Reducing the art shown to a reflection of certain predefined psychiatric conditions and symptomologies denies its diversity, poignancy, beauty and humanity. Reducing the art to a reflection of trauma and loss would be similarly narrowing although it is difficult to evade the impression that some of the art does speak of intensely female forms of suffering. Most striking for me are the powerful affective qualities of much of this art. It is these qualities that beckon us to make the effort to connect empathically with what the artists have chosen to communicate, to represent, to remember, to make sense of and to memorialise, even when and perhaps especially when, the subjects are not within our own lived experience. (p. 5)

I would like to acknowledge the women in this exhibition for their compelling works that stare at us and challenge us to reflect upon their resilience and creative responses to the circumstances in which they live/d and consider the conditions within society which impose a major mental health burden via gender discrimination, poverty, social position and various forms of violence against women. I also hope this exhibition has inspired viewers to consider their own relationship to creativity and wellbeing and to question what art does, as these works have provoked me to do.



Donna Lawrence, *Empower Me (2)*, 2006, oil, acrylic and collage on canvas. 40.6 x 122 cm.

Collection of the artist.

Donna Lawrence: Artist's statement (2006)

Empower Me is an image that epitomises the experience of living with a mental illness. Sometimes painful, sometimes confusing, sometimes even surprisingly enlightening, illness can change the way one views the world. This image refers to these attributes by depicting a figure that is bound by bandages – a means usually of healing the body, but in this case unable to heal the mind. It refers not only to the illness itself, but also to the society that classifies us, aims to help us, and sometimes even means to control us. The figure's head is bandaged, and this is paramount to the reading of the work. The brain is the centre of our universe. It defines us and allows us to be individuals. Ironically, for many it limits and even defines us because of our illnesses. We are bound by our mood swings, our delusions, our uncertainty, all arising from the workings of the mind. The head is bandaged denoting illness, and the title emphasises the will to escape or gain knowledge from this illness. Although the image itself could be viewed as portraying a negative view of mental illness, it is meant also to show hope. That we may learn and grow from our troubles and that good can indeed arise out of difficulty.⁶

Figure 5. Donna Lawrence – *Empower Me (2)* image and artist's statement

⁶ With permission of the artist to republish for the *Canvassing the emotions* – extracts of this statement first appeared in Beveridge, A. (2005). Psychiatry in pictures. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 187(2), pp. 201-202 with the image Empower Me.

Chapter 8: Study Two: The Interviews

Bringing All of the Women Together: A Dinner Party to Set the Parameters

Having visited the exhibition, I would like to imagine that I was able to bring the 32 women who participated in the research interviews together, in what Judy Chicago created – a *Dinner Party* – sitting at a triangular table having a discussion about a life of making. The pages that follow record a potential conversation between the women who have come to the table to share general ideas about artmaking, rather than their individual artistic routes and thoughts about artistic identity (see Chapters 9-11). They offer a view of what creativity, mental health and ill-health means to them as well as some views of artmaking as a woman.

I have used a format which Virginia Woolf experimented with in *The Waves* (1931/2004). Gillian Beer (2004) writes that waves run throughout Virginia's work as she muses on presence and absence, and that *The Waves* is about the thing that exists when we aren't there. Interestingly, Woolf was reading the *Universe Around Us* by James Jeans (1929) when she wrote *The Waves*. Beer says she was interested in his ideas about time bending backwards where time and space are together as arc and repetition, day to night, youth to old age. "The mercy of humdrum – weekdays following weekdays, night following day following night – is the medium of experience – its repetition and recurrence aligns it with the wave-motion of the universe" (2004, p. xv).

This aligns very well with my own reading of Barad and Braidotti's ideas on time and space, motion and diffraction, and also resonates with one of the patterns of overlap regarding artmaking practice mentioned by many of these 32 women – the process of doing and the associated bending or playing with time and space, or altered time and space, when engaged in making art.

In an introduction to *The Waves*, Jeanette Winterson (2004) comments that the novel is about sun and shadows; not sun and moon, but the light changes that affect life, "...blinded by sun, misled by shadows (p. ix)". These are the sorts of things artists may be attentive to, curious about and also seek to explore.

Beer (2004) describes Virginia's literary technique in using the hidden voices of six people from childhood to old age. The reader can't be sure whether the characters are talking with one another or it is their thoughts about each other that you are reading at any given point. Seeking a way beyond words, Woolf uses everything that happens in the novel through each character – "their senses are the medium as much as their opinions...the characters are also wave clusters of experience mentally traversing time and space" (pp. xvi-xvii). Similarly, in these interviews many women spoke of their experiences of artmaking from childhood to the present, and a number spoke of, or attempted to articulate, the idea of the sensory or corporeal nature of artmaking. A

space where you are your work, where you are what you do – not object or subject – a spatio-temporal corporeal relational openness.

I am taking these responses and creating an imaginary dialogue between the women around three broad questions - what is creativity, what is mental health/ill-health and what is it like to engage in artmaking for women?

Creativity

Sally: "One of the things I want to ask women about is creativity. So what about defining creativity, or how would you describe creativity?"

"I haven't got any idea," said Pamela.

"Well, it's interesting to be asked that question," said Ruby, "because I have been thinking about it a lot. I think everyone has it. Every single person has it and some people - - it's just like a combination of personality and environment, but whether or not you use it or not...I just think it's to be alive and to be human - - and you are creative when you're really sad and angry and you're creative when you're in love and happy and all the different emotions that makeup our personality, I think make us creative. Yeah, I think it's to be human, I guess...It's a pretty amazing thing to make something, to construct something."

"- - but then what is an artist?" said Alice. "There's many different ways of being an artist. I've always really enjoyed wearing clothes and different materials and textures and colours, so I've done that all my life so that's being an artist - -."

"But like when you say artist," said Jane, - - everything you kind of do has got a certain amount - - because like if you pick a bunch of flowers - - to me there's art in putting flowers in a vase, isn't there?"

Sally: "So how would you define creativity?"

"A bunch of flowers," said Jane.

"Not so much the painting and drawing but the sewing," said Elizabeth, "- - the creative part. Cooking is another form of creativity...I like flowers and gardening - - and that can be a creative side to somebody too...I mean, there's lots of different forms of creativity."

"- - I mean," said Margaret, "if you are negotiating doing the washing, doing the gardening...- - like to me it's about space and time and - - feeling - - so there's a lot of creativity happening in that you know."

"...that's what I don't like, the way things seem so limited when - - you know - - if you can see it from that really big perspective, I think you can end up with a lot more joy - - You know just from changing the outlook you don't necessarily maybe have to do that much different – but just see what you are doing as different - - or through different

eyes to see the creativity that is involved with cooking a meal or getting dressed or even how you clean, you know.”

“Well it is from a toddler,” said Mahdi, “who scribbles or he gets out a crayon - - or it is Picasso then doing a magnificent flowers or whatever.”

“It’s something that’s inside you,” said Kezia, “It’s an expression of who you are I think - - how you feel and what things you like...I suppose it’s a feeling you have or it could depend on something you’ve seen - - it’s a broad spectrum. Clothing, the way you dress, you know that can be a creative side of somebody too.”

“I think,” said Alice, “it can be whatever you want it to be. You get creative in your bedroom, the way you do your décor. You get creative in the way you dress. You can do it with your artwork, you can do it with gardening - - and no matter what people do in their lives, even though they think they don’t have it, but they do - - cooking - - ?”

“In some ways,” said Tina, “I think creativity is what you see in your mind coming out on the canvas or what you would like to see from even magazines. Or are just making something that you like and doing something that you like - - and maybe bringing the thought to life on a piece of paper...I think it’s good for people who are in love.”

“It’s having an eye for something, said Meagan, “- - and each person’s creativity is special to themselves.”

“Something that’s had some thought put into it,” said Jacqueline, “...Made with their own mind and hands.”

“Well,” said Josie, “creativity is starting with a blank piece of paper and being able to draw something unusual – like an eye or something like that.”

“Well,” said Taylor, “With art you are always learning something new...something out of the unusual. - - Creative is working with your hands and the mind and thinking of things that you can do that are different and coming up with new ideas and just sort of getting out there and doing something.”

What Women Can Make

Sally: “Can you tell me about artmaking and being a woman? What do you think about how being a woman has influenced also being an artist - - because historically those two things haven’t been put together very often - - there’s not that many role models out there as women artists - - what do you think about that?”

“I get two magazines” [talks about *Frankie* and *Yen*] said Ruby “...There’s some amazing stuff in there and it’s all women artists and the reason I love the magazine so much is because it could be someone...doing bits of diary entries, like they are really personal but they are about girls expressing themselves - - and a lot of them do have a lot of craft things in them.”

“...because like, there aren’t that many females. Like, you look in Google or the library and you look up art, the traditional books aren’t going to have females and you kinda feel, like, left in a gap. - - like you don’t have an identity within that world - - ...”

“Ah,” said Artemisia “- - I think, whether you are a man or a woman or homosexual or lesbian, it will always play a part in art. You know like, there’s many famous artists [that] have been of a different - - So, I don’t know if it’s sort of - - there’s a perception that the main famous artists are male...”

Judy said “I’ve actually...been researching things similar to that and...I don’t really think its affected me that much but...I was actually researching this other artist called Ann Hamilton and she seems to be really affected by the gender stereotypes that we get when we are younger because she uses a lot of craft materials and sewing and things like that are associated with females.”

“[So] - - I don’t think it’s really affected me that much because there’s no real stigma these days to women being artists - - you know if you’re a woman it’s really hard to be an artist or anything. It’s not like that anymore.”

“Yeah,” said Pamela, “sort of, I guess I never thought I could do it because I was a woman. Usually it’s men that do more creative - - I find - - so it was a big chance for me to get out there as a woman and do something, yeah. Usually they are men based projects, things like the mosaic project. Usually a lot of the things are run by men.”

“- - I think I’ve had barriers all my life with being a woman,” said Anna, “because I’ve come from a very much male dominated family ...and I always found that I was feeling a little bit - - um, dominated...for me personally, being a woman, I have felt that the art perhaps wouldn’t have been promoted as much in my family as if it was a male doing it.”

“Women” said Tina “make good artists because they are caring and loving and - - a lot of softness often - - shows in a woman’s art or that might be biased but women have good natures and it comes through the art.”

“Women”, said Meagan “seem very creative and adept at doing things whereas men might be more interested in woodwork or cars - - different ways of doing art.”

“I think women see things differently to a man,” said Elizabeth. “Men will build a shed or put up a fence or make a wooden wheelbarrow - - which I suppose is still a form of creating something but women will be more - - have more of a broad spectrum of trying different things.”

“It’s another layer - - yes and no” says Alice “I am surprised, as I think of myself as a feminist, about how little I have talked about gender issues. I think I feel more

discrimination about mental illness issues and so much of the gender stuff is so hard - - so insidious.”

“But at school there are mostly women. But then there’s issues around - - I wonder if doing this course, people who do this course don’t consider themselves to be artists?”

“They are just doing it for - - I think maybe it’s a confidence thing. They don’t - - like some of them are very talented - - but maybe it’s confidence. They don’t see themselves as artists. And they don’t exhibit; they don’t put work out there. ...- - but then I think maybe when you exhibit it reinforces your role – your identity.”

“I think that in terms of getting the work out there,” said Margaret “this really comes into play. You know like the boys stick together and - - it does seem to be - - sometimes there’s a lot of that.”

“Maybe,” said Lisa, “they don’t have much confidence in themselves”.

“I don’t think being female really factored into it really” said Ruby “Yeah, just painting,...or painting or whatever exactly and now it’s sort of like, even people who do sort of crafts and stuff, that’s considered art now and I think that doesn’t get very much respect either.”

Sally: “What do you think about that terminology? That distinction between art and craft and that lack of respect as you were saying?”

“I think craft,” said Meagan, “as in knitting, sewing, patchwork quilting - - I think, whereas I think art people would see it as painting, sculpture, say mosaics, something like that, but I think they are related to each other, because to do craft you need to have imagination and all that which is part of the same skills in art.”

“Um - - art, craft,” said Inge, “I’ve always looked at art like painting but since starting the cross stitch, I’ve - - I now consider cross stitch art. It might be, I suppose generally, it would be considered a craft, but craft is also a term about skills.”

“Back in the gold rush you might be asked, ‘What’s your craft?’ I’m a Blacksmith. I’m a candlestick maker. That type of thing. A craft is your technique...Yeah, it’s a skill - - and so then, to me, art is producing something. It’s the production of something, whether its cakes, cross stitch, photography even. It’s - - yeah, your craft is photography and the art is the photos you produce.”

“Well, my mum’s really into craft,” said Ruby, “- - but I do think that because that’s been associated with women, that it doesn’t get - - like it never has gotten - - it’s just like you know, ‘Oh, a housewife thing to do,’ or like cooking and other things...So it’s sort of like, ‘well if a woman can do it, then it’s not that hard’.”

"It's so not respected and people associate it with - - like the spinster, shall we say. The woman with the zillion teddy bears on her bed that she'd made, you know, like it's just a bad connotation, I guess, and it's really unfair."

"I think women are still viewed as" said Francis, "--- well I might be wrong but that - - we're still sort of viewed as - - 'oh, that's just something she does in her spare time, you know. It's not really valid."

Mental Health

Sally: "Ok, so one of the things I also want to ask women is the way they prefer to talk about or describe their state of mental health. Have you heard the terms mental illness or psychiatric disability? What do you think they mean? Do you use these terms? Do you have other terms you would prefer to use?"

"Not feeling good today," said Kezia, "uptight or depressed or whatever: Feeling better: That sort of thing. It's more how you feel, sort of, than what's written in the books. I mean I read about it...but it's not how I talk. They don't say, 'I'm feeling yuck' in the books (laughs)."

"Mental health," said Judy, "...is sort of like a polite way of saying, 'Oh, you have schizophrenia or something'."

Sally: "Do you think it's helpful for people to actually have a diagnosis - - or not helpful?"

"I think it is," said Judy, "because once you identify part of their problem, you can sort of help to - - make it a little bit better for them."

[but]

"I had a series of doctors," said Angel, "and different medications and diagnosis. They were all wrong. I raised three children and they all grew up and it was after they had left home, I think I became unwell again.... then when I became well - - not well but on an even keel".

"I started taking vitamin pills," said Meagan, "and I'm diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia, but it took away the symptoms of lethargy, lack of concentration - - ability to talk to people, it took all those symptoms away".

"I don't know how," said Mary "to talk about it with my two children without scaring them...I prefer to pretend that I'm like everyone else you know...-Yeah, as long as I'm doing well and I'm looking after my kids properly and whatever - - then I don't think it helps to be really brought to the forefront."

"Well, it really depends," said Ruby, "- - I've been unwell since I was probably about 16, so it's been a long time - - 10 or 11 years - - and in that time - - like you go through a lot of stages, like stages of acceptance and anger and all sorts of things. But I'm at a pretty good place now...- - like I'm pretty comfortable with the fact that I have

an illness and it needs monitoring...and it takes a bit of manoeuvring around and I don't have a problem with that, but there were definitely stages where I did. And...it comes up a lot because I'm on a disability pension and I'm not working, people often want to know why or what you are doing - - so it comes up a lot."

"And I often have to tell people that I'm just mad or whatever, and I don't have a problem with that...People often don't know how to react. Generally, I find the best reactions - - if I'm trying to put it out there and say 'Ok this is what I've got,' I'll say, 'diagnosed and bipolar.' If I'm talking to my Mum, I'll say, 'Yeah, I've been really unwell this week. I've been struggling a lot.'...So if it's more, I guess, now time and personal, I'll use more unwell or well, but if I'm just trying to give a quick outline, I'll probably just say 'diagnosed,' like more of a clinical thing. But yeah, I'll find that people generally do - - it's either one of three things. They'll either go 'oh, wow really, gosh I don't know anything about that. What's that like or what does that mean?'...But then you get another person who - - they either have a bad opinion of it or they don't - - they are probably uneducated about it to be honest, and they'll sort of go, 'Oh, Ok,' and then they can't really talk to you for the rest of the night - - and then you get other people who are like, 'Oh, yeah, my brother's got that, oh yeah, my uncle's got that, oh my Mum's got that.' (laughs) and it's amazing actually how many people know someone who has it - - so two of them - - it's usually like no big deal."

Sally: "So two of those reactions are OK for you but not the other?"

"Oh yeah," said Ruby, "it's like - - it's a shame because often I'll be getting on really well with someone and then they'll go 'Arghhh' - - and they can't - - and it's usually the more conservative people and this is probably a generalisation, but you know they are probably a lot less open-minded."

"Well, more and more it's almost like a challenge to myself to go, 'No, like you've got nothing to hide,' and if somebody can't cope with it, well then really they wouldn't cope with being your friend anyway, - - it's just hard because some people do judge people by - - but if they judge me, they judge me. I really hate that."

"So," said Alice, "I have found it difficult (attending an art course) in terms of - - it was really, really particularly difficult last year, because you know I was hiding. I was not disclosing my story because I don't want to be a stereotype or have a stigma. I don't trust the reaction I'll get around my experience of mental illness or ill-health."

"It's not mental illness," said Janis, "it's a different way of being in the world."

"Yeah, I can't understand those divisions," said Margaret. "I really can't - - people who make art with a mental illness - - that's a category. I don't even believe in mental illness anyhow."

"Yeah, wellbeing I think, yeah. But then - - I can see how my thinking can get me into trouble. That, calling that an illness, I just feel quite suspicious of it and it feels quite heavy to do that - - and maybe even make more problems... Yeah, just mental health. That's what I feel comfortable with."

Wellbeing

Sally: "So what about that term wellbeing? What does this mean to you?"

"To me wellbeing means not being sick," said Taylor. "Not having panic attacks. Sort of being able to get out into the community to actually do things and being there to help other people as well."

"I usually use 'on edge,'" said Inge. "Everything starts to race forwards and my heart beats... It's harder to describe feeling well. It's easy to talk about the negative. - - So when I'm feeling well, I guess I'm feeling calm more than well."

"Well you should say unwell," said Jane, "because sick to me is 'Are you sick too. Have you got a cold or something like that?' But I use unwell."

"...I hate to use the word unwell," said Frances, "I just wasn't real good."

"I wasn't well enough," said Alice.

"If I'm unwell, I'm unwell," said Chess, "and I know it and it's no good hiding it. When I'm well and someone says 'How are ya?' I say, 'Oh great,' and otherwise I'll say, 'Oh, I don't feel too good today'."

"Usually when I'm talking to my family or friends, said Claudia, I usually use words like I'm well or unwell or feeling a bit upset or depressed or happy."

"Define wellbeing," said Lesley, "- - 'high'. Spiritually healthy - - socially - - social enthusiasm and - - very well motivated. Yeah, motivation - - and you learn things as you go through the day."

"A bit high," said Tina.

"Yeah, wellbeing", said Judy, "as in how you are at the moment - - how your wellbeing is. Mental health - - sort of how your mind is. Wellbeing is sort of, maybe, how you are and how your circumstances affect you and things like that."

"I think your wellness," said Anna, "is a mixture of things and you've got to have that balance where you can come and go freely and be yourself and creativity is part of that."

A Bunch of Flowers

The discussion at the Dinner Party (language in its everyday use) has given a sense of how these women defined wellness, mental illness and creativity, as well as what they thought women could make. Women generally thought that the wider community still viewed women's artmaking as a hobby, a housewife thing to do, something she does in her spare time, and if a woman can do it, then it can't be very

difficult. Despite these attitudes, we begin to get an inkling of the role of artmaking in some of these women's lives, 'it's an expression of who you are' 'it's to be human.' Similarly, these attempts to devalue what women make did not deter the group from discussing creativity broadly. As Margaret commented, there is far more joy in expanding the way we view creativity – "from that really big perspective, I think you can end up with a lot more joy. It allows for a greater possibility of joy in our lives". Or, as Braidotti might say, *horizons of hope*.

Chapter 9 – Study Two: The Interviews: Ten Artists Speak

Breaking into smaller groups (10 artists, 9 aspiring artists and 13 makers), this Chapter showcases the responses of the 10 women, who at some point in their research interview, self-defined as an artist. Apart from one woman who had suffered cerebral trauma and then discovered visual artmaking, the other nine in the artist group all recognised a love of art, an ability to do art, and a *talent for it* from an early age. They also, recalled a memory or memories of being awarded art prizes and receiving accolades from teachers, family or friends particularly through the primary school years.

The 10 women had strong opinions about artmaking and the role it played in their lives. There was generally a sense of a confidence in their own skills in this area and a strong indication that artmaking had played a constant and important role in these women's lives. As Iris Marion Young would say, an 'I can do', or as Carol Gilligan understands, an 'I know' comes through clearly, and is somewhat unexpected from women who have experiences of mental ill-health and who are typically characterised as being unsure of expressing their opinions or retaining confidence in their abilities. This strength was particularly evident when relaying their art story: "I just said NO"; "Well I don't agree". Opinions sought for topics other than artmaking were in some cases more wavering – "I don't know. I have no idea" or "I can't say" – a sense of uncertainty, and some women did question their artistic skills in relation to whether they were worthy of calling themselves an artist.

Two women in this group did not mention any formal contact with mental health services, although both reported having experienced periods of *deep depression* in their lives, coinciding with the time when they were raising small children. For the other eight women, despite some discontinuities for various reasons, all had been studying and practising artmaking prior to their contact with mental health services. Six women participated in supported art classes or studios. The other two women did not attend supported art programs and were making art in their homes

The age range in this group is twenties to early seventies. Ola, Joy, Norah and Margaret have worked as paid artists and, along with Alice, have also exhibited in mainstream art spaces. Ola and Joy have taught art classes. Ruby, Artemisia, Ola, and Judy have exhibited in supported art shows and Frances was contemplating how and where to show her vibrant textile art. All 10 women in this artists' group had completed or were completing Art Courses at the time of the research interviews. Janis, Joy, Norah, Margaret and Judy had completed tertiary art courses. Ruby and Artemisia were completing tertiary art courses. Ola had completed a Continuing Adult Education (CAE) Art course, Alice was completing a CAE Art course, and Frances had begun a

TAFE Art course. Joy, Norah, and Frances have children and each had experienced periods of being a single parent.

Introducing the Ten Artists

Women's thoughts are curated as a compilation of short biographies, selected quotes and portraits highlighting specific topics. Each woman who self-defined as an artist has an 'I' poem (see Appendix A). At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to complete a demographics sheet, including age and occupation.

- Alice: (30s) Artist!! – later she says her “occupation is life”
- Artemisia: (20s) Artist
- Frances: (50s) Housewife – later she says “should have said artist”
- Janis: (30s) Multi-media artist
- Joy: (70s) Artist – later “I’ve always been an artist”
- Judy: (20s) Art student
- Margaret: (40s) Artist
- Norah: (40s) Teacher - later “I suppose I have been an artist. Would you say?”
- Ola: (40s) Artist
- Ruby: (20s) Art Student

Alice: printmaker and installation artist.

Art gets me into a space = like a drug high.

Alice acquired a brain injury as a young adult and reports she has lost her understanding of her previous passion – music. After this injury, she comments that the world looked different to her and she felt the urge to create. “Dimensions, shapes, colours and textures” were imbued with more meaning and intensity.

Alice produces different work for different audiences and in a variety of settings, (communities of practice) including art school, an artists' collective, metropolitan supported art program and her kitchen table. She claims the identity of both artist and activist and is strongly opposed to art being viewed as mental health art. Keenly alert to the politics of art production, Alice comments on making art with found objects, a contemporary mainstream art practice, and is particularly insightful about the art work she made from objects collected from inner urban gutters. She felt strongly that this collecting activity was viewed as an indication of her ‘madness’ rather than as part of a legitimate art practice.

Her work is sometimes political, making commentary on the treatment people receive in the mental health system. For her, being an artist is about exhibiting, particularly in what she calls mainstream and community venues. Although she is adamantly committed to being an artist, she comments that sometimes she feels

undeserving and is hesitant to access the good quality art materials supplied at the various artmaking venues she attends. For Alice, artmaking is also part of a spiritual process – an engagement with her surrounds which gives her positive energy, akin to an ‘altered state’

Artemisia: painter and sculptor.

I can’t do without art.

Artemisia refers to her experience of mental ill-health only once during the interview, and prefers to concentrate on aspects of her artistic life. Any further references to mental ill-health relate to conceptual aspects of creativity and mental health in general.

Artemisia begins the interview by describing ‘an artistic background in my family’, with her own interest beginning at ‘pretty much, kindergarten. ... and I just loved it.’ Although her parents have not always been fully supportive of her artmaking, she has maintained an interest in art and took ‘nearly all art subjects’ throughout secondary school. She has undertaken a variety of TAFE and tertiary arts-based courses.

Artemisia is currently making art at a metropolitan supported arts studio. She discusses a junction in her life when she was not making art due to ‘a brief mental illness’, a time which was not ‘the best time in my life when I wasn’t doing art.’ She is now unable to envisage her life without artmaking, which she describes as an integral feature of daily living. She sometimes uses her artmaking like a diary to see where she has been or might go.

Frances: textile and tapestry artist.

Who am I to think I can?

Frances lives in regional Victoria, and when asked about occupation at the beginning of the interview, she said ‘housewife.’ During the interview she said *“I wanted to say artist but I thought, ‘who do you think you are, who are you kidding’?”* Throughout the interview she asked for reassurance about whether she was telling me the right things and giving the right answers.

Born in Australia, Frances identifies with a southern European ancestry. Her artistic route was characterised by a lack of encouragement from her family to acquire traditional art and craft-making skills highly valued for women in her culture. Weaving and decorating cloth, carpets and other fabric has traditionally been women’s work in many cultures, ancient and modern. Her left-handedness rendered her ‘impossible to teach’ the traditional art and craft skills passed down in her family and she reports feeling like the girl in the family who ‘couldn’t do anything or learn anything’.

Nevertheless, Frances did not readily accept the 'I can't' tag and persisted with observing what her sisters were taught, which enabled her 'as a grown up to start to do things for myself'. Later in her married life, Frances recalls a need to keep her artmaking secret – a covert activity which would not be tolerated if it took time away from her domestic or carer's responsibilities, or as Frances quips, 'slaving over the four hot kids'.

Defying the many invitations she has received during her life to cease or not even begin artmaking, Frances makes art in her home on a daily basis and also began an art course which she has since been forced to stop due to distance issues. She now occasionally attends a supported mental health service to augment her opportunities to acquire artmaking skills. Frances comments, that she makes herself 'be doing', and that artmaking has 'kept me sane', with the process bringing a 'wonderful serenity' and 'countless hours of joy'. Frances finishes the interview with 'I should say I'm an artist'.

Janis: cross media artist.

It's absolutely essential. I do have to paint. If I don't I get sick

Janis has a range of skills including painting, acting, multi-media, animation, and cartooning and has published several books. She also participates in a metropolitan art studio which supports people with an experience of mental ill-health. Janis has tertiary qualifications and has an artistic family background with some support for artmaking from her family, but has experienced little support from wider societal institutions.

Janis says that if she doesn't have a place to make art then she would probably be arrested for painting the footpaths or thrown out of her accommodation for painting the walls and furniture. She reports that the opportunity to now have a space in a supported art studio and to create alongside supportive people has been great for her. Although she calls herself an oneiric artist, her work is sometimes highly political, making commentary on the treatment that people receive in the mental health system.

Artmaking is her primary language, her way of both communicating with the world and sorting out the communication she receives from the world – a two way intra-action facilitated by the artmaking process. Making meaning and sense of the world is via creativity. She must do this 'to live a meaningful life and to stay well'. In the past a lack of recognition for the value of art in general and her artistic skills personally have made her feel sick. Janis spends considerable time in the research interview articulating the mind-body connection inherent in the process. 'Community, nature, infinity, entropy and being able to communicate with the ideas in these things, sounds and the energy around I interact with daily'. These descriptions of artmaking are resonant of enmeshed corporeality as described by emergent material feminist

theories. Although viewing artmaking as essential to health, like exercise, Janis is insistent that she didn't ever view art as therapy, '...it's art for me. It's how I live.' She describes artmaking as how she has discovered she 'is entitled to exist.'

Joy: drawer, painter and installation artist.

Instead of chaos and despair I can create meaning in my life. I know the power of art

Joy has a very strong art story and artistic identity, and from the beginning of the interview she talked about her life of making with little interruption. There was some hesitation when she spoke about how as a mother 'the artist in me started to rebel'. Joy provided me with written material during the interview with permission to use the material in this research.

Joy has been a professional practising artist, exhibiting all her adult life. She had formal training at a highly respected artistic institution in NSW, where other women artists of her time, such as Margaret Olley, also attended. She then worked in graphic art and later had training in drawing in Victoria. In the 1980s, she ran courses for women on creativity and application in art and contributed to the Judy Chicago quilt. Joy has produced art that speaks politically, and to her community. She has produced work as 'a bread and butter commercial venture' and she has used art to explore her life – 'its troubles and joys'.

Her philosophy is based on art being one of the powerful tools for emotional survival in present times. She writes that, "the use of artmaking is both a source of spiritual awareness and a method of healing. It presents a record of the individual's philosophical development and a visual history of changing forces in the social environment" (personal communication, research archive, 2008). Her work often combines both wider political elements and personal elements.

Joy talks about the power of art during periods of 'heavy depression' and about her ability to keep 'myself afloat', avoiding the need to enter an institution or even visit a psychiatrist by continuing to sustain an art practice 'so without art I just couldn't have made it through life I'm sure'. 'It's kept me alive'.

Judy: painter.

I do feel like an artist but I still feel pretty unknown at the moment - -

Judy is a practising artist and art student currently undertaking a tertiary arts course. She also intermittently attends a support service for people who have experienced mental ill-health, This service runs some art classes, but she does not currently attend these.

Although drawing constantly since she was a little girl, Judy has only realised her passion for artmaking recently. She exhibits regularly in the mental health arts

sector but would like to break into the mainstream art world to be 'a known artist – known as an artist'. Much of the interview was taken up by viewing Judy's many paintings, including a series of self-portraits, around her home. Judy works from her kitchen and lounge room and sources her materials from bargain and op shops where she often finds a framed print to paint over.

Unlike Alice who actively disagrees with art being placed under the mental health umbrella, Judy articulates some benefits whereby 'the audience might be able to see where you are coming from'. Although a number of women in this 'artists' group recognised that a side effect of artmaking might be therapeutic, most resisted the idea of art as therapy. Judy, however, did think it was very good therapeutic tool; it 'helps me get out some emotions and dreams and things like that'. Like Artemisia, Judy uses her paintings, 'like a diary to see where I've been.'

Margaret: cross media artist; primarily a painter.

I felt the most meaning, the sense of awareness of being alive when I was making art

Margaret includes painting, ceramics and found object installations in her art practice. Like most women in this group, Margaret recalls being able to engage in artmaking and be viewed as skilful from an early age. She claims art as something that made her feel special, at least until halfway through secondary education when artmaking lost its cachet as a valued skill.

Margaret has tertiary art training and has worked as a professional exhibiting artist in what she calls the 'mainstream art world'. She is currently accessing a metropolitan supported art studio and continues to exhibit in mainstream venues. Her work is very private to her and she would like more privacy in her work space. She appreciates the opportunity to access affordable and reasonable quality materials, in contrast to times when she has scavenged art materials from rubbish skips and experienced the consequences of toxic fumes in poorly ventilated spaces like her bedroom. She has experimented with using floral and female genitalia imagery as a way of celebrating her sexuality.

For Margaret, artmaking is a good place to put a lot of difficulties, and she views the process as akin to alchemising issues into a different state. Margaret shared insights into navigating and participating in mainstream art worlds and the support received in art studios where people have experienced mental ill-health. We took a break during the interview for Margaret to hang out washing as she became distressed by talking about attitudes she had encountered to those who have art skills. She feels under-appreciated as an artist and believes her community and society in general do not view art as a valid way of pursuing a career or living a life – just 'bludgers'.

Margaret believes that sometimes art has saved her and can help people keep their sanity. Like Alice, Janis and Joy, Margaret thinks artmaking has a spiritual dimension – ‘like a spirit sense’.

Norah: painter.

It's like a meditation

Norah says she loved artmaking at kindergarten and she ‘was good at it’ throughout school. Despite having trained as a designer and later being involved in artists groups and exhibiting and selling her paintings, Norah did not initially claim the identity of an artist in the interview. For her, being an artist is about qualifications ‘and so I think that would be a bit presumptuous really’. When she did not find satisfactory work as a designer after art school, she pursued a different career and gave up artmaking, “I didn’t really think I was good enough to do anything.”

After experiencing birth trauma and during the breakdown of her relationship and subsequent single parenting, Norah completed a series of paintings which depicted her anguish at the dehumanising treatment she received from the medical system and the pain she felt from the relationship disintegration. She saw these works as highly personal, but also political in that she wished to send a message to the ‘system’. After painting these works she did not want to paint any more. ‘The tension was gone’ but this period of intense artmaking did reinvigorate a love for painting, and it was then that she joined local artist groups, sold works and exhibited.

Despite this success, like Alice, Norah comments on how she did not believe her work was good enough to warrant good materials. Instead, she preferred to scavenge and recycle found materials for her art. She now no longer has an art practice as she finds her work too consuming and she does not have time for self-reflection which she believes is necessary for artmaking. Like Joy, she had difficulty finding space (literally and metaphorically) to do artmaking with a child to care for.

Norah explained how she had experienced artmaking as a process where she lost all sense of time and, like Alice, described this as an altered state.

Ola: Sculptor.

It's always just been part of me. I just do

Ola has a long-standing love of art in her life and ‘it affects everything I do in life’. She was encouraged in early life and ‘I used to get a lot of praise from the teacher and won a few little competitions.’ ‘- - so I’ve always just really loved art and it’s always just been part of me’. Ola worked in the arts for a decade in the city before ‘I had a bad breakdown’ and returned to her regional area. She now teaches sculpture and attends a service which supports people who have had an experience of mental ill-health

where she has a space to sculpt and attend art classes. Ola articulates her artistic identity in a very confident manner.

Like Alice, Ola makes art in a number of communities of practice; the centre where she teaches and where she is seen as being very artistic by her colleagues, the art supplies shop where artistic locals tend to congregate and discuss artmaking processes, and in the local community where she has donated her time to a collaborative community project.

Ola said her artmaking connected her to people. She loves teaching others and also makes art pieces for her friends and family. She believes that this is something she is giving to the community, 'what goes around comes around'. She comments that she is not a story teller or a social commentator in her art, but she appreciates the aesthetic value of things.

Ola viewed her artmaking practice as being intrinsically related to her wellbeing and found it hard to disentangle the two in the interview. Although artmaking made her happy, it was not sufficient in itself to keep her well and she described how she was unable to make art when she was very unwell, partly because she knew at these times she could not work in a way that would satisfy the high standards she sets herself.

Ruby: illustrator.

The things that make your heart sing

Ruby has a passion for drawing and is studying art, but was reluctant to claim the identity of an artist – 'Artist is just so fraught' – although she sees her future as an artist and particularly in illustrating. She prefers to tell people she draws and paints. Ruby dropped art at the end of high school because she felt it and her artistic skills weren't valued. It was also at this time that she became 'unwell'.

She pursued a science-based career for a while but was unsatisfied with the 'dry' and repetitive nature of scientific education. She came to the conclusion that although pursuing art was a risky choice, she would only be able to envisage being happy doing what she had always done since she was little.

Ruby thinks artmaking is absolutely essential to her wellbeing and can't imagine not creating. She has been studying art whilst attending a supported art studio which she is now leaving to further her studies and establish her art practice in the community. For her, being an artist is about qualifications and experience.

Part A: Ten Artists Speak about Artistic identity, Artistic Pathways, Artistic Practice

Each of these artistic pathways is explicitly varied. How women discussed their experiences of envisaging, establishing and sustaining an art practice was highly

idiosyncratic, as was the way they described the meaning and role of artmaking in their lives. What was overwhelmingly crucial for these 10 women was the importance that artmaking had attained at various points in their lives, and for most it continued to be a significant aspect of living their lives. Some women's artistic routes were relayed to me in a chronological manner, others were woven across place and time, in and out of active artistic practice, ceasing when encountering a variety of hurdles, reigniting at various junctures in their lives. For several women, there was no time when they had not created art in their lives. For these women, making art was essential to living, inexplicably entangled with life.

Artistic Identity

Throughout her interview, Frances wavers between discussing herself as an artist and then 'coming back to reality' as she calls it and putting herself in her place – who am I kidding? In 2008, Pamela Tanner Boll directed the award-winning documentary called *Who does she think she is?* with a group of women artists. Frances, along with the other nine women in this artist group, have also contemplated this global question that women ask themselves privately, just as they are asked publicly if they claim the identity of artist.

Ola, Artemisia, Margaret, Janis, Alice and Joy all articulated a strong artistic identity, including confidence in their artistic skills. Two of the younger women, Judy and Ruby, were more hesitant but could envisage themselves with artistic futures as they completed their studies and established their practices. Norah and Frances were also ambivalent about using the word 'artist' – at times during the interview emphatically saying they were not artists, usually in relation to their perceived artistic skills, and then later asking/wondering if they actually should say they were artists.

How women conceptualised what was an artist, including what skills an artist was deemed to possess, and how strongly they resisted collective narratives around what constituted being an artist, influenced how they perceived themselves as artists and how readily they claimed the title. Women discussed a variety of stereotypical behaviours expected from artists, including being radical and having a mental illness. In terms of artistic output, women mentioned notions of being a real artist as being verified by being original and not copying or painting by numbers or to a formula. Being able to draw was important to Ruby and Norah if you were to claim an identity as an artist. The ability to exhibit your work was also seen as important by most of the women in this group as was the need for formal artistic training.

Alice: "Yeah, but I do know I said I was an artist a long time before I think I was

- -"

“... just because you’re an artist doesn’t mean you necessarily are - - radical. It’s another one of those stereotypes.”

Artemisia: “- - I don’t know this, but I’ve read that mental illness and art is seen in a way that’s sort of - - they’re all drug addicts or they are all really creative. So it’s a bit radical going from one extreme to the other.”

“Yeah, I think it’s a myth - - for most people, I see as sort of in between or pretty ordinary.”

Alice: “I think exhibiting; being able to exhibit is a big point. I’m just trying to think why - - for me it has been important - - but then I think maybe when you exhibit it reinforces your role – your identity.”

Constructing alternative identities.

Alice: “Are you are person with a disability? Or are you an artist? And which one comes first? And I think maybe I’ve been really struggling with that and I probably still will but making this work is about me going - - ‘I’m an artist and I have these issues. Full stop.’”

“I wonder too, whether my identity as an artist has been - - well compared to people at school, why it’s stronger? Is it because - - for me it was also about an alternative to being a person with mental illness, or a person who’s ill, or a person who’s sick, or a person who doesn’t have a job, or a person who’s not contributing, or a person who’s not a pensioner – all those things...’cos you get that question, ‘What do you do,’ - - then I say ‘I’m an artist,’ and then nobody asks more, initially.”

Ruby: “When I first started here [art studio], it was really, really helpful because I had been so - - like getting into my medication and even accepting that you have an illness like bipolar, it’s - - it brings on a lot of grief, like you really mourn for a self that you thought you could have but you feel like you can’t have anymore...”

I am an artist. Forging an artistic identity.

Portrait 1: Ola - It’s just me/I just do.

Ola’s identity as an artist is spoken in a confident voice when she is able to resist the comments from her fine arts tutor about being glad he was male “Oh, thank God, I’m not a woman because you don’t get - - you’ll never get taken seriously like a man does in fine art”. Later she recalls that she was able to question the authority of her sculpting teacher – the guru of the area – “- - and I found XXX was a bit stunted in his ideas. Like I said, “I really want to do detail on it and different things,” and he said, “Oh, you should be doing that in painting.” “Well, I don’t really agree.”

“I didn’t lose my confidence, I thought, ‘No’.”

At these times Ola is articulating a strong artistic identity. At other times in our discussion she questions her right to claim an artistic identity via her creative merits. On several different occasions she mentions, that because she can reproduce what she likes, this indicates that she isn't really creative, but more technical or an artisan. She would like to be more creative and establish a proper disciplined working schedule for artmaking and sell more of her work, as lack of money creates barriers to artmaking. Ola is very aware of the expectation that artists are not compensated sufficiently for their services to community projects and are expected to donate their skills for free, "they think artists survive on air."

Ola also talks about how she has had lots of mental illness in her life and this has affected her forming a strong identity both as a person and an artist.

"I think a lot of it comes down to, that you are innately artistic. That's just you and you can do most things that you want to do with art. But if you are interested in art and you haven't got the skills as much as somebody else - - it's a matter of confidence. Like some people talk themselves right out of it - - like 'I can't draw, I can't paint' - - you know - -...but I've never thought like that. I just do. It's just me."

Joy: "...and I used to draw before I can even remember, with chalk on a great big asphalt veranda - - and I assume it was there in me all the time to be expressing myself through some form of drawing. But also people would say 'Ah, you're going to be - - Oh, you're an artist are you? So it was sort of embedded in my head that I was an artist as well - - before I was four."

"- and I always sold my work easily and well...And I always thought of myself as an artist because of that early indoctrination - you are an artist."

Artemisia refers to an artistic community of practice which help her to assume 'artist' within a collective identity.

"Well, except for a few friends, all my friends are artists. So I have a collective identity with them. - - So how do I make an identity? - - I don't really think about my identity because my friends and family know who I am. So if it was out of that sphere, I really have no identity - - I'm not a famous artist yet, so - -."

Judy: "I do feel like an artist but I still feel pretty unknown at the moment - - because I've only done - - I've done a few bits and pieces around in the mental health field, but I haven't really broken the scene in - - sort of mainstream artists - - So I'm hoping to do that."

Ambivalence – I am – no I am not an artist.

Ruby: "Yeah, 'cos I don't actually like to - - actually I feel kinda stupid using the word artist...There's something so pretentious about it or I think that people associate

that word with art masters and I think I didn't like to use it. So for a long time I would just go, 'oh well, I draw and I paint', and people would go, 'Oh, so you're an artist', and I'd go, 'yeah, I guess' - - But I'm not that comfortable with that term."

"Artist is just so fraught...like anyone can call themselves an artist or Leonardo da Vinci can call himself an artist, or somebody who makes dresses or somebody who finger paints - - you know it just covers so much."

Portrait 2: Frances: Who do you think you are?

"I've always had a good eye for colour. And it's given me countless hours and hours of joy...And yet I will still say 'Oh no, I can't do this! Like I drew a tree, and it looks like a tree, and it is a tree' and my daughter...says, 'but you have drawn a tree, you've got an artist's - - there's an artist within you, you just won't acknowledge it'."

"I think - - I could almost say too that I don't see myself as an artist, but...I could be drawing and that would be contributing to my wellbeing. Because I am doing something for me - I can't say I'm an artist because, a) I have no training whatsoever, and --- as much as I love this [abstract tapestry] if it went out into the public it would be picked to pieces for flaws in it. - No, I can't show it to anybody...I didn't show this at the show because someone would make a million holes in it and then I would feel quite bad and think 'Oh well, who did I think I was? All those hours'."

"And when you said occupation (in demographic info at the start) in my head I thought 'Oh I should just tell her I'm an artist' (laughs) but then I thought I should say no --- slaved over four hot kids all my life. I thought, should I say I'm an artist? (laughs), and then I thought, don't fool yourself."

Norah: "Um - - not really. I think that would be a bit presumptuous really. To do that. No, like I really enjoy the process of painting when I've got the time and I'm free I like it, but I couldn't call myself, you know, really an artist. I like to muck around with paint - - and no I don't think so."

"Well,...when I was living in XXX I belonged to the artist group, I suppose I have been an artist. Would you say?"

"...but you wouldn't really call yourself an artist. Would you, do you think?"

Artistic Pathways

This section explores the artistic pathways women have travelled in order to establish, sustain and sometimes cease an art practice. Along the way, in a life of making, various barriers and hurdles are identified, leading to junctures and discontinuities in the artistic trajectory. Thinking diffractively, I am interested in the patterns that evolve or what happens when an obstacle is encountered. If we think back to the displays of diffraction, a wave hitting a wharf and the subsequent wave

patterns created, the obstacles women meet along their artistic pathways may be similar – overlaps – or vary dramatically, but how they go around each obstacle is what is of interest; how this pattern is changed each time a novel obstacle is encountered. No pattern can be exactly the same as each meeting is contingent upon the last and cannot have occurred before and cannot happen again – living artistic diffraction patterns. Having an experience of mental ill-health is only one of many hurdles that may influence an artistic pathway and indeed, as I shall discuss, for the aspiring artists' group, coming in contact with art programs in mental health services frequently reignited a passion for artmaking that had lain dormant for some time. In this group of 10 artists, artistic practice was generally more continuous – less fractured – but the dilemmas in proclaiming *I am an artist* and then enacting that identity, remain apparent across the lifespan.

Artistic motivations across time, space and relations. Norah's path began in a classic sense, echoed amongst the majority of the women in this artists' group, with an early love of art and a sense of confidence in her artistic abilities and capabilities (*I can*). She was encouraged by her family to pursue this passion. At art school she began to question her artistic abilities, succumbing to a "not really good enough" orientation to her artistic capabilities. Norah's artistic path has ceased and begun and ceased and begun again, weaving in and out across her life. She has made art for a variety of reasons – for sale and for herself. She has used art to empty herself of difficult feelings and she has used art as a relaxing activity or recreationally. She has also used art to generate a professional income.

Portrait 3: Norah: making marks.

"I guess I do remember as a child going to kindergarten...and that was my first experience of painting and I thought, 'Oh, that was fantastic'...I thought, 'I don't want any other activity.' - - I loved the mark that it made."

"I really loved drawing because I - - it was good actually because I wasn't much good at maths and - - Then I did an art course and I liked...But by the time I came through, there weren't any really good jobs...So then I just got into [alternate profession]..."

"I didn't do any painting much either...I was just at the job. Just go to work. I didn't do anything. I didn't really think I was all that good enough to do anything."

"Artmaking went aside for ages and then it was when I had my daughter and I was at home and working just part-time and...I was housebound. I kinda had to fill in my day and that's why I started to paint and enjoy it. Yeah, I thought it was really great. I felt a bit inferior when I was doing an art course. I didn't feel as if I was as good as

anybody else. So I tended not to want to go on with it. But then when I was at home, I didn't care anymore. You know, I just felt it was for myself. So I didn't have to compete."

"And then I think I just started off. It was just a small sort of thing. I did it then and I found it opened up all these other avenues for me...I found that process of doing those really ugly paintings - - reflect how I was feeling. I found it was kind of good Chi really. I sort of found I - - I don't know if I enjoyed it, but it offered me a lot of relief."

"And then I thought, 'that's it. I don't want to do anymore.' And then I thought, 'I quite enjoyed doing that actually. I did quite like this process'...then the next step from that was kind of a recreational thing."

"And then...I started...to look at composition and colour and I became interested in it all again and...and I got really interested in producing artwork for the local art shows. I really liked it."

"Yes. It's interesting...and I started to sell some paintings. And I was really amazed...that people would buy them, and I started to get a real - - you know, my self-esteem or my ego really liked this attention and when I sold them. I thought this was fantastic".

"I thought it was great, but then I - - moved back here to [XXX] and I was working full-time and now - - I don't do art anymore. I haven't done any for a couple of years. I think you need time - - the ideas need to percolate and filter through a bit. I can't - - there is no way I can do it with the demands of working...I haven't got the luxury of being able to re-examine how I'm feeling."

Starting young. Like Norah, there were overlaps with a further seven women in this group who talked about being 'the type of kid that drew over everything at hand' and having vivid memories of the enjoyment of artmaking as early as kindergarten or earlier. Several also recalled the pleasure in receiving awards and prizes for art in primary school. According to Joubert (2008), research shows there is value in using the arts to make learning more meaningful to reach children at risk or marginalised – particularly those who have experienced childhood trauma. However, she stresses that research also shows they need to start young. This is borne out by my research interviews with the 32 women artmakers. Many expressed delight in art at a young age, often the only time they could remember as feeling valued and as a positive time in their lives. Joubert emphasises that the arts facilitate many ways of experiencing and understanding the world and remove barriers to exploring aspects of life in novel ways.

Joy: "When I went to school I used to draw in the back of other people's - - you know, the white pages at the back of the book - - so I've always drawn."

Ruby: “Oh, well basically drawing has been a major part of my life for as long as I can remember...so it had been a really big part of my life. It was pretty much my favourite thing to do at school from the moment I went from kindergarten onwards.”

Janis recalled “Yeah, drawing and art have always been there - -.”

The support and encouragement may have remained from friends and family, but as these women entered the secondary education system, their positive experiences of artmaking began to be tarnished by the dwindling sense of art skills being valued. Jumping generations, Joy reports that artmaking skills were not seen as valuable in the 1930s school system. Margaret describes how she lost her confidence somewhere along the 1980s educational pathway between primary and secondary school and Ruby reports that artmaking skills were not seen as valuable in 2000s school system.

Portrait 4: Margaret: I lost that sense of love between high school and primary school.

“Even in primary school I loved - - I think I felt the most meaning, the sense of awareness of being alive when I was making art. And when I was in primary school I got allowed to go inside the art room at lunchtime and sit and work quietly while the teacher was in the room. That felt like a really special privilege and - - that’s really nice to be encouraged - - my work was encouraged and it felt really special to get that...And yeah, it was really pleasurable - - like to be acknowledged in a positive way like that.”

“I had quite a bit of trouble in high school because I just wanted to do what I wanted to do but the art teacher wanted me to learn specific things and ‘Oh you can do that in your own time’.”

“But I didn’t want to do it that way...I wanted to do the freestyle stuff - - and the girl who did do what the teacher said was really favoured and got great marks and - - she was really taken under the teacher’s wings and I felt like - - I was on the outside and - - ...”

“- - I think I lost that sense of love between high school and primary school given that that relationship with that particular teacher was so difficult...I just really struggled with always being not good enough. So all I wanted to do was travel but then after about eight years of travelling - - look I remember when I was travelling I was writing poetry about colours and I was craving to stop travelling so that I could make art.”

Joy: “I went to a high school that specialised in languages and art was their last thought in the school. It was in the foundations of this three story building and it opened up into this dark - - underneath the building - - and art wasn’t considered valuable.”

“- - but in those days, art wasn’t considered a sensible thing to be putting your mind to. Particularly in a working class family like ours - - you wouldn’t mess around with art.”

Science versus art pathways.

Portrait 5: Ruby: It’s a bit of a gamble.

“I guess there were times at school that it wasn’t really worth doing and art is not really perceived in Year 12 as being a really valuable thing to do, I don’t think. - - It was like the slack subject. And I didn’t actually do it in Year 12 for that reason.”

“Yeah, so there’s a lot of reasons...I mean my family didn’t really care what I chose to do, so it wasn’t from home, but I sort of felt, just generally, it wasn’t a valued thing.”

“I was seen as one of the more skilled people art-wise in my year level and even then - - I don’t know, you just didn’t get any, I guess credit for it. It was kind of like, ‘oh yeah, you were born with that skill and everybody else is not, oh yeah and like whatever’.”

“It’s a bit of a gamble. It’s not a smart choice.”

“Yeah, and even now when people sort of say, “what do you do,” and I say, “I’m an artist, I paint, I draw. That’s what I do with my time.” People are sort of, “oh, you took a gamble doing that.” - - And even when I’ve done painting courses and stuff...I remember the Art teacher saying to me, basically don’t choose to be an artist. Like you are never going to have any money. (Laughs) like even people who do it, bring it down.”

“Yeah, I was doing [science course] when I finished school and I was suffering a lot at that time because I didn’t know what was wrong with me and I was just struggling on a day to day basis and doing something that - - it is actually quite scientific and it’s quite dry and it’s all about repetition and remembering things - - which was making it worse and I guess out of desperation...I went, ‘Well, that’s what makes me happy [artmaking] and I should just give it a go’ and then I never really stopped.”

Artistic skills not valued. As the women have articulated above, having your art viewed seriously is a major challenge throughout the lifecycle – whether in the education system or in daily adult life – and to compound this, art made in mental health facilities is frequently positioned as therapy. As women move out of early childhood, there are many invitations to begin to doubt the worthiness of acquiring and possessing artistic skills. The implications of realising that the skills they have, that were frequently wholeheartedly encouraged as children, were now ‘seen as useless’

were serious for some of these women – Artemisia, Margaret, Janis and Ruby – however they all considered the consequences of not doing art at all were worse.

Portrait 6: Janis: It's a useless thing, those artistic skills you have.

When asked what her understanding was of how she had ended up using a mental health service, Janis said that lack of recognition of her artistic skills had made her sick.

"Well, I followed - - because I basically was very much a follower as a kid, and I think that's the main reason I have to assert myself a lot more now. It's because I let everybody sort of paint over me [laughs]."

"I was given the understanding from a very young age that visual art was not a skill that could ever be viable. But I still couldn't help sketching and painting voraciously in my spare time, 'as a hobby'. I think it's all that stuff of not being able to do things that help me process the information society gives me, dismissing my skills as worthless. I need to be working at something that makes sense to me, otherwise my world falls apart. I'm not into socialising things. I don't understand my place in it. That's a problem, because Australian society likes to network this way. And so, I didn't get work in stuff I enjoyed or was even good at most of the time. I just got what was left over. I didn't mind that while I was young, because I still believed things would get better, but...as I got older, it became like there was no reason for living if this was all society was ever going to allow me to do."

"- - for me not to be able to do it and for somebody to say that I have no skills is kind of denying a lot of things...which is all very strange to me. I don't quite understand why, but that's just - - why I don't quite fit in - - maybe that's the reason?"

"And I think stopping, meant that I was sort of like at a bottleneck, no middle of the road. I had no - - it's like not being able to talk. It's like somebody's, you know, taken away my voice box. I can no longer speak - - anymore or - - and just that feeling that I'm not supposed to. That it's a useless thing."

Margaret: "...and I just feel like I cop a lot of flak because - - I feel like I'm seen as some sort of bludger who - - I think they think I just stay at home all day and don't really do much. And I don't think that what I do is respected or taken seriously or, you know - - I think they think I'm weird and then you know I hear myself saying that and well in thinking that, well I'm creating a problem for myself - - ."

"I just feel like chucking a big tantrum, 'like you can't understand me'."

Ola: "Yeah, that's right, but it's still treated like recreational, you know - - and it's very hard. Like I was talking to another friend yesterday, and she's an artist, and I said, 'Oh, are you getting paid?' and she said, 'No. Oh they think artists live on thin air."

Because you are an artist, you go down and do it, donate your time,' you know. And I sort of agree with that. I don't know if it's particularly right. You don't ring up a plumber and say, come and do a job. You are not going to get paid, but do it for the love of it. - - You don't want to be exploited. - - But I'll still do it for nothing."

Artistic Practice: Relational Barriers

Being a mother and being an artist.

Portrait 7: Joy: Don't want to get on the men's train.

"I had two kids in two years and at that stage the artist in me started to rebel because [laughs] I think the groundswell of the women's movement was coming, plus I hated being Mum... - - I wasn't cut out for it - - and I sort of made a pact with the artist side of me, that I'd do my duty by the kids and I'd just - - I wasn't going to put too much time into the art because there was too much other stuff to do - - ."

"- - having to go back to work at that time - - to raise the children - - but I also found that women's politicisation because I was being treated like all others getting \$2 a week raise instead of \$6 which the men got... And I went up and told them I was leaving. Anyway they paid me the \$6... - - they would open the door for every lady and give her a seat and everything else but [laughs] not pay the money."

So that idea of being an artist and being a woman was an issue for you?

"Well it was...when I said to my friend that I had to have authority before I could start the other - - the authority was in drawing like a man."

"...and I knew I had to do that before you'd be ever taken seriously in the other things you do and say... - - I changed my direction to only deal with women and to the women's side of art after I dreamed that I was trying to get onto a train where all these men were going and couldn't - - I got the ticket but I couldn't get through the doorway. It was too tiny. And then, out of no-where, a very weak, like cartoon-like woman, in a uniform, she came along and said, 'all women this way'. And there was a whole lot of women with pushers and handbags and jeeps and we all went after her and she opened a great big sliding door and we got on the train. I took notice of that and I didn't try to struggle to get on the men's train anymore..."

"And the other thing was that...the director of the XXX gallery...had this fellow ...with his cheque book open and he'd chosen three very expensive pictures and was about to write the cheque and she said the name and it was a woman's name, and he just closed the cheque book".

"Yes, and he said, 'oh, that doesn't accrue in value' and that was it. And that was a blow, you know, not to me personally, but for all women."

“- - I think really we are a very small spearhead of people you know - - in the cultural world.”

You mean women artists?

“Women in general; Women who are activists. It’s a very - - um - - I feel we are bred to look after children and nurture people and that can’t be denied in us and you’ve always got to fight against it because, if you want to be an artist I mean, because all the women that I’ve ever run groups with, art doesn’t come first because they’ve got to do the house first. And I said, “we’ll change that. When you get up, when you are ready to do the art first and you’ll have as much energy as you need to do everything else then. But the other way you are draining yourself of energy.” So I don’t know if anyone ever did do that, but I tried to do it all my life...”

Frances also defied the life story that had been prepared for her, disputing her familial upbringing and teaching herself the skills her siblings mastered. Left-handedness was seen as impossible to teach and thus she could not contribute to the traditions of her culture and family. She now wants to have her artwork considered as a family heirloom – reinstating her claim to cultural traditions. Frances also thwarts the domestic role by making art in secret.

Portrait 8: Frances: A tradition: Mother to daughter. Artmaking in secret.

“Now when my mother was --- this was in XXX, a practice that they did was ... they would make, you know, the top sheet...the bit that goes over was all hand stitched with the most amazing stitches and...that was given to the bride as a present from the family. - - but - - my problem right through has been that I was the only left-handed girl in a family of four and my mother didn’t really bother much with me. - - Well she felt she couldn’t teach me but --- and said ‘oh, I can’t do anything, I’ll never learn’ but I have actually made tablecloths and --- (shows a large abstract tapestry) and there is also an abstract tapestry at XXX (hanging).”

“- - well I never like to pat myself on the back --- but I just think it’s quite beautiful. For someone who ‘well you’ll never learn how to do anything because you are left-handed and you know you won’t be - - I’ve taught myself to knit and crochet and I’ve made a number of things and when I started that [indicates tapestry] it just took on a life of its own.”

“No, my mother couldn’t be bothered with me whatsoever. And being left-handed didn’t help either. But she bothered with the other girls and showed them how to make clothes and dress-make and stuff like that and to knit. And I sort of had to just

observe and see and it wasn't until I was a grown up that I started to do things for myself...(laughs) but you see I always grew up in my family as being a stupid, dumb, fat girl. That went through all my family and that's how I've always viewed myself."

"So having done that, [tapestry] I'm tickled pink, I'm really thrilled with it, but I don't really see it as being something - - I'd never enter it into a show because they'd only have to look at the back and see I don't do the back properly."

"...when I was married I did knit. I used to knit a lot of stripes and I used to make blankets and I used to knit them in multi-coloured stripes but that was something that I did - - sort of - - never in front of my former husband - - never - - it was done in secret."

"... and yet knitting the stripes was what kept me sane. That's - - knitting the squares has kept me - - I was going to say kept my sane - - I'm not mad but you know - - it kept me - - and now I don't have to do anything in secret, I do everything quite in the open and have all my paints and crayons out on the table. If I want to sit and just doodle or do anything."

"Yes. I don't think he could have said anything I suppose, - - with me knitting but it was quite a secret thing that I did, because I was so miserable and so unhappy that just knitting stripes was what helped me get through things."

Artistic Practice: Practical Barriers – Space, Materials and Authority to Claim Them

Claiming space: Art as part of daily life. Consider the work practices of Joy Hester which resonate with many of the comments made by the women in this research regarding art production spaces, methods and materials. "Hester's method of working, sitting on the floor in company and rapidly producing her drawings, or creating many drawings on her knee, meant that she was viewed as a casual rather than a serious artist, 'A quick, off the cuff thing'" (Burke, 1983/2001, p. 136). She did not have her own studio until 1956, only four years before her death.

Burke (2001) argues that another reason Joy was not taken as seriously as an artist was that she was a drawer and did not consistently produce oil paintings. "Drawing was not valued as highly as oil painting and was seen as preparatory to the finished work of art" (p. 95). It is also possible that Joy may not have been able to always afford materials such as oil paints and stretched canvases. She made art from the cheapest and most accessible media and "mostly she drew with pen and ink or brush and ink on litho paper." Hester's *Mad Girl* (1942) is painted on a piece of tin that has been battered flat. It is also possible that she preferred this rapid and spontaneous way of making art. However, as Burke observes, this has had implications for her

reputation as an artist. Nonetheless, Burke surmises that Joy did not seem to mind the poor quality of her materials and that she did not need to withdraw to a studio to create “Like Sunday [Reed] she saw art as part of life” (p. 133).

The material conditions of artmaking, such as production site and context under which the work is made, influences whether the maker can be considered an artist. Janis, Margaret, Judy and Alice discussed the difficulties encountered when working from home, particularly in shared accommodation. Alice also identified the difficulty for some women to access art programs in mental health services when they are dominated by men. This service use pattern is supported by studies regarding women’s participation in psychiatric rehabilitation services in Victoria (Brooks, 2004; Gerrard, 1993; Spink, 2000).

Janis: “I didn’t have the space, because when I lived with other people they got annoyed if I made a mess - - or the landlord got annoyed if I made a mess and - - you know sometimes it’s hard not to get splattered paint on the wall. [Laughs] It’s just - - and you know, I do have to paint. I can’t just draw in the sketchpad.”

“Because I like painting big pictures and I was sort of, you know, wanting to go out and just graffiti things. [Laughs] It just got to that point, but I was painting all my furniture, everything, and yeah, I really needed the place to paint and be around other people who kind of accepted it.”

Margaret: “Well the story that comes to mind is where I was living with others and they’d go like, ‘Come on, come on, come and look’, and I just felt like I was attempting to immerse myself in a type of process and it was very interruptive. So it was quite a relief to go to a studio with other artists working who knew not to interrupt.”

Judy: [works at home] “I think working with oils is rather difficult, because you have to have ventilation or you have to be outside.”

Alice: “So a lot of drawing happens on my kitchen table. The table is really annoying because it’s full of books and every now and again I’ll open a book and do some sketching or drawing - - and then I have to eat dinner off the table - - so yeah, it’s a bit tricky.”

Artists Raik and Mangiamele (1991) looked at the work practices of 156 painters (men and women) in Victoria and found that half the sample considered ventilation in their working space unsatisfactory and identified a range of physical and chemical hazards at various points in the artistic process – storage, handling, disposal, cleaning, and ventilation during a variety of processes such as airbrushing, spraying, sanding/grinding, torching and heat gunning are a standard occupational hazard. Furthermore, artists are generally an industrially unorganised group and perhaps

particularly for women, are less likely to be working in studio space with others, but at home with potentially poor ventilation and a greater degree of isolation.

Sourcing materials to make art. Apart from difficulties in finding a physical space to make art, many women discussed the difficulty in accessing good quality art materials, partly due to financial reasons. Those on disability pensions cannot necessarily afford premium grade materials and may only have access to cheaper and more toxic art materials. Indeed, the need and, sometimes, the desire to scavenge for found art materials is a pattern that is encountered frequently when hearing artists talk about their artistic practices. Also for some there was a feeling that their art skills were not good enough to justify using quality materials or ‘the trappings of art’ as Norah described equipment like easels. A number of women discussed their ability to source art materials in innovative ways and from unlikely sources in order to be able to make art.

Several women explained that scavenging materials such as discarded house paints from skips allowed them to continue artmaking, but was possibly perilous in terms of health risks. As Alice explained, there was also the risk that collecting found objects for art projects was seen as ‘mad’ behaviour not artistic behaviour. Thus one of the advantages of accessing a supported art program was access to subsidised and reasonable quality materials in a well-ventilated and professional space which promoted respect for artistic practices. However, a lack of privacy and dedicated individual spaces was mentioned by several women as a difficulty in the shared supported studio space, and the problem of art made under the mental health umbrella being viewed as ‘mad art’ remained an obstacle to being regarded as an artist.

Joy, Ola, Ruby and Judy all discussed the exorbitant price of framing but if the work was to be valued then it should be framed. Joy had found a friend to make frames, Ola sourced affordable frames and replaced the picture with her own work and Judy searches for pictures in op shops with interesting frames which she proceeds to paint over. Although this often dictated the scale of the artworks, the need to be ‘creative in your poverty’ was not necessarily seen as a negative aspect of making art, but often an impetus to be more resourceful.

Judy: “- - sometimes it’s frustrating, but sometimes it will push you to make work on interesting mediums. Like I have been experimenting with other materials besides just canvas – like patterned materials and - - or just cardboard or things like that. Anything I can find that’s a flat surface [laughs].”

Margaret: “It was when I didn’t have any money to buy materials and I’d go through dumpsters and back alleys and just get out like...tins of house paint – stuff that

had just gone off. And it was really, really toxic and I just used to paint with it and stay for hours in the studio and it didn't have enough ventilation."

"...like...I found a chopping board from a ship that was washed up on the rocks and I painted on top of that. So not having money can become quite exciting."

"To me- - well if materials were all available, I don't know if you have to work as hard to create- - if you could have anything you want - - but there is something special about finding and creating."

Norah: "I found it quite good to try to be able to think, 'you have to be creative in your poverty.'

"You don't need a canvas anyway. I mean you can paint on anything. You can go down to the tip, down to the recycle place and get whatever you want or just - - the things that are thrown away are a fantastic source of - - to be used in artmaking."

The right to claim materials.

Alice: "...here (supported art studio) is really good, but I haven't actually used that many materials here because of that whole thing about deserving [laughs] - - It took me two years to actually paint on a canvas this big - - I just couldn't do it."

Do you think your art isn't worthy of being on the canvas?

"No, intellectually I don't, but unconsciously ...I think it's because I feel I just don't actually deserve anything - - but I think that some of it may come out of the scarcity mentality that disability services tend to have."

Norah: "I never really liked using expensive materials because I didn't think my work was all that good to really justify it...I didn't have the money to purchase expensive materials or canvases. And I liked the idea - - well Picasso just used whatever was at hand and if it was good enough for him - - [laughs], it would be good enough for me, you know."

Selling yourself – selling your work. Some of the women in this group recognised that although they had artmaking skills, they did not necessarily have marketing skills or the desire or confidence to market themselves or their art.

Margaret: "Pretty much I give it away. I just find that sales, is wearing a horrible hat. It's just that I find it excruciating, that experience. If it can be a sale, being quite natural, and I'm quite happy and open to that, but if I have to put any effort into convincing or - - I just feel it's all really private."

Janis: "I find it difficult to move in circles and socialise. People like to judge my kind, put labels on us. You're supposed to be out there talking yourself up. And I just have no idea. I end up telling people why they shouldn't buy my painting, more or less."

Ola: "...but I'd like to make money out of it, but I don't really know. I'd have to find an outlet - - sell it somewhere or - - you have to be a bit of a businessperson really... Yeah - - see I never, ever had that skill..."

Artistic Practice: Having an Experience of Mental Ill-health

The fault line/disjunction/discontinuity can sometimes be an experience of mental ill-health which interrupts artmaking for a time. What is interesting is that rather than traditional notions of madness as muse, an experience of mental ill-health was generally a hurdle for artists in this group. How these women moved around this interruption, as one of the many interruptions or obstacles encountered when attempting to establish and sustain an art practice, varied. But retaining or regaining a space and place to create was considered vital. Ruby stopped artmaking when she left school and took a science course and became unwell. Artemisia "had a brief sort of mental illness where I didn't do much art and - - but I kept looking at art - -". This was also the case for Ola: "So I did all the art work on them for ten years and then I had a bad breakdown and came back here virtually - - So it's taken me awhile to get on my feet again now - - Oh well, I've had a lot of mental illness so my identity hasn't been that strong until lately - - over the years ... probably as a person. So when I have been unwell, I probably haven't been together enough to have my art together enough."

Alice: "Um - - yeah, I think it's impeded and it's helped - - sometimes my anxieties just get the better of me and so I can't make art. I get so stressed out about it but that's happening less as I think I gain confidence."

Drugs and artmaking. Exploring one of the stereotypes around mental illness and genius, like van Gogh and his infamous bursts of creativity, Janis says she can't make art when taking psychiatric drugs and Ruby (laughs) "Oh, that's what happens when you don't take your medication... - - all the knowledge that is around you, you absorb it and you hold on to it and you remember everything and it's great and you can have a lot of fun with it - - but you always crash, so - - it's not worth it in the end. It's really not. You always end up where you come to the point where you either go too far with it and you can't control yourself anymore (laughs) or you get really, really depressed..."

"...and it's followed by - - it's so - - it's quite self-destructive, like you wouldn't - - in that time I wouldn't think that you'd be eating much or you wouldn't be taking care of yourself. You probably wouldn't be sleeping - - you know it would be like being on speed all the time, just constant - - never stopping - - so I can't see how anyone could have a long healthy life."

Or as Judy comments, as she shows me one of her early paintings, “that’s before I went on psychiatric drugs. I think the drugs really make you put on a lot of weight. That is really depressing as well and that’s a whole other issue.”

“Yeah - - I think it takes away the psychotic component, because I’m on anti-psychotics, so it takes away all those psychotic things that sometimes can be very interesting but also can be very scary.”

“It does take away the...but then again I’m also on antidepressants and that sort of makes you a bit more relaxed and more likely to create art.”

Art under the mental health umbrella. The women identified a number of barriers associated with mental ill-health and art practice – e.g., being outside the mainstream/lack of visibility – artmaking seen as therapy not art practice – artwork seen as visual manifestations of symptoms of mental illness.

Portrait 9: Alice: Mental health services to mainstream.

Whilst Alice was pleased with the support she received at the supported art program, she held strong views about the way art was presented and conceptualised within the mental health framework.

“- - the thing that really shocked me, like - - the real world, leaving the Mental Health community, is that the real world has no tolerance for different people.”

“And I think part of it is, - - at other mental health services I tried to do that [advocate for services] and I failed and it was horrible. They’re such conservative systems. So when I came to XXX I said...‘well I’m not going to get into trouble, you know, because we are not a very powerful group of people. I mean I’m young, ambulant and I’m lucky. I didn’t get sick until I was XX, so I had a whole history of what it meant to be myself.”

“And have rights and choices. So when I ended up in a mental health service I couldn’t believe the lack of rights we had. - - So anyway, when I came here, I decided...I was just going to do art and that was the only reason I was here – just to do art. But then I started thinking, ‘Oh well, I’m here to do art but I’m going to try and bring my fellow consumers with me on this journey of being empowered, getting out and exhibiting and or whatever they need to do. Because one of the biggest problems that I’ve had with mental health services, is the division around - - is that there is the people who live in the mental health community...they live in this world that is completely separate from the rest of the world - - and when you’re in the community all these other people become invisible.”

“And it is very hard to cross over - - to get into the real world when you are in the disability sector - - anyway this really concerns me...I was going to move and really engage and try to join my local community instead of just living in this sort of limbo land of disability services.”

“Yeah well, that was when I first moved I also found out about this local art network and I went along, dragged another friend of mine along with me so that I had support, and so I slowly got myself in. But before that, my friend and I, we’d had no contact with artists outside the mental health community. So we did that and built networks up to the end result being that I put my work in one of their exhibitions.”

“And it’s been one of my things about which I have been quite passionate - the mental health umbrella. If you are going to show some work it should be in the public setting not the mental health service which is what inevitably happens, in my experience.”

“It’s just so...and it’s just disrespectful. It’s just not right.”

“Yeah and because there’s so much stigma around mental illness, it’s difficult to tell people to go and see your work. Yeah, it’s difficult and you are really limited. You’re not proud - - the times I’ve had work in mental health services on show – yeah it hasn’t been that much of an empowering experience.”

Janis and Margaret appreciated the opportunity to attend the supported studio and be amongst other artists who respected their practice and space. However, Alice was not alone in her critique of art made in mental health services; the women in the artists’ group were cognisant of how their work was viewed when created in a mental health service. So although the artists mentioned the supportiveness of the art programs, this was generally not the most salient feature of attendance. Other motivators featured highly for these women. Artemisia, Janis and Ruby nominated skill development, access to decent materials and space, and support to contemplate working towards such events as exhibitions as being useful.

Mainstream to mental health service. Margaret follows a standard path of art school to exhibiting in mainstream spaces before making art in a supported mental health service art studio.

Margaret: “I feel unusual in that I’ve been participating in the mainstream in my past.”

“I’ve done things in a funny order. Like I did a two year residency at XXX [laughs] and then I went to the XXX [art school] after that, which most people usually do the other way around - - and going to XXX [supported art studio] was really confronting because - - having that sense of identity in the art world and then going into

something under the mental health umbrella - - it's just hard - - that whole area of artmaking doesn't seem to be encompassed in the art world. It's something on the outside - - like for people who aren't well and - - it's a very different sense of artmaking to the other - - type of artmaking that gets shown in the galleries."

Ola also went from mainstream employment as an artist to a mental health art program "And the second time, when I was in XXX, and I was high, I did all these portraits off my own bat. Nobody came and said, 'Hey, let's do some art'...Um, they are very poor with their classes and they're - - it's like they haven't been given money for materials or - - and they have the cheapest paint in these plastic bottles, like you're in kindergarten - - but maybe that's the reality of psych hospitals."

Art not therapy.

Janis: "I don't ever see it as therapy though, it's art for me. It's how I live and I have the tools to unlock - - it's how I communicate."

Alice: "And when I was at other mental health services, the art program, if they had any, they didn't all have them - - was seen as art therapy. There would be no materials...and no like support in terms of learning techniques - - no qualified art teachers or artists would be part of the program."

"It would just be the worker who happened to be there - - ...umm and so I could have possibly made myself a little bit unpopular at times, with management, in my quest to try and get art respected as an important part of life."

[later discussing an arts-based skills class she attended] "It was really, really powerful. Really significant for me because it was the first time that it was real - - it was real artists taking the program and treating you with absolute respect - - and it wasn't in the context - - it wasn't in a mental health service...It was so different and we all got really excited about being artists...and it was about the art not about our experience of mental illness."

Alternatively, as noted, Judy thinks art is a good therapeutic tool and Ruby is ambivalent.

Ruby: "And some of their work shows their mental state really, really clearly - - and obviously everything that you paint is tainted a little bit with what you feel at the time - - but - - "

Thus, whilst all artmaking may be potentially therapeutic, as mentioned frequently by a number of participants, in most cases the therapeutic aspect was only one of many of the functions and meanings art rendered. The art as therapy paradigm was not generally viewed as applicable to these women's artmaking practices.

Reception of women's art: Interpreting women's art.

Ruby: "Yeah, like people who come to the exhibitions here, they know that it's a place where people with mental illness go and I think that people expect to see something pretty amazing, particularly from people who are schizophrenic. They expect to see something a bit earth shattering, like something really different... So people come with that expectation and the art can't just hang there for its own sake?"

Cindy Sherman on interpretation:

My idea when I shot it was that it was someone with a hangover, waking up in the sun and thinking, 'Oh, God, what time did I go to bed?' It wasn't anything at all about rape, although that's how it's been described. I realised later on that I have to accept that there will be a range of interpretations that I can't control, because that's what makes it interesting to me. But at the same time I was sort of disturbed that people could so misinterpret my intentions...(Tomkins, 2008, p. 34)

Frida Kahlo had her artmaking genre defined for her when Andre Breton proclaimed her to be a self-created surrealist "I never knew I was a surrealist until Andre Breton came to Mexico and told me I was...the only thing I know is I paint because I need to, and I paint always whatever passes through my head, without any other consideration" (Herrera, 2003, p. 254). Later she wrote, "They thought I was a surrealist but I wasn't. I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality" (Herrera, 2003, p. 266). Or for Georgia O'Keeffe, "I write this because such odd things have been done to me with words...I am often amazed at the spoken and written word telling me what I have painted" (O'Keeffe, 1976, Preface).

Thus, if well established artists such as Kahlo, O'Keeffe and Sherman encounter issues with how their work has been received and interpreted, what happens to less well-known women and their art, especially if they have a diagnosis of mental illness? While artmaking might be a safe space or at times therapeutic, when it is articulated in this manner, there is a temptation to misconstrue these comments as *art is therapy*, ignoring the artist's intent. But if art is not therapy for these women, then what does it do?

Part B – The Interviews: Ten Artists' Speak: What Does Artmaking Do?

The Power of Artmaking

It has been recognised that artmaking can assist people tell their stories, express themselves, contain feelings, improve self-esteem and find new solutions to old problems, and that that art programs in mental health services can be beneficial (Stickley et al., 2007). But it has not been emphasised is that any or all of these things,

and many more, may contribute profoundly to a person's way of being and surviving in the world – "It is absolutely essential". None of the women in this research expressed artmaking as having a single function but rather as having different roles at different stages of their lives. There was no one role or function that was clearly the most important for all the women. Like their artistic routes, the role and function of artmaking in women's lives was defined individually and idiosyncratically – patterns of overlap and difference.

Just have to do it: I think it's absolutely essential.

Janis: "Um, it's absolutely essential because I stopped doing it for a few years because it was expensive...It's just - - and you know, I do have to paint. I can't just draw in the sketchpad...I need to create as much as I need to exercise, for my wellbeing."

"Have to make art to live. Not good if I don't. Fall apart emotionally. Um. If I don't have a studio to paint in I'll be arrested for painting the sidewalk, most probably."

Ruby: "Oh. I think it is absolutely essential...I'm one of those people whose got a zillion journals everywhere and I'm always scribbling something, like writing or drawing or doing something - - and - - yeah, it's just like an extension of my arm. I need it all the time."

Alice: "...because I really do think that creativity is a really, really important expression of - - probably for everybody in their life and we all do it in different ways - - but some need it more than others and art is one way to do that and it's just really important."

"Yeah, and life can be pretty miserable without that and if your whole life is a mental health service which for some people it is and it was for me for a while too, and then no wonder people get stuck or stay sick."

Artemisia: "Yeah, I don't feel that I could ever - - well - - to not be apart from art after - - so yeah, I don't think I could ever do without it."

Survival strategy. It saved my life.

Joy: "...without art I would have topped myself ages ago."

"Well, for me it saved my life because I've been plagued with depressions and I've had - - ."

"But I know the power of art...So really I could not have got through without the artwork and the release of certain tensions and...- - I went through all the stories and artwork that kept on coming up and found these sorts of things would help me crawl out of the - - it's kind of like someone going to a psychiatrist regularly, you know, I did the same thing that way."

"So without art I just couldn't have made it through life I'm sure."

"It's kept me alive."

Margaret: "...sometimes I've felt like it's saved me, in that it's a really great place to put a lot of difficulty...taking a lot of really difficult issues and alchemising them. Like...taking something and turning them into something else."

"- - I think sometimes artmaking can help people keep their sanity."

Frances: "- - I was going to say kept me sane"

If I don't I get sick.

Janis: "Good medicine is giving me a place to paint and work out my psychology, rebuild through encouragement, getting me out of a violent situation, learning to build those parts of myself I want to exist, that sort of thing. Social workers, people who talk to me, who see me as a person, rather than an insect. That helps."

"It's not so much about rehabilitation, because there isn't a place to return me to. It's about having been given time and space, without too much pressure to find a way to be able to assert and develop what my ecosystem was designed for. It is a self-renovation, when your home is in a state that's just not liveable. And by home, I mean, my body, my mind, my sense of self."

"I'm prepared to work long hours at creating a visual impression of the world around and within me. If I don't, I get sick, like people do when they don't exercise their bodies or fulfil their desires to become parents."

Lived Body (Corporeality): A Style of Being in the World

During the interviews with these 10 artists I repeatedly heard phrases such as It's who I am/how I live/I just do/it's just me/ what feels me. It's what I DO/ It's in the doing.

Ola: "- - so I've always just really loved art and it's always just been part of me and very much so really - - and it affects everything I do in life. - - . *I just do. It's just me.*"

Joy: "all sorts of ideas came out like a Catherine wheel..."

To make is to be human.

Portrait 10: Ruby: The things that make your heart sing.

"I sort of sat with myself and thought, 'what feels me? What makes me really happy and what have I done through every class that I've ever been in since I've been a little kid?' - - which is just draw all over all of my notebooks. So I went, 'Well, that's what makes me happy and I should just give it a go' and then I never really stopped."

"- - and maybe even, like a friend of mine, XXX and I were thinking about doing an exhibition and we wanted to - -...I like the idea of it being about who we are".

"Yeah, I think it's to be human, I guess. It's a pretty amazing thing to make something, to construct something."

"Anyway, so that's it, you go to school and you learn all about political ways of expressing yourself...But at the end of the day what I am learning about being an artist is that you have just got to be really honest with yourself about where you're at and what you believe in and - - sometimes, when you paint them - - they just make your heart sing and others are hard work. And the things that make you sing are the things I think you should do."

Frances: "I make myself be doing - - that's why I'm so sorry that this is finished now [tapestry]."

It's a visual language. Joy and Janis talk about artmaking as a visual language.

Joy: "And drawing meant a lot to me. It was my first language. So I remember if I really wanted to annoy my mother I remember drawing her ugly (laughs)." Janis commented that being prevented from making art was like having her voice box removed and explained the mind-body and surrounding environment intra-actions that occur when artmaking.

Ruby, considered her desire to draw all the time as being "just like an extension of my arm."

Portrait 11: Janis: My whole body thinks.

"I now have a visual language and it comes from - - I get a sensory intake - - but it's - - I feel like I sense things - - through my skin or whether it be - - well I'm calling them electromagnetic frequencies but - - they could be called vibes, they could be called anything - - but it's something that I intake, my mind interprets and it stores it as information and it's like, if I don't do anything with it, it sticks there and turns into a mood."

"And I know if I get these moods, I know there is something I have to do. Sometimes it's writing, sometimes it's dancing, sometimes it's playing an instrument - - but more often than not - - if I'm at home I just get out this sketch pad and I just do."

"I think of visual expression as a primary language, whereas something like English as an imposed construct. Innately people know how to draw, in the same way as people make sound. Sometimes society has just put up barriers preventing people from expressing themselves in this way, so the visual ideas don't get encouraged to develop."

“Community, nature, infinity, entropy and being able to communicate with the ideas in these things, sounds and the energy around I interact with daily.”

“Landscape is alive with its own specific frequency. To me it’s not just the landscape captured by our visual lens, so much as the feel of it as well. Drawing the feeling of being swallowed by the sea in various places, or more specifically the eerie sense of Hanging Rock. I’m sure there’s some kind of odd element trapped in those rocks, something like Krypton. I hear it, but I’m not registering it as a sound, but it is there. I feel it through my skin. Painting stuff like that into visuals makes sense, because my hands are good at describing what is felt, but not easily defined immediately or properly with words. My hands have a connection to my mind that surprises my conscious self. It’s like watching a dream being painted before me.”

“I’m not fond of farming areas, I prefer bushland, or the electric creatures of the city and the vast clusters of humanity, with their variant sounds and senses....And some parts of the earth speak to me more than others, like some people do.”

“All parts of my body are part of my thinking, not just the electrical circuits of the brain.”

“It’s a mind hand connection and I can’t just do it with my mind...So the hands are like - - they think - - and I very much think it is the whole body that thinks.”

Meaning making: I am entitled to exist. Artists also discussed artmaking as a way of making meaning.

Joy: “instead of chaos and despair I can create meaning in my life”.

Margaret: “I think I felt the most meaning, the sense of awareness of being alive when I was making art.”

Ruby: “I try and make it mean something. I’d like, if my painting was on a wall for someone to go, ‘oh, that’s so sad’, or ‘oh, she looks so peaceful’, - - I like to make people feel something and I don’t like to title what I paint because I’m pretty happy for people to take away whatever they want - - just as long as it has made them think something.”

Portrait 12: Janis: A way of being in the world.

“It’s not mental illness,” said Janis, “it’s a different way of being in the world. I think I have sensory differences, which have given me difficulties with being able to conform to what society wants. I’ve always wanted to work with people. Meeting other people like me, that have similar experiences with interpreting the world, made me realise that we’re not ill, so much being directed to be afraid of our own way of sensing.”

“Cognitive problems are created by interacting with society and being programmed into behaving in ways that are not helpful in negotiation of it. This is why chemical fixes are not solutions, whereas I have found art to be a skill that can be developed continuously through practice, that can give a means to finding solutions.”

“It’s not about how other people feel about me, it’s how I feel about myself. I know when I’m happy. Being able to create art in a supportive and stimulating environment has made me smile and laugh like I’d never thought possible. I realise now I’m entitled to exist. And that there is nothing wrong with me as long as I remain myself. Other people might think there is. But, I’m not the one doing the imposing and dictating and the harming. I only want to have autocracy over my own body, see.”

Lived Space (Spatiality): Dimensions, Intra-actions: This is What I See

As with lived artistic body and style of being in the world, during the interviews with these ten artists I also repeatedly heard comments about the space and place that artmaking evoked – different dimensions, takes me to a different space, a place of one’s own. Artmaking was vehicle to claim a space to create.

Janis: “Like someone in the house is going into a rage. I’m - - I mean you know you might go and help them and all that, but then afterwards I can go and - - go and do my painting and just focus and it took me into that little world where nothing matters.”

“You know all that - - the conditions of who I am or who I’m supposed to be and what I’m supposed to be doing are gone. Suddenly I’m sort of free to do anything I want there - -”

Norah: “But I sort of think, for artmaking, I really need the space and time for self...Not much space for anything else.”

Artmaking helped me discover things about myself and the world I live in.

Alice talks about how the world actually becomes smaller when you have an experience of mental ill-health; others talked about how their world view had changed via artmaking.

Portrait 13: Alice: The world looked different.

“- - so instead of music I started seeing the world differently - - the world literally did look different. It just had different dimensions and shapes and the colours were different, everything was different - -”

“I think being ill, your world becomes smaller in a way - - so you - - the things immediately around you - - your vision - - the world decreases. And so there is more time to actually see what is around you and there is a way to investigate these things that are right here and see the beauty in them. Because you have to. There’s nothing

else because of how big your world is. Your world had got really small - - so you have to do that. Well, that's what I found I needed to do. I had to find some sort of beauty or some greatness in this much smaller world."

"But I think that's a consequence, oh not a consequence, it's the illness itself. That being ill you become disconnected from the rest of the world - - and there's less people in your world, there's less - - so you find other things become more - - get your attention more."

Janis: "the stuff I used to do as a child with my grandmother and my mother when I'd look into fires and see things in that or in the walnut cupboard and reading into it. So I just find little creatures or things and they just sort of appear out of it and - - generally they're detailed. I like to dance and sing while I work. I like big canvases. Not all of this is always possible. I've worked in different styles. At the moment I paint with my left hand, then swap the brush over to look into the details of what's there, find things, creatures, landscapes, architecture. It's dream-like stuff."

Dimensions/spirituality.

Alice: "I think the other thing that is really amazing about creativity is that what we create is often - - we create it - - no-one else did - - it's a really, really individual expression of ourselves - -"

"...for me creativity is quite a spiritual thing - - it's a spiritual engagement and that's one of the reasons why it's important to create art. - - Because part of living my life in a positive way now is about my spiritual engagement with my surrounds - - because they give me positive energy - - and creativity is wrapped up with that spiritual process."

Joy: "the use of artmaking is both a source of spiritual awareness and a method of healing. It presents a record of the individual's philosophical development and a visual history of changing forces in the social environment."

Margaret: "I think that it's - - there's stuff that's just impossible to talk about. You can get it out in your artwork - - I suppose it just helps you keep on going and even if it feels like it's invisible it does feel like it's being seen in some sort of way."

Being seen by your self- - is that what you mean?

"Ah no, look it feels like a spirit sense of being seen - - kind of - - I don't know if that makes any sense? I don't know how to describe that feeling to you."

Lived Time (Temporality): Altered Time***Portrait 14: Norah: losing time.***

"It was a real kind of outpouring of everything that had happened to me. I wasn't very happy and so I used all those emotions that would well up and I thought, 'They're all going to be thrown onto the canvas.' And it - - I found I would lose sense of time, you know sometimes...working from 9 o'clock in the morning and I'd listen to ABC radio, ...to 9 o'clock at night and they would start to replay the same - - and I'd think, 'Oh yeah, I think I heard that this morning' (laughs). But I think I kinda liked that."

"Yeah...and I kinda felt it was an emptying and I felt, 'I'm just throwing everything here' - - and I felt it was like a venom coming out of me."

"- - and I did go into a kind of - - it was almost like an altered state. It was just operating in this very emotional way - - Pouring everything onto this. Really expressionist painting, I suppose, and not a logical way of thinking. - - And then I felt as if I'd come through something. I'd cleansed myself of it...that - - I got it into proportion - - into perspective - -...it's like a meditation."

Janis: "It was when I got the oil paints that I actually really discovered something that was sort of like my - - thing that I could do when stuff wasn't too happy. I could just go into like a focus."

"And it was just a nice thing to be able to just get images out of my head."

"They're my process of communicating with the stuff around me. My way of dealing with a problem and finding a way through. Or just wanting to focus on something beautiful, dreaming about it and building it more. The visual stuff is generally a precursor to my writing. They are like tangents to each other. It's also meditative."

Alice: [importance to wellbeing] "Oh - - it's very positive. I don't do enough of it (laughs). Cos I do know when I'm painting...I can get into this space where I'm loving it or - - and it didn't matter what the paint was, what the colour that was going on, it didn't matter what was happening, I had no - - actually no investment in what the painting was looking like, it was all about the process and that beautiful - - um, high. It's like a drug high I suppose. You just feel great."

"...and I always feel very inspired, you know energised by that. - - And it's also interesting that if I did get to paint all day it's about the only time I actually feel really calm and my anxiety is really low which I find - - painting itself is quite torturous, except for that high you get."

"- - it's a meditation engagement that for me is a way of really grounding me. - - I feel really grounded and calm..."

Frances: "But when you are working away you - - for that period of time you don't feel depressed, you don't feel the pain. You don't feel the - - there's a wonderful serenity in just being able to stitch and choosing the colours. This thing has had a life of its own...And it's given me countless hours and hours of joy. And --- I'm not --- I don't so much worry about the housework and stuff..."

Lived Relations (Relationality): Communities of Practice

This section looks at the art productions sites and supports to be artistic and to make connections to self, others, and the world of which we are a part. All 10 artists worked in their homes as well as various other sites, ranging from supported studios to artist communities. All 10 artists maintained individual practices across various sites and several were involved in, or had been involved in, collaborative projects.

Community arts.

Joy: "I did a life drawing class there every week, once a week, but it was my social club. It was really, you know, supportive and happy time of my life while I was working with those people."

[talking about the women's art groups she ran]..."but I created an area where they could drop their inhibitions. Yes, well that was a big nourishing source for me, that place."

Ola: "The other thing that's really helped me is, an arts store's opened up - -"

"And that has kicked me on no end. Because, before we had to go up to XXX and he had very limited materials. Now I can go down there and it's like a lolly shop. ...and I get all my stuff through them now and I talk to them about work. So I don't think I'd be doing as much as I am today without them..."

Supported art studio.

Janis: "I got an art studio I can afford to work in and people like minded to interact with. People that don't reject who I am, because there's something odd about the way I look or act. This has given me faith in my community and something to live for."

Ruby: "- - so now I just come here and I try to just focus on trying things that I haven't tried before...but I come here and do things for fun - -"

"And then I've got my garage at home and I just sort of do things that mean something to me, more at home I guess...Yeah, so I didn't see anyone. I was in my house every day. So coming here twice a week, even if I just coloured something in, was so helpful. It was really helpful to have people who were just pleasant and you know, 'hi' and greet you. Just an afternoon where there wasn't too much time, there wasn't too little but there was enough...and yeah, it was really helpful."

So it had been a transitional phase?

"Absolutely, like coming here now is more sort of like a kind of bonus. I feel lucky that I get to use the facilities here."

Judy: "Yeah, sort of the first place where I sat down with other people and created art in a group. It's good because you sort of get ideas off other people and - - sort of change them a bit, turn them into your own idea and then create from there."

Alice: "- - like making art here is fun and I think it's the community of people here that I'm doing it with and I really like the people I'm working with. I feel very relaxed and I enjoy making art."

"- - I'm really, really proud of myself that I've got - - that I'm on this path that I've got so far because it's been such a big journey. It still is - - there is so much determination to go - - to get out of bed in the morning when I really don't feel like it or I'm not feeling my best and then to go."

Artmaking as a means of connection. As we have already seen with Janis and Joy, these artists view artmaking as a language and a means of communicating with others. Only Ola in this group discussed giving away her work as an important part of connecting with others and Frances liked to make to pass heirlooms to her family. The other women preferred to sell their work.

Artemisia: "What does it mean? OK. - - It means sort of coming out of myself - - and so I was pretty withdrawn during schooling and - - I sort of needed something to express myself."

"Yeah, I wasn't a good singer or actress, so that was the way I could connect with - - other people and - - society. So like I said, I was involved in doing something [laughs]."

Joy: "- - that was the best show I've ever had, in my opinion, because it touched so many people."

"...in the community. There were quite a few schizophrenic people who felt - - you know - - that I understood - - which I don't, but I do understand being an outsider."

Artmaking as a means of connecting with self.

Putting yourself into the artworks. Frances puts her happiest and her saddest times in her artworks and Margaret tells me her work is very personal and a good place to alchemise troubles. Judy makes portraits which she says portray her alter ego.

Alchemising troubles.

Janis: "I regularly download my emotions onto sketchpads, canvases and stuff. It helps me work out where I'm at. I find it necessary to access the visual in order to

process my emotions, or as I call it, sensory-data input. Since allowing myself to do this when I need to, life hasn't been quite such a traffic jam."

"...now what I do, I sort of step back from it and go 'OK, what's this?'" And I sort of look at it like it's - - something on a computer or something that's - - my idea is that I've received it and my body has interpreted it and it's no one else's. It's mine - - getting to a place where I'm getting an understanding of it - -"

Visual diary/working out where I'm at.

Artemisia: "Well, it's a bit of a diary. I remember how depressed I was when I did that - -"

"Yes - - what is the word - - it validates what I actually thought...and then you can sort of put it away in a folder and don't look at it. It's out of sight, out of mind - -"

Judy: "I think that it's a very good therapeutic tool and it helps me get out some emotions and dreams and things like that - - on paper. So I can look back and remember them or even get them out of my head and just totally get them out so I don't have to think about them, and I just put them away."

"Yeah, sometimes it's helpful to see it again and sort out that I've come from that place to now...Sort of recovered or sort of gotten over that issue or I'm still working on it but it's a lot better than it was."

Joy: "The first time was when I was in a depression and decided I felt worthless and I hadn't achieved anything you know, just being a mother, so I started to collect photographs of all the artwork that I had done and sold and so forth and put it in a book - - so that whenever I felt low I could look and think 'Oh well, I haven't done too badly. I've done all these.' - - it took a form, you know, you could see a progression of where I was and where I'd come from."

"- - so I felt I kept myself afloat. I never had to be put in an institution or anything and yet those depressions were very severe. Sometimes I would be in bed for a fortnight, not eating - - and you know, not there."

An agent of change.

Norah: "...so I remember just wrapping them all up [paintings] and yeah, - - 'I don't want them.' It was nothing to do with me anymore. 'I've moved on.' That's what I thought. 'I don't want to be associated with that kind of bleak part of my life. It's just a closed book. It's finished.'"

"Yeah - - but I loved the idea that I got rid of it. I felt as if it was a dark dog and I got rid of it."

"If you don't have something for all of that I don't know what it would do to you? ...Because people can say to you, when you are going through a really emotional time,

‘Just try not to think about it. Just put it out of your mind’, and that’s easy to say but hard to do that. If you are going to stop thinking about it, then you must have something to replace it, I guess.”

Alice: “Well, this one [print] is very special to me because you always get told to move on, ‘don’t remember’ you know, forget about the past. And although I think it’s important not to live in the past or dwell on it too much, but I think it’s really important to, for me it’s really important to remember where I’ve come from.”

“Yeah, and I can’t deny it. I get very annoyed at people who say, ‘Just move on. Forget about it’. I can’t do that.”

Artmaking as aesthetic expression.

Artemisia: “- - well I have to think of it consciously or else it doesn’t work as a painting. So it’s a struggle of getting something aesthetic that looks like an artwork.”

Ola: “I’m not a storyteller as an artist or a social commentator or anything like that. I suppose I’m into what aesthetically is pleasing.”

Janis, Ruby, Norah, Alice and Margaret also made art at times for purely aesthetic purposes and for pleasure.

Janis: “I’m a hedonist I suppose. I like to think we should have pleasure in our lives and it is pleasurable - - my art and when I’m making it.”

Judy: “Maybe, sometimes I produce things on issues that are surrounding me - - but sometimes its personal - - so yeah, I do have two sorts of different things that I go back and forth between.”

Artmaking as a political tool.

Janis: “Once diagnosed with a mental illness, all you have to do is be impertinent to a psychiatrist and they have the authority to muck with your life”.

“A person’s mental state is as open to interpretation as an abstract painting. And a psychiatrist can find a problem with anyone. They look for them. It’s their job”.

Norah: [discussing a painting about the medicalisation of childbirth]

“...I kinda felt - - I don’t like this authoritarian thing that institutions have over you and so I thought, ‘well I’ll send you a message,’ and I’ve felt like doing that with a few things actually I must admit.”

Alice: “It was about me taking a stand and going - - you know it’s tricky - - you know, that people with disabilities can still do great art and have a right to exhibit in public spaces and - - yeah, so I was trying to inspire other people too.”

Artemisia: “I don’t know, I think I’ve probably always seen art as radical - -”

Joy: “The conservative artist who continues to reassure us by presenting from already accepted and understood (by conserving the accepted way of being) does little

to solve world problems.” (essay 1976). “I believe the artist is a ‘receiver’ of trends and changes going on in society.”

“I took the step in being able to use art to do something else – other than to just please people or get something off my chest - - and I started doing the exploring of ideas - - so the XXX show was the most successful in that area because that covered things like illegitimacy, single motherhood - - being institutionalised for erring.”

On Being an Artist and a Life of Making Art: Summing up the Patterns

Generally, each of these women articulated a patchwork of roles and meanings that varied not only between women, but across the lifespan and sometimes across a day. As we saw in Part A, Norah’s interesting artistic pathway exemplified the interwoven functions of artmaking which clearly varied and were contingent upon a variety of factors according to the audience, the period of life and the challenges at the particular point at which the art is made, the artistic aims of the time for the artist individually and, more generally, the artistic movements they are influenced by – for their time and of their time.

Alice and Ruby were very clear that they made art for different functions including for exhibition and for private consumption. This was surprising because so many women have been offered many opportunities to view artmaking as ‘expressive’, as a window to the soul, and as a therapeutic outlet – particularly the expressive emotional aspect of artmaking as women and as mental patients. However, these women clearly had many other ways of viewing artmaking and its role in their lives. The question – *What does art do?* – deserves concentrated enquiry.

As shown in chapters 10 and 11, it is evident that none of the 32 women who participated in this research thought artmaking had any negative effects; however, it did have varying degrees of impact on individual lives and particularly for the women who identified as artists. Of these 10 women, eight thought artmaking was vital to living their lives. For these women who self-defined as artists, artmaking was not merely a career choice; it is what they do, who they are and how they are in the world. It has ontological resonance. Women in this group wanted artmaking to be taken seriously – legitimised – with support to be creative at all points in their lives and in all art production contexts. So, as Ruby commented, “the things that made your heart sing” were described as absolutely essential by a number of women – something they had to do – sustaining a practice that engages the time/space/material axis and creates a contingent freedom to create – a practice woven into life.

Willingness to claim an artistic identity varied considerably across this group. Legitimacy to say ‘I am artist’ was frequently bound to artistic training and experience. Some women chose to think of themselves as artists rather than publicly proclaiming

the title. Another significant factor which influenced the perceived ability to call yourself an artist revolved around the way the individual had constructed what is art and what is an artist. The ability to envisage oneself as an artist was frequently based on a wider societal and traditional construction of the artist as a Western male, painting or sculpting mammoth pieces and displaying prolific output.

This thread runs throughout the comments from all 32 women in this research. However, the women in the artists' group were more likely to have begun to unravel the ramifications of producing art both as a woman and as a person with an experience of mental ill-health. In contrast, the makers were more likely to uphold traditional notions of the artist and artmaking (see Chapter 11). In this research, the women who called or thought of themselves as artists challenged the notion of 'what is an artist' and 'what is art anyway?' – thereby creating a modicum of space and freedom to envisage themselves as artist. Artmaking for these 10 women was almost never seen as an isolated activity they undertook at certain times of the week or in certain spaces. It was entangled in all aspects of their lives.

Right across the lifespan, women encountered hurdles to overcome if they were to establish and sustain an art practice. From an early love of, and confidence in, their artistic capabilities, often with support from family and friends, this confidence was typically eroded as they navigated the education system and later; attitudes from the wider society towards those who produce art – 'bludgers and slackers,' 'not a valuable thing to do', 'not sensible', 'artistic skills are useless', and 'it's a bit of a gamble doing art.' Thus the skills and the abilities which were evident from an early age were denigrated and worse; ignored as legitimate ways of being in the world.

A variety of underlying assumptions regarding the worthiness of an artistic life are evidenced by statements women reported as having been said to them, such as; 'It is inherited so you don't have to learn it or work at it – it is easy for you', 'it is God's gift', 'you were born with that skill, it's an innate talent', 'your star sign determines your creativity, you are just a conduit'.

So, women who had been encouraged in early life grow older and encounter the education system valuing skills other than art, leaving many feeling discouraged with the perception that their skills are viewed as worthless. Interestingly, the very systems that denied art as a legitimate skill, career or vocation, were those that many women believed conferred the qualifications and training to legitimate the title of artist. There was a sense that escaping or standing outside the art education and history canon was a difficult option if one wanted to be taken seriously, especially as a woman and particularly if you were working within the mental health art scene. What is clear

from these stories is that one has to be persistent at every juncture to continue artmaking.

According to the women, all of the above issues were further amplified by women's art frequently not being taken seriously because it was seen as a hobby or a way to fill in time. Coupled with the 'art of the insane' being viewed as a therapeutic manifestation of 'the symptoms of illness', it is not surprising that women were somewhat reluctant to unequivocally embrace the title of artist. Indeed, it indicates a potent determination to establish and sustain an artistic practice in the face of many barriers – a determination that frequently wavered when women thought about claiming the time, space and quality materials to make art – were they worth it? Did they have a right to access these materials or question the accepted artistic practices that they were being taught?

This determination is even more remarkable given the most recent Throsby report states, "Despite progress made in recent years in reducing gender-based discrimination in the workplace in Australia, women artists continue to face difficulties in pursuing a professional career. Concern about these problems was discussed in detail in earlier survey reports (see especially Chapter 9 of the 1994 report, and Chapter 10 of the 2003 report)" (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 73).

Regardless of many barriers to having their art taken seriously, a number of women recognised the advantage of claiming an artistic identity as an alternative to a sick person identity or that of a housewife. Frances, Joy and Norah illustrate the difficulty of shaking the housewife/carer role and identity and maintaining an artistic practice and identity. Joy found the tussle of balancing her carer's responsibilities with that of the artist extremely difficult until the artist in her 'started to rebel'. Norah found the time and space to make art when her daughter was visiting her father and sometimes 'lost track of time'.

The divided self/artist/mother was strongly articulated by Joy, and two others in this group also discussed how they made art in the gaps left over after family needs had been addressed – their feelings of guilt as artmaking took time away from the family and, for Frances, the need to keep her artmaking secret. Frances and Norah also talked about how they had worked to foster a love of artmaking in their children. For Frances, this was in stark contrast to her own childhood experiences.

Ruby and Judy were considering claiming the title of artist after finishing their art studies and acquiring artistic experience – legitimacy in the 'mainstream' art world. However for the majority of women in this group, artistic identity was not merely about having recognition and success as an artist. It was part of every aspect of living, not some sectioned off part of the day or week or year; it was who they were 'this is what I

do', 'this is what I see'. As one artist said, it's 'creating a visual impression of the world around and within me. If I don't, I get sick.'

AS IF: A Future Artistic Identity

All of the women in this group of artists envisaged an artistic future (see also Figure 6: Returning to the Dinner Party). Margaret did not wish to move from the supported art studio as she felt it suited her well, but she also knew that if she was required to move, then she would need to find a new space as "if I based it on past experience, there's been just such a big build up for it - - that I have to produce."

Frances and Ola both wish to study art courses in the future if they are able to surmount access difficulties caused by distance from available educational opportunities. Alice wishes to continue to acquire art skills and to teach art skills to others whilst securing a studio in a shared artists' collective and exhibiting further in mainstream spaces. Artemisia would also like to have more exhibitions and to travel and see other cultures and art. Norah would like to make art again if she can find the time away from full-time work. Judy wishes to build a career as an artist and gain some recognition for her work. Joy continues to plan and work on her next exhibition. For Janis artmaking is "...as necessary to health as physical exercise is promoted to be. I'd like there to be painting dens around the place, where people can just drop in and paint when they need to, like gyms and bars and cafes, but not." And the last word goes to Ruby "...at the time if someone had said to me, 'If you could have any ridiculous dream in the world what would it have been?' I would have said, 'I'd live in a studio and I'd have a cat and a dog and I would get up every morning and be able to go downstairs and I'd have a darkroom and it would be somewhere really great.'" But I would (not) have believed that would never be possible. But now it's like actually kind of likely. So if I hadn't of taken the risk, even though everyone was saying, 'Oh, it's so hard to be an artist', well I wouldn't have had the fun I've had."

These women made art because they had to, because it connected them to the world of which they are a part, because it made them feel alive and imbued life with meaning, and because it helped them see the world differently. Sometimes it helped them to see the life they had lived and reassess where they were at in the moment – I am here now. At other times, and significantly for women who have an experience of mental ill-health, it facilitated an idea of a future with possibilities – a future with hope and a space to have a contingent freedom to create – a forum to state this is who I am – this is what I see. Documentary film maker, Pamela Tanner Boll (2008), advises women to respond to the query 'Who does she think she is?' With a smile and comment 'I am an artist – that's who I am'.

Chapter 10 – Study Two: The Interviews: Nine Aspiring Artists Speak

“I am fairly creative, but I’m not a prolific artist...”

I have called this second group of nine women aspiring or emerging artists. Over half of this group nominated artmaking as having already played an important role in their lives prior to making contact with mental health services. Similar to the artist group, these women recall having received varying degrees of recognition for their artistic skills. The remaining women discovered or rediscovered art via mental health service programs, and prizes or awards may have come more recently through the mental health system.

In this aspiring artist group, none of the women wrote artist or art student in the pre-interview questionnaire, and they were clearly hesitant to claim this title even as aspiring artists. There was a sense of maybe I am an artist, maybe I could be an artist. As in the artists’ group, notions of what it took to be an artist were often associated with training and education required to become an artist, namely the right credentials and a certain amount of experience.

Women in this group were likely to be able to think of themselves as artists but not publicly proclaim the fact. So, as Ruby in the artists’ group remarked, there was a difference between calling yourself an artist and thinking of yourself as an artist. Each woman at some point in the interview talked about confidence in their artistic skills and the ability to envisage themselves as artists or an artistic person in the future.

Would you call yourself an artist?

Meagan: “Not to sell anything, but I like to think of myself as an artist, but not to sell anything.”

Although over half reported an interest in artmaking and artistic ability from an early age, only three women in this group had established an art practice in adult life. Mary previously worked as an artist, Lesley had done some artwork for newsletters, and Angel has continued an art practice sporadically through her adult life, albeit with significant breaks when she was raising her three children. For the majority of this group, participation in skills-based supported art programs has facilitated a rediscovering, or in some cases a discovery, of both a love for artmaking and recognition of being able to learn and utilise artistic abilities. This group frequently wavered between expressing lack of confidence in their artistic skills to reporting a sense of being able to achieve artistically. In some cases this recognition of their artistic skills rippled over into other areas of their lives and instilled a confidence to approach other activities and challenges with a sense of being able to DO. This group most clearly evidenced the 'I can't' transforming to the 'I can.'

Women talked about the sorts of artmaking opportunities offered to girls and young women – at groups such as Brownies and Girl Guides. Or they talked of their experiences of artmaking activities in the mental health system where, for instance, in psychiatric hospitals the activities were driven by an occupational therapy focus with events such as pottery, macramé, painting, doll making, painting pots, making aprons, knitting, making children's clothes and lavender bags. There were strong invitations to view all of these activities as craft and as appropriate pastimes for women to engage in without having to contemplate being creative or artistic. Some, but not all, women in this group, did not question the art as therapy paradigm and were more likely to connect artmaking directly to wellbeing rather than viewing artmaking as an integral part of existence.

Part A: Artistic Identity, Artistic Pathways, Artistic Practice

Introducing the Aspiring Artists

Angel: (40s) Home duties. Preferred medium – painting.

Angel reports that she was very good at art at school but gave it away for a time after she had three children. She took up artmaking again after an experience of mental ill-health during which time she talks about a frenetic level of artmaking activity which she did not sustain when she became well again or, as she says – 'back on an even keel'.

Angel makes art at her home, at a regional supported art program for women and designs her garden. She has no hesitation in calling all of these activities Art.

Angel would like to undertake an arts course but there are no opportunities in her small regional community. She imagines a future for herself as an artist and has plans to create a space for her art studio in her garden.

Anna: (40s) Consumer consultant. Preferred medium – abstract paintings and drawings.

Anna has been in contact with the mental health sector since she was 16 and now works as a consumer consultant. Anna has submitted an art piece in a mental health art show in Melbourne and attends a regional supported skills-based art class regularly. Anna "came to a passion for art" through the mental health service and sees this as beneficial. "... If I hadn't have got unwell I probably wouldn't have learned all about art and craft and my creativeness wouldn't have developed. So there you go, that's a blessing in disguise."

Anna feels that being able to create art fills a gap experienced by not having a child and artmaking has helped her to accept this strongly felt loss. She uses artmaking as therapy and to express her emotions but says it has also helped to feel that she can

achieve things and acquire a skill that she never thought she was 'good enough at'. She can now envisage calling herself an artist when she has gained more skills.

"I think so. I mean I've got quite a creative skill within me...And um - - yeah, I can make some lovely things because I'm a little bit of a perfectionist [laughs]."

"Sometimes I sell my work. I mean I'm not on any high scale. I mainly do it for my own therapy or to give for a gift."

Claudia: (20s) Office administrator. Preferred medium – painting, ceramics and mosaics.

Claudia has attended a metropolitan supported art studio where she has exhibited and believes that this opportunity has acted like a halfway or transition arrangement. She is now poised to re-enter the work force and is wondering how she will have the time, energy and finances to continue making art, although she still aspires to be an artist in the future when she has practised for longer.

(long pause) "- - I don't really see myself as an artist. In a way it's probably because I feel I haven't been practising enough and for a long enough time. Also I think because in a way it was part of my rehabilitation - - I don't think of it - - as myself being an artist. I see it as part of the process I needed to go through, but I don't necessarily see myself as an artist - - yet. Like, I haven't arrived at it yet."

"I'm not an artist yet but I will aspire to be one."

Inge: (30s) Stay at home mum. Preferred medium – cross stitcher.

Inge works at home and does not attend a supported art program but does access some support from her local regional service periodically. Inge practices cross stitch, completing intricate and complicated designs which require a high level of concentration. Her advanced patterns include 3D effects.

Inge has always done craft work or made things with her hands. "umm...I've always had good artistic ideas, but I've never been able to create them. What I see in my head is never what ends up on the paper." Cross stitching offers her a way of reducing feelings of anxiety and gives her space to claim her own time away from her carer's responsibilities. Inge frames her work and hangs it in her home and has now purchased software that transforms photos into cross stitch patterns.

"So I've even considered, maybe doing some of my own - - taking them to a local craft market and see whether I can generate a bit of extra pocket money...I don't think I would take it to an art gallery only a craft market."

"Um - - art, craft," said Inge. "I've always looked at art like painting but since starting the cross stitch, I've - - I now consider cross stitch art."

Lesley: (40s) Disability pensioner. Preferred medium – optical art.

Lesley reports being good at art at school and, after leaving school, had paid work for art in newsletters. Like Norah (artist group), she had a long break from making art because of full-time work. She now attends a metropolitan supported art studio and each of her Op Art pieces takes eight to ten sessions to finish. Lesley has had a solo exhibition and participated in a number of group exhibitions via the supported art studio. She has sold some works and “I was pretty happy about that.” She has also won an award for best up-and-coming artist in the mental health sector. Lesley makes art at home and at the studio.

“So it’s a social setting with other artists. It’s fantastic.”

Mary: (40s) Pensioner. Preferred medium – painting and video art.

Mary attends a metropolitan supported art studio and has worked as a video artist. Mary has always loved artmaking and she says she sets herself very high standards in relation to her art practice and doesn’t consider herself good enough to be called an artist. She says she would require some formal training; however, she would like to make some money from her art in the future. Mary practices a variety of artmaking forms, including painting, portraits, photography and video making, and actively teaches her children artmaking skills.

“If pushed I would have said that (an artist) when younger, but I was very enthusiastic about art. I had a real drive for it, but now I’m just taking a day at a time. I’m not thinking too far ahead.”

Meagan: (50s) Admin Officer. Preferred medium – card maker.

Meagan attends a women’s art and craft group at a regional supported mental health service. Meagan rates this group as being very important to her and she co-ordinated the group for an extended period of time, until an artist was employed to run the group. Meagan believes there are many benefits to participating in the process of artmaking. She previously used artmaking as therapy but it has now become a pleasurable activity in which she has gained confidence in herself from both the artmaking and being part of the group. She is hoping to sell her work in the future.

“I’ve always been interested in art but I wouldn’t say I’m that good at art. I’m fairly creative, but occasionally I’ll do a piece that’s really exceptional, but I’m not a prolific artist...”

Pamela: (40s) unemployed. Preferred medium – mosaics.

Pamela reports that she was not encouraged by her family or at school despite really enjoying drawing as she was growing up. She subsequently stopped and did not do any artmaking until she participated in a community art project via a mental health service. Pamela then went on the project steering committee and helped teach people

in the community mosaic-making skills. "I have a gift for teaching." This has been a turning point in her life and the confidence she has gained from this participation has helped her in other areas of her life. She wishes to continue being involved in the community art scene in her local regional area and develop her artistic skills.

What did being an artist [in the mosaic project] mean to you?

"Oh, really big things. Like I said, it's been something that I've been discouraged in - - so it's nice to know that I can do it and that what I want to do works out."

"They are trying to get another one up and running and I'll take over the co-ordinating of it because of the work I did in the last one."

Tina: (40s) Sickness beneficiary. Preferred medium – painting.

Tina sees herself as a 'science type person' and she had not done any art until attending a regional mental health rehabilitation program. Tina has had electro-convulsive treatment (ECT) as part of her treatment and is wary of her ability to recall 'things' but has increasing confidence in her ability to be creative as she has found a passion for painting and won several prizes within the mental health art sector. She attends supported art classes and has been involved in a collaborative arts project at the supported service. Tina does not see her artmaking as therapy but still views it as 'good therapy.' She wishes to keep learning new artistic skills.

"No I don't call myself an artist."

"I need guidance and prompting to do art - - I think artists can just do it themselves. Like if I got stuck I'd like to ask someone to show what to do - - no I'm not confident."

"No, not really. People like my work but - - I suppose people say my stuff is good...but I don't think I'm qualified enough to be an artist yet...But I'd go to art classes if I could afford it."

"Now I'm finally getting them framed... and I can say, 'I did them,' and I can show my brother who did art. When I say, 'I did this,' he says, 'No, you didn't. You can't paint like this'. That's what he's thinking, 'You sure your teachers didn't do it?' 'No. No I did it'. 'Oh, we've got an artist in the family'."

Artistic Identity

'It's not me'. 'It's like it's a gift from God, or you were born with that skill'. 'Or I can't really believe it is me doing the art, it comes from somewhere higher'. 'Give the glory to God'. 'A nun's definition of art', 'I'm a Cancerian so...'

Frequently when an artwork had been created and a pleasing result obtained, women in this group reported a variety of explanations for why it might be *quite good*. Invariably these explanations deflected the attention away from the woman actually

possessing skills herself. In some instances this took on a spiritual meaning – or as Lesley explains, “I do actually get quite mystified by my work. I don’t feel like I own it sometimes. It’s like where did this come from? I think God has a lot to do with it. He comes through my hand. It’s not magic. I don’t like that word so much, but it’s amazing some of the things that come through, whether it’s good, bad or whatever. I just find it, ‘jeez, did I do that?’” Thus on one hand we hear how women dismissed their artmaking skills by viewing themselves as conduits perhaps in a spiritual sense – but we again also encounter the visceral nature of artmaking, where the body is fully involved in the artmaking process – lived corporeality.

Meagan: [is talking about her friend who is ‘very artistic and has the patience of a saint’.] “She’s a Catholic girl and she always says ‘give the glory to God’ because she is so good at craft.”

Tina: “Sometimes I look at my art and I don’t even know how I got to do it.”

Anna: “I’m a Cancerian so that says that I’m a creative person...”

Alternatively Pamela disputed these ideas by stating that, “Artmaking is like any other job – it requires hard work and persistence.”

Artistic Pathways

Similar to the women in the artists’ group, despite showing early artistic skills and artmaking as a preferred pursuit, many of the women aspiring to be artists experienced ruptures in their artistic pathways due to an experience of mental ill-health, having children, lack of access to time, space, materials etc., doubting their own skills or having others doubting them. A recurring pattern in these interviews is the education system where the disjunction occurs at secondary school and science subjects are given greater credence.

Even though five of the nine women – Mary, Angel, Meagan, Lesley and Claudia – thought of themselves as good at art from an early age, all of the women reported long periods of inactivity in their artmaking practices. An interest in artmaking was frequently reinvigorated via contact with a mental health service that offered some sort of supported art program – or in Inge’s case, suggestions from a mental health support worker.

Three of the women – Anna, Tina and Pamela – did not see themselves as adept at artmaking prior to attending skills-based art programs in the mental health service. This was largely because they reported having always been discouraged in their intimate relationships with family and friends, or for Tina, the education system where you either did one or the other – science or art. You were either practical or artistic and you didn’t entertain the possibility of exploring both. This echoes Ruby’s

(artist group) experience of the science-art divide in secondary school. Claudia also discusses how this perceived divide influenced what she pursued in high school.

Mary established an art practice in adult life and Angel made art sporadically throughout her adult life, although she did find it difficult to make art when raising her children. Like Frances (artist group) she often made her art in secret as her husband had confiscated her art materials 'for her own good'.

Starting young.

Portrait 15: Mary getting that spark back.

"The earliest memory is in grade prep and I just loved playing with paint and painting and then when I was a teenager I was into painting at home and I made some portraits and then I had a break from that and it's only just recently in the last two years or so, that I've got back into it."

"For that period of time I wasn't very well, but I had that sort of grandiose - - you know that high - - I used to make videos and put music to them...I was so creative with my video making, 'cos that was a new thing that I got into and I really enjoyed doing it."

"When I got back into art I felt I'm not as driven as I was before. I'm not as enthusiastic about it as I was when I was younger - - and it was - - so I'm trying to just spark that up again...just getting that drive back, that spark, yeah."

"Just get that creativity, the ambition, the drive, the enthusiasm."

Science versus art pathways.

Claudia: "In primary school I always loved drawing...- - and feeling that I was quite good at it and I enjoyed it."

"And then in high school I went down the science route, so that was it. It became really hard to follow the science path and keep up an art practice as well. Yeah, and after High School I just didn't do any art at all....Then I didn't do anything until I went to [supported art studio]..."

Tina: "I took things like Chemistry and Biology and I just thought that I had a - - I thought you were either an artist or - - what's the word for it? - - either logical or you're artistic. Yeah, and my brother was good at art, but he wasn't any good at the others and so I thought, 'Oh, that must be the way it goes'."

"So I never allowed myself to be good at art, never tried."

Artistic Practice: Relational Barriers

Lesley was one of the few women in this group who reported having been supported by her family and friends in her artistic pursuits. Others such as Angel, Pamela and Anna reported being actively discouraged by family, friends and the education system.

Artmaking in secret.***Portrait 16: Angel: Shaky identity.***

[About making art at home]. “No, because my husband has put away - - which I reckon is deliberately - - all my paints and everything - - and when he cleaned out the room he found them - - but I saw them in the tip and I grabbed them real quick. So now I’ve got all my paints again. I do know I’ve got a brand new set of pastels that I’m trying to find as well.”

“He probably thought that he didn’t want me to have them at that stage in case of what I might do. Of what I might do to the house maybe - - he doesn’t like to overwhelm me.”

“I can’t remember it when I was young but I got As and A+s for art at school.”

“No. No then I didn’t do any. I suppose it’s bringing up the kids - - and it was being all around for them. And then I became unwell once again and then I thought ‘well I’ll give it a go’ - - and yeah - - that’s when I came back to it.”

“When I was ill I did a lot of artist work. I suffer bipolar. Before I was actually put on the right medication I did a lot of stencils and things like that around my house and believe it or not it looks good. - - I was up until six in the morning painting stencils.”

“I did stuff when I was ill - - bright red and black scribble. I did work that I thought was really good but - - when I became well - - not well but on an even keel - - I thought OMG how could I have even done stuff like that - - and it’s just not art - - to me it was something a child would have done - - but at the time I was doing it I thought it was just terrific.”

“When I was mentally unwell I painted all the [woodwork] in the house white. I was very unwell when I painted that.” Unlike a number of the artists, where the point of discontinuity from artmaking was often an experience of mental ill-health, such as Ola (artist group) who said she could not work when she was unwell, Angel was very active in periods of psychosis as she describes it. Angel’s experience of mental health services drew her back to artmaking and a more contained art practice.

Artistic Practice: Access to Space, Time and Materials

Time, space and quality materials were reported as barriers to establishing an art practice – no space at home, no money to purchase the materials, no time away from carer’s role to make art. Angel, Tina and Anna all express a desire to increase their art skills and attend art courses, but finances or lack of courses available in regional Victoria are barriers to fulfilling such ambitions.

Part B – The Interviews: Nine Aspiring Artists’ Speak: What Does Artmaking Do?

The centrality of artmaking to the lives of the women in the aspiring artist group was not reported as intensely as by the 10 women who identified as artists.

Nonetheless, artmaking was still very important to these women and the effects of an ‘I can’ orientation to artmaking rippled across into other areas of their lives.

The Power of Artmaking

Mary: “I think it’s very important because it shows your creativity.”

Pamela: “Probably last year it had a big role in my life. I was involved in a mosaics project. Yeah, so that had the biggest impact in my life.”

Anna: “It is very important, particularly in the moment when you feel lost and confused and think, ‘Oh, how am I going to get through the next few hours?’”

Tina: “It’s is important. It’s really important...”

Inge: “It became a big part, I suppose, even of my daily activities. I try to do it at least once a day, even if it’s just for half an hour.”

Meagan: “- - it’s a healing process I find...getting better as a person and being more open to other people and learning from other people as well.”

Lesley: “My fear is, ‘cos I’ve been here a long time, they are going to boot me out now, because if they booted me out I have such a strong creative feeling that I’d have to find somewhere else to do the artwork...Yeah, I think about my future and I want to continue. I don’t want to give up.”

Lived Body (Corporeality): A Style of Being in the World

The language women use in these comments is very visceral – I feel uptight, get something off my chest, etc.

Hand body mind connection. As we have seen above, Lesley is mystified by her work, “I think God has a lot to do with it. He comes through my hand.”

Anna: “So now I’ve got areas of artwork that I can do - - any other sort of creativity where you are making something and you can say, ‘Oh, I created that.’ So I haven’t created a baby but I’ve created an object and I can say, “Oh, that’s mine that I made’ and that to me shows that my hands are working and my body’s capable of producing something.”

Pamela: “I’ve really got to be on top of myself to be able to produce anything and I’ve also got to produce something to get on top of it. So it’s a bit of a mixture.”

“Yeah, I push myself to do the best mosaic. I really struggled with it. Then when I finished it, I realised I could do it and that helped my mental state tremendously.”

Bringing thoughts to life.

Anna: "I use it as a strategy. It's a really good strategy and it can be just so quick and easy and it's always on hand and you can always get papers and pen so you can just think, 'Oh, I've had enough of TV tonight, I'll just sit and draw and it gets all that emotion out. And you think to yourself, 'Gee I didn't realise I was that tense till I sat down and put my mind to paper.'"

Tina: "- - and maybe bringing the thought to life on a piece of paper."

Angel: Talks about an abstract red and black painting she did. Has it at home and has it turned upside down. "I don't want to look."

"I reckon I put all of my guilt into this bit and that's why I don't like it."

"Yeah, to me sometimes artwork can sort of become something - - it isn't really artwork. It's something that your imagination thinks that should be done and you just go and do it. ... or get something off my chest."

It's in the doing.

Lesley: "Oh, I get so thrilled - - some of the pieces that I do every so often. Every three months or so, I walk out of here and I'm buzzing. It's a real buzz - - a wow that I've never had...It's like - - 'Oh, that felt good' - - but it's not normal for me to have such a routine that I stick to."

Meagan: "Well. It really helped me ... I would go home and keep doing what I'd been doing at the group. - - because I enjoyed it so much."

"In the doing of something is the process of helping yourself or in the singing is the dancing or in the dancing is the singing. I don't know, but it's just in the process of doing something."

Angel: "- - so the art concept can be very soothing to you. I feel it can be very beneficial."

Tina: "I like flowers, nature and things that are pretty - - and as I'm doing, I think 'Oh, this can go into your flat,' cos I've got bare walls - - a picture of Jesus and Mary - - but other than that, anything that civilises me."

Lived Space (Spatiality): This is What I See

Like Frances and Alice in the artist group, Claudia also attributed artmaking as a stimulus to seeing the world differently.

Claudia: "- - I think art has become a much more important part of my life. I've started to look at things differently - - in other areas of my life - - so I look at colour more now and that's really important. And I think I've changed my world view a bit."

"I think things that I see in everyday life. Colours for painting, forms for ceramics. - - it helps me look at things differently and gain a greater appreciation of my health and - - you know - - how important my health is compared with other things."

Meagan: "It's having an eye for something - - being able to see things in a way that expresses how you see them... - - each person's creativity is special to themselves. When they look at something they see it in a certain way and how they convey that - - express that in their own way of doing art."

Lived Time (Temporality): Altered Time

Claudia: "Art allowed me time to rehabilitate - - to relax - - . Artmaking can be a slow process - - so yeah, it's really good. You can do things at your own pace."

Angel: "And that it's a good way of clearing your mind - - is doing artwork."

"- - it's a thing that I could release my energy into and then at the end feel tired but think, 'OK, I've done that. It looks good'."

Mary: "It kind of helps, because I find that if I'm in the house I get - - the depression builds slowly but if I go out, if I come here and I'm creating and I'm doing something and at the end of it I've got something from it, then I feel a lot better for the rest of the week because I've been out."

Anna: "...if ever I'm feeling a bit flat I can just pick up a blank sheet of paper and either textas or crayons or whatever I've got on hand and just do something abstract and that takes my mind off my tension. And that to me is sort of releasing a bit of that pent up emotion."

"It really helps you unwind and keeps your mind active and takes away that tension."

Portrait 17: Inge: Zone out.

"It's a good way of working out frustrations."

"I found it more relaxing."

"I find it fulfilling and very therapeutic."

"It relieves my anxiety."

"I like the complicated nature of cross stitch that I have to focus on ..."

"I zone out of everything else. So it is a complete, in a way, - - shut off of what's going on around me."

"So I really do take that as my time out."

"Gives me space for my own time."

"It slows me down."

Meagan: "I find sometimes if you don't feel well and you start doing an art activity, that you forget how you feel and you can concentrate on what you are doing rather than how you feel."

Lived Relations (Relationality): Artmaking as a Means of Connection

Connecting to a wider community.

Pamela: "Who was involved? Well they all got in and did their part, which made it a community [mosaic] project. Just everyone; local churches...schools...youth groups...old folks. We went around to each group and got them to do their pieces and then we put it all together."

Lesley: "I make art to sell is one - - the other one is to converse with people about something I've done. It's attention. There's so many bad ways to get attention but this is a good way and I'm proud of that because I'm sick of the old shit....It's good attention - - and I can't remember the last time I've stuck to something so continuously."

Inge: "When I take it places, people are interested in it and I end up talking to them and making social connections because of my cross stitch...People are interested in it."

Only Frances and Ola in the artists' group reported that making art pieces for friends and family members was important to them. In the aspiring artists' group, Meagan, Claudia, Tina and Lesley all discussed the pleasure they found in making art pieces for other people and connecting with others in this way. This was also a significant motivator for the 13 women in the non-artist makers group.

Artmaking as a means of connecting with self.

Visual diary.

Lesley: "So sometimes it does - - how you are feeling, state of mental health, comes through your work - - Yeah, I suppose it does."

"That's the thing, if I'm extra happy or maybe a bit high it does, but then if I'm a bit depressed or low in energy - - I think there is a difference between...I have different moods and the art is different."

Anna: "Art or craft, it has my emotions in it... when you've been in a very locked in situation and you've had no power, and someone's taken your life over - - I think it's important that people understand that there's emotion involved in it. There's got to be a storyline...It didn't matter how it turned out. It wasn't right or wrong. It was how you felt you wanted to express yourself."

"...so I could use my art to cope with those very, very uncomfortable feelings and inadequacies - - So it was helping me through that bad patch where I was feeling

let down. I was feeling very, very lost and lonely - - but I could still express it in my artwork and get on with my life - - and say, 'OK, I still have a purpose'."

Pamela: "I can also express myself on paper now if I get depressed or anything like that, I can just do a picture for how I feel and then that can make me feel better too..."

Alchemising.

Lesley: "Well the thing is I get a bit embarrassed because if I'm a bit high,...I can't shut up - - but it's good because - - like I'm doing something with the mood sort of - - and artistically it's good while you've got the chance you've got to do it there and then." (like Margaret and Janis)

Communities of practice. Supported art programs: A time for I CAN.

Arts within mental health services. Several women in the artists' group mentioned the social side of attending a supported art studio, although this was not reported as an essential feature to making art. In this group of aspiring artists the social side appeared to play a more significant role, where they highlighted the importance of working with other artists, sharing artistic ideas and the acquisition of artistic skills rather than just the social benefits. The low cost of materials, a space to create and accessibility of different mediums were also significant benefits. What was more pronounced in this group was the recognition of the value of support to explore and gain skills and confidence at a pace which suited each individual.

For most of this group, artmaking was also a social event; a space to do both art and talk, a space to do one or the other, or space to do neither – just come and sit. This fluidity was noted as being particularly appreciated by both aspiring artists and makers. Women reported finding this format "not so confronting or intimidating" than attending a purely social group or conversation-based event. As Meagan said, "You have a focus on stitching or whatever you've got an art focus on but if you want to you can discuss things. It's not like meeting to go out for coffee or meeting as a social group where the focus is on talking. This is more stressful for you when you get nervous about meeting new people...We help each other and stimulate each other. Bounce off each other."

Being with other artists.

Portrait 18: Lesley: artmaking in a supported studio.

"So it's a social setting with other artists. It's fantastic."

"Yeah, it's good here. It's affordable too."

"But this is the most rewarding, because all of the art that I used to do before, that was all on my own."

"I'm doing artwork, someone else is doing artwork and everybody looks at everybody's work. Which is good."

"I do come in here in different moods. I might be really upset about family or friends or something - - or whatever happens, but these staff they are just great. There's no pressure, like they will work with you however you are, you know. And if I can't cope, which happens to me occasionally, just sit down and yeah - - I do solo stuff ...yeah, so some days I just come in here and sit down. I want to be here but I'm not in the mood to work, but I still have people around me. It's a support."

"Well it's exciting, what the staff do, well they will have a look and they say 'that's good or - - and I ask them...' 'this is what I want to do and can you let me know how to go about it?' ...and a lot of people they come around and see my work and it makes me feel pretty good."

Claudia: "Being with other artists - - that's been important for me because I've been able to see what artists really do - - how they live and how they talk as well."

Mary: "Yeah, it's better when you have the same people because you don't have to get introduced or you feel more comfortable around the same people."

Pamela: "Sometimes I came down just to sit in with them."

Tina: "No it's really important for the socialisation and everyone's in a good mood when they are doing art."

Meagan: "We've become good friends...I've just found I've learnt a lot from them about people skills and all that."

I Can't DO becomes I CAN

Pamela: "Yeah, I really like drawing. I've been drawing for years but never really thought it was good enough to keep going so I sort of stopped... ..but I was discouraged a lot as a kid, from drawing - - from both parents and teachers. It was discouraged...But [art support worker] sort of gave me the confidence to keep going again - - that I've got the skill there, I've just got to keep - - practising and it will get better as I go along - - so I've been doing a lot more artwork."

Portrait 19: Anna: I can't do art.

"I wasn't very clever at art when I was young."

"...So, it was here that I really found that I had a flair for it - - and - - um - - it sort of broke the barrier because I think at school it was very competitive and I felt that I wasn't good enough at school and I had an inferiority complex...- -"

"I think our art teacher [supported art program] was excellent because he'd say - - 'OK, you know if you are feeling very tense and uptight - - why don't you do something abstract. It doesn't matter - - it doesn't have to be right or wrong'."

"The program is great to get materials and the fact that you are working together with other people - - that motivate you and the fact that you've got someone who knows about the way to produce it."

"Our art teacher is trained in the psychiatric section as well as the art section. He knows how to handle you when you are breaking down and crying and a bit of a mess. He's very encouraging, because I just had no self-esteem and I thought, 'I can't handle this. I'm not good enough at art. But once I got involved I found I could say to myself, 'I'm not doing a bad job.' 'Gee, I'm not bad at this [laughs]'."

"I think it's great if you can do it. It shows you are worthwhile; that you are actually industrious. To take it from start to finish and actually finish it is a big challenge when you are unwell. To say, 'well I've completed that. This is my work,' and it really does have that sense of satisfaction."

"...that I can still achieve that, it makes me feel even more empowered because I feel I'm worthwhile and I haven't lost my skills in every angle. I'm still able to participate."

"I was really proud of that (piece in Mental Health week show) because at the time I was really, really down. I was just so tense and I didn't think I was capable - - until my art teacher said, 'come on have another go, Anna'...So I came back and attempted that piece of work about three times before I got it the way I wanted it. So that's what you can do."

Tina: "I never did any art - - didn't like art."

"...I had a mental breakdown, which led me into participating in a rehabilitation program. As part of my healing I participated in the art program once a week for three hours. I wasn't very confident but with guidance and support I became very happy with my work."

"I enjoy art because I have always thought I could not paint or draw but I was capable of doing these things...'cos they give me positive encouragement around here' and you can do anything and it's not too hard."

- - but it's really helped me doing art because it's helped my confidence and new skills like how to shade."

When you are not well you can't concentrate for too long. - - but I just made myself keep going, keep going, keep going."

Lesley: "When I first started, they said, 'there is no such thing as a mistake', and if I've made a mistake they have advised me how to take a different road."

Mary: "They help me out and give me ideas. Give me a little bit of a push because sometimes I'm stuck at what I do...Well I get a lot of encouragement on things - - and gives me the confidence to want to do something."

Meagan: "Have a go at it and it gives you more confidence."

Flow on effect to other parts of my life.

Portrait 20: Pamela: I'm a person not an illness.

"This [collaborative community arts] project has had a great impact on my life. I have a mental illness, which affects my ability to perform tasks such as these. Throughout the project I have come to see many skills I didn't know I have. I have gained in confidence and my social skills have increased greatly."

"I have gained more self-esteem and confidence now that I will be able to take into other areas of my life."

"It's really important. It really changed my whole state of health at the time".

"It's very empowering - - gives me satisfaction...The ability to know that I could do more in the community as a whole - - not just creativity wise, but just as a person. You know connection."

"One of the most important parts of this was that I was treated and respected as a person, not as an illness."

Art Practice under the Mental Health Umbrella: Art or Therapy?

In this group of aspiring artists, there were a number of conflicting ideas about art as therapy, both across women and from the same woman within one interview. These women were less likely to argue vehemently against the idea of art as therapy than the majority of the women in the artists' group, who wished their artistic abilities to be recognised as art not products of therapy. The women in the aspiring group were more ambivalent. Or perhaps as Tina acknowledges, art is not therapy but it is therapeutic. It is evident in this group that the functions of artmaking can also change over time.

Mary: "No I don't put in things that have happened in my life or anything like that. No, it's something totally separate."

"It's a way of expressing yourself, like if you feel you have certain emotions or whatever, but I don't work that way at the moment. I sort of make art separate."

Tina: "I go to a counsellor and she says to me if you get angry just bring along an old shirt and we'll go out the back and you can do some painting. So if you ever get really angry - - you know, something really upsets you - - you can use that?"

“I’ve never seen it like that. I don’t use it like therapy.”

“Painting doesn’t demonstrate my wellness, ‘cos my paintings look good. It doesn’t demonstrate that I’m not well at the time.”

“So it’s not personal expression like journal writing? No, it’s not.”

But interestingly, Tina also writes “I would like to improve with my art and drawing for I found this to be very enjoyable as well as rewarding and good therapy.”

Anna also thought that “the artwork was great therapy for me.”

Meagan: “When I’ve been in hospital - - to express myself, in the mental health system, I’ve done art drawings and paintings to express how I’ve felt when I’ve been sick, when I’ve been psychotic. Because I suffer a schizophrenic background, I’ve used art as a form of expression...I was painting pictures when I wasn’t well to express how I felt mentally...Yeah, but now it’s an activity.”

Coming to a Life of Artmaking as an Aspiring Artist: Summing up the Patterns

In terms of challenges to artistic identity, none of these women talked about an artistic family background and tended to more readily accept various stereotypes regarding what was an artist or what it took to be an artist. So while it might be possible to think of oneself as an artist privately, none in this group was publically proclaiming this title. Barriers to claiming an artistic identity included real artists: don’t copy, are prolific in their output, are men, ‘real’ artists paint or sculpt but not crochet. Real artists have training and experience.

This group reported a CAN DO attitude to artmaking but were perhaps less certain of their ability to make art than those in the artists’ group. As we have seen previously, the women in the artists’ group were strongly I CAN DO in terms of their artistic ambitions and abilities. It wavers in this group and in the last group of non-artists or makers it becomes I CAN’T DO. So we begin to get a sense of the Iris Marion Young ‘I can do’ ‘I can’t do’ and how women inhabit their bodies for artmaking, and particularly the support many in this group found from making art within a group environment.

In addition to the support and skills development offered within the art group, the actual production of a physical entity was also very important as this showcased an ability to achieve, ‘I can’, and as several women said ‘to actually finish something’; to persevere and commit to something. At the same time, skills-based artmaking was providing a bridge to connect with others, sharing artistic ideas, sharing artworks made, participating together, or in parallel, in the act of doing, the act of making and finally providing a space to potentially seeing the world differently, making connections to others and the world of which we are a part.

Chapter 11 – Study Two: The Interviews: Thirteen Makers Speak

Part A: Artistic Identity and Pathways

The third (arbitrary) grouping of women did not self-identify as artists in the interviews, nor did they convey any aspirations to become artists or envisage themselves in this way in the past, present or future. Communities of practice, or where the women made art, was the focal point of the meaning and role of artmaking for the 13 women in this makers' group. Being part of the group was paramount and what they achieved within the group had flow-on effects to other areas of life. As we saw in the aspiring artist group 'I can't' became 'I can,' in many instances. Three women attended skills-based art programs in regional mental health services and seven women attended art/craft or a women's group which undertook various art and craft projects in regional mental health services. One woman was involved in both types of programs. Another woman attended a regional centre when she felt like it and constructed pieces from wood. Lastly, one woman was attending an art class at a metropolitan community centre.

Women identified many benefits of supported art programs and groups such as having the materials supplied, especially as many were struggling financially. Overwhelmingly though, for this group, the social aspect of the supported program was paramount to their ongoing participation. For several women, this was the first time in many years that they had stayed and participated in a group regularly. Some were afraid of leaving the group if it was to cease or if they perceived themselves as having attended for too long. Jacqueline identified "a real gap in services for people who are approaching 65. I'm frantic about that. Senior citizens groups are too old and community art groups are too young... - - but it's finding a slot out there and the mental ability to walk into another group of strangers, which I won't do. Yeah, - - I haven't got the confidence for that."

The majority of these women expressed feelings of unworthiness in relation to artmaking from an early age. Craft making was viewed more positively in terms of skills they were prepared to consider claiming to have. Whilst many of these women were able to say 'I am good at craft making,' they thought of themselves as not capable of artmaking. Some, however, were able to say 'I am creative when craft making'. So, the opportunity to participate in artmaking was often discovered for the first time in a supported mental health service.

Introducing the Women

Chess: (30s) attends the skills-based art class at a regional mental health support service and her preferred medium is painting. Chess tells me that she has had ECT or 'shock treatment' so her memory is not good, but she was given a sketchbook

when she was in hospital and recalls that she has always liked art (although she can't remember a lot about her early life). She rediscovered a passion for artmaking when she became 'sick' and her art teacher has told her she used to paint and that she was very good. Chess also paints at home.

Elizabeth: (50s) attended a skills-based art class at a regional mental health support service which led to her participating in a community arts project in her local community. She now attends the art/craft class for the friendships and support she receives from the other women in the group. Elizabeth reports that she has "done a lot of art and craft for years."

Georgiana: (70s) has been involved in artmaking for most of her life. She calls herself a "psychiatric artist because that is where she developed." However, she does not see herself as an artist as "I just do what I am told." She continues to attend weekly art classes in her local community.

Georgiana talks about growing up in a family with an artistic background. She does not however have a strong art story as she views it as part of her treatment to get better. Art is a tool in the suite of treatments she has experienced via periodic encounters with the psychiatric system. Georgiana refers to her interactions with doctors on a number of occasions with words such as "which was the year I was given permission to go back into (profession)." We talked later about a painting which was said to be a self-portrait but Georgiana doesn't think it is. I ask her if it upsets her if people said it was a self-portrait if that wasn't her intention. She replied that "No, I didn't expect to be taken notice of."

Jane: (60s) tells me that she loves to do things with her hands. She particularly likes to knit, do crochet, tapestry and fancywork. "An artist is someone who paints and draws and I'm not that". However, Jane reports that she has begun to see art and craft in a different light since attending the art/craft class at a regional mental health support service. These classes have given her a feeling of "I can do it."

Jacqueline: (60s) attends the weekly women's group at a regional mental health support service where they work on various art and craft projects. Jacqueline comments that she has "always done arty/crafty stuff" – sewing, knitting, making soft sculptures such as teddies. The group is very important to her for the social aspect – a safe space – and for a feeling of achievement.

Jessica: (50s) attends the art/craft class at a regional mental health support service. She has also been involved in a community art project in her regional town. Jessica has experienced post-natal depression and "I felt a failure when the marriage broke up. It was very traumatic and I went through change of life in the same year. I ended up in the psychiatric hospital." The friendships Jessica has made in this art/craft

group are very important to her. Jessica has always enjoyed knitting but it was not until she joined the group that artmaking is something that has showed her she can “achieve things.” As she says, she has “never really known she could do anything” until she began to participate in the art/craft group.

Josie: (40s) works part-time, and when not working, visits the supported mental health service where she has learnt woodworking skills and keeps her materials and tools. She reports enjoying making these pieces and then being able to give them to friends and family as she is able to contribute to her community. She is proud of her ability to have acquired a practical skill and use her imagination, although she does not classify herself as very creative because she uses a pattern and she had no interest in making prior to attending the mental health service. She believes making with wood contributes to her wellbeing because it encourages her to “have social interaction and gives me an interest” and has given her skills to use in other areas of her life. Although she nominates woodworking as one of the activities that she thinks keeps her well, it is not enough alone and she is unable to do it when she is sick.

Kezia: (50s) attends the art/craft group at a regional supported mental health service. She has always done craft making such as patchwork and appliqué, and “loves it.” She has a traditional view of craft and art and thinks of herself as good at craft but not good at art because she did not draw very well, and at school she was taught that artists were men who painted and drew.

Lisa: (40s) participates in a skills-based art program at a regional mental health service. She likes painting and has begun to also take weekly sculpture classes. Lisa reports “being pretty good at art at school” but then she “just stopped doing art.” She rediscovered artmaking in a psychiatric ward and primarily describes artmaking as relaxing and therapeutic “something to take my mind off my problems” rather than a means of expression, commenting that she thought group therapy served this purpose better for her. Nonetheless, she thought artmaking was very important to her state of mental health.

Madonna: (50s) attends the women's group at a regional mental health support service where they work on various art and craft projects. Madonna has also been involved in a community arts project. Madonna likes collage, she loved art at school and won prizes for art, but before she became ill and had ECT when she lost all confidence in her ideas. Madonna now encourages her children to do art. She is interested in collage and produces artworks on silk prayer flags.

Mahdi: (30s) attends both the skills-based art class and art/craft group at a regional mental health service. She also does some art with her sexual assault counsellor and she makes the distinction between *creating art* and *making art with*

emotion which she doesn't count as art. Madhi says she has rediscovered artmaking in the mental health service and received a grant from the local art school. She has exhibited paintings in an art show in the mental health sector. She paints and draws caricatures of people at the mental health service.

Taylor: (40s) tells me she has done some knitting and crocheting before but discovered artmaking at the regional mental health service where she attends the weekly women's group. She tells me she is proud to have recently won a poetry prize through her local library and wants to pursue her creativity via this art form. She says that artmaking has helped her gain confidence in her ability to achieve things and helped her to try new activities in her life. Artmaking has shown her possibilities and "opened me up to a lot."

Yvette: (30s) attends a regional skills-based art program run by a mental health support service. Yvette discusses her love of candle-wicking and the techniques and skills involved. She also discusses how, with support in the art class, she is doing things she "never thought I could or would."

Artistic Identity

As noted, none of the women in this group self-identified as artists or aspiring artists and for the majority, the social aspect of attending the art group was paramount, particularly as there was a focus other than just meeting and talking. This was perceived as offering a relatively non-threatening opportunity to engage with others on whatever level a participant felt like, generally or on the particular day. Many of these women also made art and craft outside the mental health service they attended.

A sense of not being able to do – across a wide arena, not just art – was common across the group and it was evident that this view of self began early. The idea of thinking about yourself as artistic or not artistic – the sense of *I can't* – is palpable for this group. Only one woman in this group talked about an artistic heritage or a sense of right to claim the word artistic in relation to themselves.

Thus, often artistic talent was seen to be a gift or an inherited talent. As Jane commented "Having someone like [art support worker] - - well she's got the gift. We are so lucky." Or that you were "innately artistic. That's just you." None of these women had any future ideas of being an artist but several did identify artmaking and being creative as something they found important to envisage as part of their lives in the future. If the art service at the program ceased, then many said they would not do it at home but others said they would need to find a substitute for their creative pursuits.

Lisa and Madonna are the only ones in this group of women who say they were good at art from an early age. Lisa, who got "As and Bs" in Art at school, said her mother saw her as an artistic person but she did not; to consider herself as artistic she

would need to go back to school – “I don’t see myself as an artist.” Only one other woman, Chess, said she had always done art or had liked doing art.

It was clear in this group that how you define art, in most cases traditionally, influences how you view your artistic abilities and capabilities, and that the art/craft dichotomy was alive and well. Those who held a traditional view of art may have been able to see themselves as being good at craft, perhaps going as far as to state that publicly, but did not see themselves as artistic.

Jane, Jacqueline, Kezia and Josie all told me that an artist was someone who paints and draws and that this was usually a male. Or as Kezia says “Well when we were at school we learnt about artists and they were like Vincent van Gogh and all those guys and you learnt about it like that so I don’t know about any females that we learnt about. They were all male...I think artists are men.”

The array of skills in this group is impressive. Card making, cartooning, patchwork, appliqué, embroidery and sewing, knitting, soft sculptures, candle wicking, tapestry and fancywork, crocheting and also woodwork, mosaic and collage. Similar to the aspiring artists’ group, a number of women discussed the types of making opportunities they have been offered via the education system, which generally consisted of sewing and cooking. Two of the older women said that they had always wanted to try the woodworking, like the boys, and both had recently experimented with making pieces with wood.

Artistic Pathways

None of these women had an artistic route to reveal as none had ever thought of themselves as artistic. Most had rekindled or discovered artmaking in the mental health service and for several women, this was the only time they came in to the service or made any contact with the service – to access the art program. As for Lisa, “I only come for the arts and stuff and every Monday I do sculpture with xxx.”

Madonna: “At school I always did art... and I won first prize... it won and I was probably about eleven at the time. But after becoming unwell with mental illness, I’ve lost a lot of that confidence and I’ve probably lost a lot of my ideas. Like it’s hard to come up with ideas and comprehend how to do things...I just dropped the art [at secondary school].” Mahdi’s disjuncture with artmaking came via her parents, as although she had liked art at primary school, she dropped it when her parents picked her secondary school subjects for her. She began making art again in her late twenties. Now she continues the interest in artmaking at the supported program.

I can’t. The rest of the women had come to artmaking through the mental health service, although many had done ‘crafty things’ at home for a long time or since childhood, most generally expressed an ‘I can’t’ view of artmaking:

- I'm not good enough
- I was never any good at art at school
- I can't do things with my hands
- I wasn't an arty child
- I'm not an artistic person
- I haven't got any artistic expression in me
- I don't think I am creative because I use a plan
- I have no training whatsoever

Yvette: "I wasn't an artistic child at all and then when I was in [mental health service] last year I became a bit arty...It was quite daunting, coming to be artistic. Yeah, I didn't think I could do it...I remember doing leatherwork and a bit of sketching but confident wise – I wasn't that good...I always wanted to do it but thought I never could."

For these women, as for the aspiring artists, the format of the art class, with a focus on doing, not conversation, meant for many, that this was the first time they had felt able to attend a group for years. With no expectation that you are turning up to 'chat', some women in this makers' group often sat and just watched until they were confident enough to 'give it a go'. This is a major benefit for those who experience any anxiety regarding social situations.

Part B: The Interviews: Thirteen Makers Speak: What Does Artmaking Do?

The Power of Artmaking

Although there was still a range of meanings of artmaking or what art does in women's lives, the full gamut of meanings and functions was less obvious and less intensely articulated here. The strongest messages from this group were the beneficial social aspects of attending an art group and gaining a sense of I CAN, similar to the aspiring artist group. Several women saw this as an ongoing commitment to stay healthy whilst others thought that they were unlikely to continue artmaking outside the mental health service.

Taylor: "art is an important part of moving forward..."

Jessica: "Oh, I just feel happy doing it and yeah - - just enjoy it...and I just feel that's where I'm meant to be."

Yvette: "Oh, pretty important, yeah. Because it helps you unwind and it helps you forget all the other stuff and you can focus on that and see the end product."

Mahdi: "It's definitely important because it's um - - I can see that it's made a vast improvement."

Kezia: "It's probably the most important thing that I've done – all that crafty stuff. You know that expression and I just love to do it."

Lisa: "Pretty good - - it's pretty important to me. I find if I go into a cycle and I don't have anything like that I - - I don't know, I don't think I would get better or - - for some reason it makes me better."

Jane: "Oh, that's been very important to my mind, because that was one of the reasons I came to XXX – to get out and I started with the craft club and then it just branched out so yeah."

'I can't' becomes 'I can'. Many women had to be coaxed to participate in any form of artmaking believing that they could not do it. A common refrain in this group was 'Artmaking showed me I could achieve something'. With more confidence and new skills, artmaking gradually became a vehicle for I CAN – an impetus for attempting new activities – perhaps I CAN do that too; a flow-on effect to other areas of their lives.

Jane: "I didn't want to join the class at first. Thinking - - not being artistic; not being able to do it. I liked other things - - like I love my tapestries and things like that. You know, I do more crafty things."

Portrait 21: Jessica: I can.

"...when she mentioned mosaic I thought, 'Oh, I'm not going to do that', because I didn't know how - - well I'm not very confident."

"...when I first started coming, I used to just sit and watch the others. I didn't want to do it - - but I do it now and I've gradually tried to do something and join in. Whereas before ... - - anything I enjoyed doing, the depression just took over. I just thought that I couldn't do anything - - but gradually I just joined in."

"I found that the more interested that I got, I got more confident - - thinking I can do something because for a long time in my life I hadn't known what I was good at."

"So I'm gradually getting a bit of confidence to try something instead of just sitting watching. I actually enjoyed it."

"I probably thought, 'well if they can do it then I can,' and that sort of gave me a little bit of determination to try and then see what I could do. 'Cos I never thought I could do anything'. I didn't know what I was good at. They say everyone has talents and I sort of took a long time to figure out what I could do."

"So that made me feel good."

Chess: "I said to [art support worker], 'Oh, I love that, but I don't think I can do that,' and he said, 'You can,' and I said, 'No I can't.' He said, '[Chess], years ago when you were really sick you used to paint,' and I said, 'Oh did I?' and he said, 'yeah, and

you were very good. I'll help you do it.' So I done it and it's beautiful. Like I can't believe I've done it."

"Like he built my confidence up really great."

Jacqueline: "Well they [artworks] show, - - I know I can do things...And I think that's what I enjoy here. Not the expressing. I haven't got any artistic expression in me but I can follow and be told. I think it does you good to sit and do it, you know, it does the mind good."

"Oh, it's a big part. It's one of the only things I do each week (class) - - and mentally, I look forward to it."

"Yeah, that it's a challenge and the social group. I thoroughly enjoy that and - - then I think it's a real achievement afterwards."

"I show them to the grandchildren and others. I'm proud of them yeah."

Taylor: "Watching the other women - - and knowing that maybe I'll be able to do it too - -"

"It takes your mind off your health and it helps you to build yourself up as well because when you see something that you have accomplished, you sort of think, 'oh, wow', and it really boosts your moral support. You think, 'wow, I actually did that and maybe I can do something else'. It makes you a lot more confident then, knowing that you can do things like that."

Portrait 22: Jane: Have a go.

"Oh, I think it's good. I really do. I've enjoyed it. I've said with a few things we've started to do, 'No, I can't do this,' or 'I don't want to,' and XXX will say 'Well have a go,' and when you've finished it, it just feels so good because you've done it."

"So yeah, I really get the brain going...If I didn't do it, I'd probably just sit around and feel sorry for myself."

"I think it's just that when you've got a mental problem, you don't think you can do certain things and you kinda put yourself down because you don't think you can do it - - But then you've got to have a try and then if you finish it, you think, 'well, I can do it'."

"But if you can just get over that first little hurdle you can do anything if you want to."

"It's good because it gets people to do things that they might never have done before and...you get impressed and excited because you are doing it."

"You've got a hidden talent there sometimes, that you don't know that you have got."

Discovering skills – ripples over to other parts of my life.

Kezia: "...I'm hoping as I feel better I'll do more stuff and being here has made me do other things."

Jessica: "I've found things that I can do and that confidence has spilled over into other areas of life - - yeah I think it has."

Josie: "And things I've made – a chopping board, a shoebox, I've restored a chair. I've built a fort with a lookout - - now that's a kid's toy. This has taught me how to use power tools and to be aware of safety factors. So I can go home and use that knowledge and if I need to mend something at home I can do that."

Taylor: "I felt really proud ...and it sort of encouraged me to have a go at other things and it sort of made me think, 'well if I can do that, maybe I can do something else', and I keep getting in there and having a go. Yeah, it builds my confidence."

Lived Body (Corporeality): Being Handy – Putting Yourself on Paper

Jacqueline: "It's good to do it and it's a good experience - - and it's good therapy to have to use your mind - - because even though we bounce off each other and feed off each other's ideas, we've still got to use our own mind and our own hands to do it."

Chess: "It makes me concentrate. I get a bit shaky but I learn to calm myself down. I don't get so irritable with things that don't go right. I seem to be able to control that - - like I've got more control with myself - - um my body - - by making things nice and I appreciate what I've done. It goes through the rest of my life."

Mahdi: "I do a little bit at home. I've got a little bit in a book. Whatever goes onto that sheet comes out in paint and comes out here [supported art program]. The mind, the brain is transformed onto the book. So I suppose it's going to be like a story when it's finished."

Yvette: "Probably putting a bit of yourself into every project. Something personal, - - yeah. Your thoughts have gone into it and your time and your effort. Your own stamp I suppose you would say."

Lived Space (Spatiality): A Way of Seeing the World

Portrait 23: Taylor: opened up my mind.

"I was sort of like a hermit and it's really opened my mind up to a lot of new things and I've been actually able to walk down the street now and I've noticed lately that with the trees and things like that, I'll actually take a lot of notice of them. Where before I thought, 'Oh, it's just a tree,' but now with the artwork, I notice the outline of the tree and their shape and different sorts of trees."

“...you know, things I’d never tried before. Coming here opened me up to a lot as well because I’d never been around art people before...”

“With the illness, I sort of didn’t get out much either. Then when I started coming here to class, it sort of helped ease the panic attacks that I had and I learnt a lot of new things that I didn’t think I could do, like sewing, embroidery, patchwork, quilting and drawing as well.”

“I never thought I could draw anything before but now I can sketch a few things as well. So it really opened my mind to a lot of things that before I wouldn’t even try - - now I sort of have a go at doing things.”

“It’s everything for me to get out...”

Chess: “I had the shock treatment and my memory’s not good but ...I really look forward to coming...XXX is my day and no one gets that. It’s my day...”

“To occupy my mind, I do that [art] and beading to make me concentrate.”

Well I do it to stay well because I used to just hop in bed, which was no good.”

Lived Time (Temporality)

Taylor: “It takes your mind off your health and it helps you build yourself up as well.”

Lisa: “I find art very relaxing...it’s very therapeutic.”

“and when I’m doing the sculpting I forget about all my other problems and it’s like - - ...you are concentrating on the art and when I’ve done it I feel good about it...”

Taylor: “I think it’s a relaxing idea to get involved in - - and stress wise it helps you to ease your mind because you are not thinking of the stress - - you’ve got something else.”

Yvette: “I’m enjoying it so far, doing this - - I find I can unwind and think of nothing else...something to take my mind off my problems.”

Lived Relations (Relationality): Social and Safe

Most of the women in this group spent considerable time discussing the benefits of being part of an art group.

Elizabeth: “I think if you can make something that you’ve never tried before; it’s quite rewarding to see the final finished piece. It’s stimulating - - the mind. It’s making you feel relaxed...being creative, thinking it’s good for your mind, your soul and the friendships you make.”

Jacqueline: “Oh, it has a big part because if you are on a downer, you don’t really want to do much, but then you get here and I find, even if you are flat you can still come out - - yeah, you put the effort in or you will try or you can come to a networking and just sit and chat or sit and listen and sit and watch.”

"It's a security group. It doesn't matter how I feel, I can walk in because I'm known and I know them..."

"Yes as much as anything I think it's the social group. People have a focus each week to do as much or as little as they feel."

"It's a very safe space and group, yes."

Connecting to a wider community. Six of these women shared artmaking and crafting skills with their children and grandchildren and were proud to show and give things made to their family and friends. Interestingly, teaching skills to a person who prefers to use their left hand, which was raised by Frances (artist group) as having been issue for her in childhood, was also raised by Jane, "I tried to teach her to knit (granddaughter) but she's left-handed and it's just hopeless, but she is always asking 'what are you doing'? You have to stand behind them to teach them with the left hand."

Giving to others was mentioned as very important for ten of the women in this group and this was a significant motivator for completing projects. Women talked about a sense of contributing, displaying competence, moving out of a helpless role and a feeling of giving something back, together with an opportunity to feel proud of their work.

Lisa: "Yeah [laughs]...It makes me happy...to think that I'm doing something for someone too."

Artmaking as a means of connecting with self.

Visual diary/visual history.

Taylor: "Well with the panic attacks and that, I sort of realised that I can work that into my writing and art and that."

Mahdi: [Artmaking as a means of expression?] "Well, I'd say I did more in the past. I'm more creating now, whereas it was more emotion..." "It has changed with circumstances of life - -."

Georgiana: "...I started out doing pictures from memory of situations that had confronted me during my life that had contributed to my illness - - ..." "It was a great relief when I'd finished....It's something I do."

Lisa: "It's something I do to help me feel better...Yeah. It felt useful that I was actually doing something instead of sitting around and feeling sorry for myself."

Kezia: "... It's something I do. I do it to help me feel better. I always have."

Jane: "It's the whole lot [artmaking and coming here] as long as I'm doing something."

Chess: "I think it's very good if you've got a mental illness, to be able to do artwork...Well after you have had electrical treatment your brain is a bit scattered and it

seems to help put things back where they should be...It's good to start on something and finish it."

Artmaking: Summing up the Patterns

The most striking feature in the group of makers, and similar to the aspiring artists' group, was the strong movement from an 'I can't' to an 'I can' orientation and this feeling acquired via artmaking had, for many, rippled over into other areas of their lives, giving a sense of 'I might give that a go'.

The women in the makers' group mostly did their artmaking within a group and participation in the group was the primary focus or role of artmaking. As in other studies (Graham, 1994; Lewis & Doyle, 2008; Thiele & Marsden, 2003; Van Lith, 2009; 2011; Wreford, 2008) this confirmed the benefits of group artmaking for wellbeing. The forging of strong links via making together and the friendships established were mentioned by many women, particularly in one of the regional programs. While they reported appreciating the support from the art teachers, they also thought that 'helping each other out is very important'. The makers were the only group where all the women were attending supported art classes/groups and this was also where the most importance was placed on the social aspect of participation. Aspiring artists who attended supported programs reported the social benefits as being similar to the makers, but also placed greater emphasis on the skills acquisition and being around other artists. Similar to the aspiring artists, the makers also indicated an 'I can' orientation via artmaking, which influenced other areas of their lives, including increased skills and confidence, an ability to view the world differently and a sense of connection to both the women in the artmaking groups and the wider community through being able to give or 'put something back into my community'. The act of doing was also potent for the material product; a concrete example that 'I can achieve' and here is what I can do with the creative skills that I have. These are powerful side effects of artmaking and are worthy of further research.

The artists who attended supported art programs, tended to view the benefits as having their artmaking taken seriously, having access to decent spaces and materials, with skills based artistic support as required. Acquiring skills, such as translating spatial awareness onto the sketchpad or learning how to shade were nominated as important. The artists did not necessarily dispute the social benefits of attending art programs but the discussion of the role of artmaking in their lives reached further and they were often making art in a variety of settings, not just the supported program, or had never been involved with mental health services. Artmaking was intricately enmeshed in their lives regardless of where they made art, however many were wary of their artworks being received via a mental health lens. .

Many of the 32 women saw formal artistic credentials, such as training and qualifications, as being necessary to call oneself an artist. So art institutions and education were highly valued, even though this was the very system which had so effectively discouraged them in the first place. Although only one of the factors identified as a barrier for women to becoming an artist, the education system began erecting hurdles early in these women's lives, and perhaps for most girls electing to study art within the Australian education system. The advent of an experience of mental ill-health was also an obstacle, as was the time-heavy responsibility of having children to care for. Another major hurdle was the ability to envisage oneself as an artist – and the subsequent right to claim the title, the space and the materials necessary to practise artmaking.

So how you view art and what is an artist either facilitates or hinders how you are able to envisage yourself as artistic or an artist. Or what Davies (1994) describes as the “paint or stone...thread or fabric” view of art (p. 431). Further challenges to adopting an artistic identity included women's artmaking being viewed as a hobby only, being discouraged or prevented by family from accessing art opportunities and materials – doing art in secret; a prohibited pursuit – having an episode of mental ill-health and having your artwork viewed as a product of therapy rather than an artwork. Or, having your artwork or art practices viewed as symptoms or manifestations of mental ill-health, not as an artwork produced with a variety of motivations and for a myriad of purposes

The overlaps between what women said artmaking did were remarkable in terms of the importance making art assumed in their lives. Although the makers were more obviously anchored in mental health identities than the artists or aspiring artists, all 32 thought artmaking was a beneficial event in their lives, with a varying degree of intensity, and there was also a wide spectrum of differences reported in what art did (what art does will be discussed further in Chapter 12 & 13). For some, it was in the doing; alchemising, diarising, politicising and transforming material for the sheer aesthetic and visceral pleasure of making. For others, the world looked different, as the practice bends time and space, forging and clarifying relations, both with self and the world of which we are part. Still others, felt the sweeping force and power of artmaking, where there was no choice whether they would create or not, for it was absolutely essential; a necessity, a survival strategy; ‘if i don't do it, I get sick’ and ‘it saved my life.’

If, as Wilks (2005) wonders, artmaking can teach us to make connections by piquing curiosity, eliciting guesses, evoking memories and exercising visual and spatial perceptions, and she urges us to “look carefully and engage in rich connection making

– e.g. social and cultural themes, philosophical conundrums, aesthetic concerns, personal anxieties and insights, searching for contemporary, historical and cultural patterns, and using scientific and mathematical concepts” (p. 75), then the women in this research would say, yes artmaking can do all these things, and more. Not necessarily all at the same time, for the same person, or ignoring the conditions that may or may not be conducive to facilitating artmaking. But the responses in this research suggest that if creativity is, as Jane said, ‘a bunch of flowers’, then there are myriad possibilities and opportunities to explore the role of creativity in our lives.

And we now return to the Dinner Party and invite other women to offer their thoughts on what artmaking does.

Chapter 12 – Study Three: The Collage –Other Artists Speak – What Does Artmaking Do?

Today we honor this practice of art – of a life of making. A life of making isn't a series of shows, or projects, or productions, or things; it is an everyday practice. It is a practice of questions more than of answers, of waiting to find what you need, more often than knowing what you need to do....Art just is. (Conference address – Ann Hamilton, 2006, p. 52)

The research interviews, where women spoke about a life of making, have been positioned in an ambient context metaphorically by the discussion regarding feminist research in the first section. Women's ideas about art, the cosmos, spirituality, corporeality and time-space, were embedded in theories from philosophy to psychology to quantum physics and imbued with a feminist orientation. So lest these words be seen as merely an artefact of their experience of mental ill-health, as their artworks often are, it is time to invite more women to the table. Ann Hamilton has just given an after dinner address and women with and without an experience of mental ill-health are now joining the 32 women who participated in this research. It is akin to an extension of the 39 women at the table of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party, where an additional 999 women, across time and place, joined the gathering on the floor.

This chapter, exploring the available literature regarding women's ideas about the role of artmaking in their lives, is therefore positioned as an epilogue to the interviews conducted for this research and they can be read alongside each other in a diffractive sense for patterns of difference and overlaps. Whether calling themselves artist or not, the incredible diversity in the circumstances in which women have created art provides endless variations in the obstacles and challenges they have encountered along the way, both structural and individual, collective and personal. The ways in which women have gone around these obstacles is equally diverse but at the same time exhibit striking overlaps when women discuss *What artmaking does*.

As discussed in the introduction and elsewhere, there is a distinct lack of first person narratives about day-to-day artistic practices and the challenges of envisaging, establishing and sustaining an art practice from women artists, particularly from those who have had an experience of mental ill-health. The Women's Art Register archive is the primary source of the following collage of women's thoughts on what artmaking does for the maker. Other first person accounts are pasted together from published sources – books magazines, newspapers, and film. Social media sources, such as blogs, were not explored for this thesis and remain a potentially rich source of data to augment an understanding of a life of making. Due to the decision to prioritise and showcase the women who participated in this research, via interview or exhibition,

space precludes a detailed presentation of the artistic identities and pathways of artistic women (see Appendix J for selected portraits highlighting artistic identities and pathways). This section is a collage of published comments made by women artists with or without an experience of mental ill-health about the focus of this research - the role and meaning of art in their lives – what artmaking does. Akin to what Lorraine Code (1995) calls ‘choral support’ for visual artists, space is opened up for resonances and iterations of other stories in marginalised spaces and places – writing, poetry, music – by adding more voices the murmuring becomes audible. Priority was given to Australian women artists, however international sources are included to support the chorus.

The Power of Artmaking

“Art has been my
closest friend
Without her I would
long be dead
from a broken head.”

(extract from a poem called *Today* by Niki de Saint Phalle, 1999, p. 155).

Art is life is art: It's not a choice: I have to do it: It's what I do. Virginia Woolf talks about life and art – “behind the cotton wool is a hidden pattern that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art, that we are parts of that work of art...we are the words, we are the music, we are the thing itself” (Dunn, 1998, p. 235).

Yayoi Kusama has frequently been photographed as part of the artwork; one does not exist without the other (Scarfield, 2009). “Art is neither a choice nor an affectation. It is not something she does on an occasional whim. It ...is ingrained in the stuff of life itself. Yayoi does not separate the two, for her, her art is her life” (Rule, (2010, para. 2). “To me, being an artist, art comes before anything else” (Itoi, 1997, para. 16). There is no death of the artist she is fully intra-active. Kusama enacts and embodies Barad's theory of diffraction and artmaking as intra-action and Bradotti's entangled engagement with life.

Australian artist Kim Mahood (2009) says:

...the art I make is part of a dialogue the language of which is only half-understood by all of us who participate in it. Part of this process involves being in the thick of it, which has its moments of epiphany, but is also a test of physical and psychological resilience. You can't think or write your way through it, you live it and you use whatever resources you have to survive and make sense of it. (para. 26)

Melbourne artist, Alisa O'Connor (1921-1980), was also a woman for whom art was not a choice but something she "had to do" (1982, p. 87).

Louise Baker, Melbourne printmaker, remarks "It's all I know. If I can get some classes going, if I can finish some paintings, that's what's getting me up in the morning...Having this spot makes me free" (Percival, 2009, p.11).

Melbourne-based visual artist Katrina Collins describes artmaking: "It conjures up a rapid breath of energy – anything and everything – the extraordinary, the ever after, the imaginary and the sublime. It moves in and out and up and down, it tingles in delight, and lurks in the darkness. It knows no credence, no barrier, no limit – for this it is so large, grand and abundant. It is also small – tiny, a whisper. IT is what we do..." (Melbourne International Arts Festival, 2007, para 3).

American artist, Roberta Weir (1998) describes what she calls the artist's way of seeing where, "Art feels to me like a form of life itself...this is reason enough to make the first mark...A creative solution is not found at the end of a long chain of logical thought. It may make its appearance in a dream, at a stoplight, in an overheard conversation. Locked in a little wooden paintbox a cosmos gathers" (pp. 39-40).

Eva Enders, a Melbourne-based sculptor says "I suppose art's just a part of me, just like I smoke and I drink coffee, I do art. It's just part of life...I just do it. Not must, I want to do it, I love doing it" (Johnson & Purcell, 1985, p. 60).

Mirka Mora (2000) describes painting as hard work, "it leads you to great exaltations and to the deepest despair. It is important, there is no other way to exist in my case, and the same applies to many painters" (p. 107).

Sonia Delauney says of her art practice (orphism), "It was my life and I worked the whole time, but I wasn't working – I was living – and that is the difference" (Nemser, 1995, p. 32). "...It is strange to me that people speak of my art – because I *have* to do it" (p. 31). "Between me and painting there is nothing" (p. 33).

Artists working in the Stables and Splash supported art studios in Melbourne commented;

"...it's the thread that holds everything together..." and "It's an anchor".

"Members tend to recognise creativity as integral to who they are and/or their development...When I started at...and held a paint brush after so many years, I felt a strong connection with that part of myself. Reconnecting with that part of myself was so powerful and I haven't stopped since" (Friend & Laming, 2004, pp. 11-12).

"Painting is my only desire" (Splash Artist, NEAMI, 2003).

Australian artist, Joan Brassil, was asked what was it that compelled an artist to continue to make work and she replied, "we are pursuing wonder, celebrating wonder" (Meskimmon, 2003, p. 185).

I can't live without art. Niki de Saint Phalle (1999) wrote, "The most important remains the work, the total obsession, the virus. Jean [Tinguely] said art was a disease, either you have it or you don't have it. I had it bad. I still do. I can live with problems, I can live with pain. To a certain extent I am used to it. I can live with solitude but I can't live without my work" (p. 121).

Rebecca Miller (Llewellyn, 2008) explains, "people who make things, like me, make them in part because they themselves are not enough...If I was enough, I wouldn't do anything except live my life. But I have a disease that makes me need to produce things outside of myself. It's a compulsion to prove our own existence" (p. 11).

Rebecca Barnard, a Melbourne jazz inspired artist, believes that if "you have a creative thing going on, something must be done about it. If you ignore it, you get frustrated, sick, bitter and twisted" (Wilmoth, 2010, p. 6).

Art as survival.

I fight pain, anxiety, and fear every day, and the only method I have found that relieves my illness is to keep creating art. I followed the thread of art and somehow discovered a path that would allow me to live. If I had not found that path I am sure I would have committed suicide early on, unable to bear the situation in which I found myself. (Kusama, 2011, p. 93)

After attempting suicide, Alice Neel "...came to understand that her painting was, for her, a means of survival" (Bailey, 1994, p. 32).

Beth Norling, an Australian illustrator comments:

The mental solitude and inner quiet brings me close to some form of divine collective unconscious, an experience that is comparable to deep meditation. There have been times of intense self-destructiveness, self-doubt, self-absorption, and the constant and wearing negotiation between creative compromise and vision...whereas the creative stuff is what makes, for me, life really worth living. I don't think I could survive emotionally if I didn't have the art. (Power, 2008, pp. 146-147)

When artist Vali Myers returned to live in Melbourne in 1993, after spending many years in Europe, she said "if it weren't for the drawing I would have died years ago" (Spinks, 2005).

Del Kathryn Barton describes artmaking as an outlet, very pleasurable and something which allowed her to feel very present and occupy a space where nothing could touch her. She observes that from a very early age, she had the feeling that making images helped her to find her place in the world and to begin to understand what the world meant. "My art and my practice have played a vital role in keeping me here on the planet" (Turley, 2010, 4.25min).

Climbing the stairs to sanity. In the 1950s Margaret Olley began to drink frequently and discusses how “it wasn’t easy to close the cellar door – but working for this exhibition, for me, has been like mounting a steep flight of steps – step by step – to sanity, clarity and freedom – and faith in myself – proving that I can draw and paint...you’ll never know the depths of despair I’d reached” (Stewart, 2005, p. 346).

Mirka Mora believes “such is life: and the paintings remain a mystery, threatening my sanity or saving it at other times. So too the workings of the mind, sometimes treacherous and sometimes elevating...great art is always there to rescue us” (Mora, 2000, p. 104).

Victorian-based poet, Sandy Jeffs (2009) comments, “the gift of creativity has been a lifeline because it allowed me to look at myself, and the complexities of being a human being, both intuitively and critically. But more importantly it has enabled me to recreate myself, construct an identity, and so survive the disintegration of madness” (p. 18). “The creative impulse is there to make sense of who we are in the world” (p. 76).

Inga Hunter an Australian mixed-media artist said “I cannot *not* work and still stay relatively sane” (Voigt, 1996, p, 125).

Gandolfo and Grace (2009) interviewed 15 individual craftmakers and a group of quilters in Melbourne and called their book “...it keeps me sane” in response to the women’s thoughts on craft and wellbeing. Other responses about what making does included having an alternative identity to ‘sick’ person, for pleasure, the connection to others, distraction, relaxation and time out.

Rebecca Miller, married to the actor Daniel Day Lewis, talks about finding the balance to meet the creative needs of both people and not succumbing to the artist’s wife role or the mother role, “someone’s going to give up and very often it’s the woman. That’s what’s expected the woman falls. But I can’t. I wouldn’t be able to maintain my sanity if I gave up who I was. I just wouldn’t be able to exist” (Llwellyn, 2008, p. 10). Such statements again emphasise the significant implications in being thwarted in sustaining an art practice and it would seem imperative, given what has been reported here and in the findings of this research, to find ways to support women who have children and a creative practice, although it is unlikely that this is an area that is routinely screened for new mothers.

A safe place. Like Janis, Del Kathryn Barton, discusses artmaking as a safe space during her childhood:

I think I was a deeply phobic child and I had severe anxiety that manifested in these weird episodes where I would hear voices and my vision would do very strange things, the light would shudder, or it was too bright and I had to shut my eyes. It was terrifying actually, and not something I could control...The act of

drawing was where on one level I felt safest as a child, but also most engaged, always this feeling of incredible potentiality, which is a really electric place to be. (Coslovich, 2008, p. 12)

Lived Corporeality

Kusama maintains, "Art is about everything that exists in my mind and body...Put simply, it is a means for extension and, ultimately, survival." (Rule, 2010, para. 7) "Art has been my guidepost throughout my life..." (Rule, 2010, para. 17).

American craftartist, Kari Lonning, views her work as a response to the world. "Somebody's got to take care of the world and that's part of why I am doing what I am do because someone has got to keep their hands on materials, not just doing key punch and computer stuff" (Jeffri, 1992, p. xi).

Jane Cafarella, the Melbourne cartoonist, discusses her practice, "How do I get the ideas? I don't know. Sometimes I think it has nothing to do with me. Around every story there seems to be a bunch of wispy threads as fine as spider's silk that I must grasp and draw out. I had epilepsy as a child and there was a certain feeling and smell before an attack occurred. Similarly, there is a certain feeling before a cartoon idea happens. (1990, p. 13)

Louise Bourgeois believes "I am not what I am, I am what I do with my hands" (2009, p. 1).

It's like food or the air you breathe. Archibald prize winner Davida Allen (King Murdoch, 2003, para 4) said, "As a Catholic, the nuns would say to you that faith was a gift. It has taken me years to realise that the pleasure of being a painter is a gift". And Allen informs interviewer Rachel Power, "Art sort of came...It was like the air you breathe, really" (Power, 2008, p. 262).

Melbourne artist, Erica McGilchrist, said her mother "taught her to take drawing and image making as a matter of course, a natural thing like breathing, which one did without any further thought about it" (2013, wall-text).

Another Melbourne-based artist, Antonietta Sanfilippo (2005) says, "painting is like food, it sustains me and gives me energy to live life...I am deeply grateful for the gift of being an artist" (p. 3).

Australian artist Judy Watson (2009) claims "Art will always be my choice. It enriches me, it feeds me, it is my life. I don't ever envisage not being an artist. It's the best career decision I could have made as a young disenfranchised teenager living in the outer suburbs of Brisbane" (p. 18).

Anne Summers (2005) said of Constance Stokes. "She had to paint like other people had to eat" (p. 153).

Melbourne painter Dorothy Barton says, "It's the thing that keeps me feeling vital" (Johnson & Purcell, 1985, p. 2).

It's an addiction. Mirka Mora says, "It's good to be alive. Every day I wake up and I can't wait to paint...I love painting, it is worse than an addiction for me. If you are a painter you have to paint..." (Tracinshki, 2009, p. 22).

Nora Heysen observes that painting "...for her is a disease, a drug, an escape. I can get absolutely lost in it no matter what traumas are happening in my life if I start painting. It is a retreat from life in a way" (Rusden, 1994, 33:21).

Lived Temporality and Spatiality

As I have noted above, as a child Del Kathryn Barton likened artmaking to a safe place; Nora Heysen views artmaking as akin to a retreat. Painter Carmel O'Connor also views artmaking as a respite from day to day concerns, "The art space in my mind is a respite from the mundane things of life" (O'Connor, 2008, p. 11). Roberta Weir says "Modes of attention we use in art are not unlike various practices of meditation. When we are working we are attending with all our being...In art we train the faculty of observation" (1998. p. 105).

Alice Neel explained "the minute I sat in front of a canvas I was quite happy. Because it was a world I could do as I liked in it" (Nemser, 1975, p. 106).

Kusama's *Infinity Nets* are large works which challenge where things begin and end, frequently spilling over into the entire room including the furniture, creating what she called sensory environments and "...without form, without definition, seemed to actualize the infinity of space" (Kusama, 2011, p. 48).

Kim Mahood (2009) had this to say,

Making art is an exercise in trust, risk, fortuitous surprise, a willingness to spend a lot of time doing something that may not work and a peculiar faith in your own vision that may not be shared by anyone else...Art takes me to places I can't reach via the conscious process of writing. It's the place where meanings are transparent and multiple, where contradiction transforms into ambiguity, where the inchoate becomes visible. (para. 2)

Drawing Together the Patterns

A Life of Making: Persistence and Insistence to Claim '*This is what I see*'

The jacmanna was bright violet; the wall staring white...She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly...it was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. It was that moment's flight between the picture and the canvas that the demons set on her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. Such she often felt herself – struggling against terrific odds to maintain her

courage to say: 'But *this is what I see; this is what I see*', and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck away from her..." (Woolf, 1927/1977, pp. 22-23)

Virginia Woolf's artist, Lily Briscoe, articulates the difficulties of establishing and maintaining an artistic practice and the struggles that many women highlighted in this research have encountered. Moi (1999) argues holding on to one's vision of the world is difficult and uttering that this is what the world looks like to me, "This is what I see. This is what I do" (p. 241) is frequently a response when a speaker sees that no amount of further argument or convincing will get the other to see what she sees or understand what she is doing. So the woman does not chose to argue further but takes a stand on the value of their own view – refusal to alienate their own subjectivity. This is what a number of the women I spoke to in the interviews did – *it's what I do. It's who I am. I just do* when there was an inability or unwillingness to articulate what is essentially a non-linguistic process and one that I could not share as a non-artist. Moi believes this is a fundamental right – to have the freedom to speak and participate in human decision-making; to have the freedom to create art in the way you see the world.

If the last chapters have illustrated the difficulties for women in becoming an artist, particularly if you have an experience of mental ill-health, then they have also highlighted the potential joys. Having taken the risk to proclaim *this is what I see*, many women artists appear to have strongly held views about the role and meaning of artmaking in their lives and attest to Ann Hamilton's theory that making matters and Barad's assertion that every meeting matters.

The published fragments of women's artistic lives vibrate backwards and forwards across and between the types of responses the women in this research offered. There are striking overlaps, with the most startling being the depth of significance given to making art for many of the women with or without an experience of mental ill-health. The findings in this research gave an intense indication of what happens if a life of making is devalued or halted and the potential impact on wellbeing.

There were also overlaps with the few studies that have investigated artistic pathways for women. The term artist was predominantly viewed with hesitation. Some fiercely claimed the title while others were more reluctant to grasp such a concept laden with ambiguity (*it is just so fraught* – Ruby), and in general there was a sense of uncertainty or lack of confidence to envisage oneself as an artist or claim the title of artist (*I wouldn't call myself an artist* – Norah) (Brooks, 1995; Helson, 1990; Paget, 1983; Taylor, 1991). Factors which strengthened a sense of artist identity were an interest and focus on artmaking from an early age (Joubert, 2008), a sense of

prodigious output, early encouragement and a feeling of having inherited an artistic talent (Freeman, 1993; Jeffri, 1993; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Women often spoke of other women when discussing transformative moments in artmaking (O'Connor, 1982; Peers, 1990a; Maxwell, 1994). "...mothers, grandmothers, and aunts had crucial roles to play in the making of their artistic identities" (Prieto, 2001, p. 202), although not always in a positive sense, as in the case of Frances.

So where there was encouragement, there was also discouragement in establishing a career path as an artist, where women were frequently circumnavigated by family pressure to pursue a more suitable career in professions such as nursing or teaching or, by necessity, to support an artistic practice on the side (Collett, 1998b; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Similarly, many like Ruby, Claudia and Tina reported having been encouraged to choose the science path during schooling as a more legitimate ambition than art. Other major hurdles to establishing and sustaining an artistic practice and career were having your work devalued as trivial, or as pale imitation when associated with artistic men, or a hobby when being a mother, and significantly, for many women who participated in this research, having your artwork considered a by-product of therapy when having an experience of mental ill-health. What was also evident, despite or because of many ruptures to artistic career paths, is that pursuing a life of making required intense commitment and tenacity and, as Georgia O'Keeffe illustrates, enormous fortitude to persevere in enacting *this is what I see* (Brooks, 1995; Freeman, 1993; Jeffri, 1993; Mishler, 2004; Paget, 1983, Throsby & Zednik, 2010).

For those women who found a way to call themselves artists, navigated the path through childhood or perhaps art school to establish and maintain an art practice, the role and meaning of artmaking in their lives is a topic worthy of greater consideration. What sustains an art practice after the pragmatic and relational hurdles have been leapt? What drives an artist, like Alice, Artemisia or Joy in this research, to 'have to do it'?

In 1914, Wassily Kandinsky wrote *Concerning the spiritual in art* to free art from its traditional bonds to material reality – an independence from nature that music had (Kandinsky 1914/1977). His quest was to describe the laws of colour perception and sensation that would provide a universal means of communication apart from nature. In Kandinsky's search for abstraction, there was no question of representation but instead whether a harmony had been achieved. He admitted that he had not entirely reached this universal formation, and as I have discussed, postmodern feminist theory has shredded any Western fantasies of the applicability of the universal, in all realms, including art. However, resonating with discussions of Barad and Braidotti's work earlier in this thesis, Kandinsky's musings are noteworthy on several other levels. He

says Cézanne painted a teacup as he painted a human being because he was able to perceive the inner life in everything and thus achieve a spiritual harmony, a painterly rhythm. According to Kandinsky, Matisse was also able to achieve this inward vitality by colour and Picasso was attempting to achieve it through form. Kandinsky construes this inner need as composed of three mystical elements. Firstly, every artist has something to express – he calls this the element of personality. Secondly, every artist is a child of his or her age and is impelled to express the spirit of this age – this is what he calls the element of style dictated by time, place, and culture. Finally, every artist is a servant of art called to help the cause of art – to create – and this is a constant through all ages and all cultures. Artistic personality and artistic style will disappear through time but the third element of pure artistry remains – eternal artistry. “The artist in whose work this third element predominates is the really great artist” (p. 34).

So we see artists such as Séraphine Louis and Yayoi Kusama, and artists in this research like Janis and Joy with an irrepressible urge to create – “based only on the artist’s ‘inner need’” (Kandinsky, 1914/1977, p. iix). This is not necessarily inner self or inner emotion, but the inner life and vitality of everything in the universe, and the visual external means of engaging with this via artmaking, which Kandinsky says “cause vibrations of the soul” (p. 35) or as Ruby said “the things that make your heart sing.”

“There is no past, present or future. Using tenses to divide time is like making chalk marks on water” (Frame, 1961). So from Camille Claudel to Del Kathryn Barton, from Margaret to Frances in this research, across decades and continents, is the woman artist’s dilemma timeless? For, if as Kandinsky argues, artistry transcends ages, so too do the dilemmas of envisaging, establishing and sustaining an art practice. Ignoring fashions and fads in artmaking and art history, those who create and paint and stitch, transport a vibrancy and spirituality at the time that they are alive and beyond. Or, if you reject the notion that artmaking requires spiritual meditation, then such artmaking makes meaning and enriches and thickens the quality of the life of the artist and the lives of the viewers. With Kusama’s *Infinity Nets*, Barton’s wholly covered fantastical worlds, Séraphine’s pulsating canvases of flora inspired by religious fervour, de Saint Phalle’s mammoth Nanas, perhaps Zelda Fitzgerald’s exhibition proclamation that *sometimes madness is wisdom* is, after all, not so much unfortunate wording but intricate and profound reality manifested via artmaking – of which the majority of us are unaware on one level and yet persistently seek on another.

I have heard and read a kaleidoscope of statements about what art does: ‘Creativity as a lifeline’, ‘Art as a guidepost’, ‘art as an anchor that kept me on this planet’, ‘art has saved me’, ‘art is a means of survival’, ‘there is no other way to exist’

and finally as Virginia Woolf said 'to not be able to work is hell' or as Janis says "if I don't, I get sick". Such vehemently expressed views on the role and function of art in one's life and what happens when a life of making is thwarted, are surely worthy of greater attention.

The final section of this thesis devotes the space to apply attention to contemplating ways of beginning to think about artmaking and what it does and what it inspires. For, as Barad has enticed us to meet the universe halfway and entangle meaning and matter, then the doing and the thinking are not separable and praxis and theory can be threaded through one another.

Section Three: What Does Artmaking Do?

Chapter 13: What Does Artmaking Do for the Maker? Discussion of Findings and Theories

Community, nature, infinity, entropy and being able to communicate with the ideas in these things, sounds and the energy around I interact with daily....

I feel it through my skin. Painting stuff like that into visuals makes sense, because my hands are good at describing what is felt, but not easily defined immediately, or properly with words. My hands have a connection to my mind that surprises my conscious self. It's like watching a dream being painted before me. (Janis, 2007)

Artmaking Matters. Why?

In presenting research data, it is difficult to capture what resonates between and across the interviews, the importance placed on particular issues or the emphasis that punctuated each interview for each woman, without diluting the intense sense of commitment to the artmaking process expressed. For all 10 women who identified as artists, it could be said that if there was one overriding similarity or overlap in what they chose to tell me, it was the significance of artmaking to their lives. Those who had stopped artmaking for any period of time were adamant that being prevented from making art was not compatible with wellbeing and existence. The clarity with which this was expressed, and the vehement certainty that this was the case for their lives, was perhaps the most striking aspect of this research. For those that defined as aspiring artists, the opportunity to acquire new artistic skills or hone existing skills ('I can') in a supportive environment with other artistic people, where their work was respected was significant. For the makers, the issues were different, primarily concentrating on the social and safe aspects of making art with others and the achievement experienced in producing, which cascaded through to other areas of life – *I will give it a go*.

Nonetheless, these observations do not do justice to the women's responses across and between the groups – different and similar at other points in the matrix of what art does.

To make a conclusive summary of all that has been offered by the women in this research – exhibition, interviews and collage – would be reductive and privilege one response over another – for, even within the one interview with the same woman, responses like, sometimes I use art to X and other times to Y, were frequent. It would also be inconsistent with a diffractive methodology and it would not honour the multiplicity of women's relationships with artmaking. I cannot condense the self-defined makers with the artists or the aspiring artists with the women in published sources. I have threaded commentary throughout the Dinner Party relevant to the particular issue

highlighted by the women. As I have already organised the data in artistic definitions, pathways, practice and what art does – lived body, space, time and relations, I have shaped the way the reader can access the material; I have curated the data and made my interpretations evident while attempting to leave room for a conversation to continue. Like the exhibition where the wall text was kept to a minimum – so too are the global summaries.

For there are many things to take from this thesis, and I invite you to jump back and find which parts interest you the most – whether are you a maker, a knitter, a sculptor or someone who says *I haven't got an artistic bone in my body* – something will vibrate in here. Will it be a springboard for further research into what art does for the maker? Or, will it inspire you to start making, resume making or perhaps you have never stopped and you have been nodding your head throughout as you have read what the women had to say. You may be a health professional who is now considering asking women you work with, 'what do you do creatively?', or a policy maker contemplating how to fund artmaking opportunities. Having read this thesis closely, you will have your own ideas about what is significant. The women in this research certainly did.

What Theories: Ways to Think about what the Women have said about Artmaking

But how can we attempt to think about what the women have been saying about artmaking – not just in this research but also in published sources – with or without an experience of mental ill-health? The various proclamations regarding the importance of artmaking – a life of making – the act of doing – have not been comprehensively brought together on one axis before. The women's responses presented here do resoundingly suggest that serious contemplation should be given to the sort of theories and ideas which might begin to be adequate to encompass all that the women have discussed: mind body connections, expanded dimensions, altered time, 'I' can, engagement in seeing the world in novel ways, the things that make your heart sing, and from chaos to creating meaning.

For these women, art is not something 'over there' that they access through a painting method or medium. It is not a discursive system that they willingly enter or rebel against. It is a becoming thing, a thing that happens in the intra-actions of their environment, their hands, their bodies, their minds and their temporal, spatial and social relationships. It is a 'lived' experience. It becomes art in a lived space.

What sort of ideas will thread through one another and allow us to begin to understand why artmaking is important to many and what is it that an artistic subject is doing if they are not bound by representation? This final section explores theories of imagination and creativity and concludes with Braidotti's nomadic artistic subject as a

way to think about a life of making and why it matters. A diffractive methodology does not require a linear progression from introduction to findings to discussion to conclusion, but allows me to go back to the start and consider anew the unsettled questions. Working diffractively acknowledges the interplay of “The world’s effervescence, its exuberant creativeness, (which) can never be contained or suspended” (Barad, 2007, p. 177), and allows a consideration of how aspects of human existence such as creativity, dreams and imagination are entangled.

Revisiting theories about creativity: Disrupting the canvassing of emotions. Graham’s *Philosophy of Aesthetics* (2005) discusses the value of art in quadrants: Art and pleasure (Hume & Mills), Art and beauty (Hume, Kant & Gadamer), Art and emotion, and Art and understanding (Hegel & Collingwood). All of these areas were mentioned and sometimes emphasised by the women in this research – often simultaneously, rarely singularly. Graham argues that each has merit and each has fallibilities in making a claim about why art is valuable. For instance, Graham describes how art can provide pleasure but it still does not have any special value claim over any other form of entertainment. Or we can appreciate aesthetic beauty, but art is often ugly and confronting, for example, the works of Peter Booth, Patricia Puccini or Andres Serrano’s *Piss Christ*. Although his focus remains on what art does for the audience, what is useful about Graham’s analysis is that he does not discard one value claim for another, but finds space to allow earlier claims to remain intact, although with less significance as he builds his argument, almost diffractively. It is *art as emotion*, that I will revisit, as the role of the emotional in the history of art and creativity is central, particularly where women are involved.

The 19th century expressivist theory of art positions all artists as emotional conduits who embody specific emotions in an artwork which then stimulates the same emotion in the audience member. Artmaking is a process of self-expression, where the artist must retrieve and understand their emotional states during creation.⁷ Graham (2005) questions the assumed benefit of catharsis for the artist by pouring out emotions into an artwork. If art could purge us of harmful emotions it could also purge us of beneficial ones. How would we be able to prevent them leeching out of us? He concludes that there is nothing valuable about expressing emotion for its own sake.

⁷ This is not the same as the movement of art known as expressionism, an “artistic style in which the artist seeks to depict not objective reality but rather the subjective emotions and responses that objects and events arouse within a person” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2012). Artists of the expressionism movement, such as Munch and Kandinsky, were deliberately attempting to capture and express emotion in their paintings, not their own emotions. “Being ‘an expression of’ versus ‘being expressive of’.” So art becomes a way of understanding a richer and multidimensional human experience” (Heywood, I., & Sandywell, B. (Eds.). (1999). *Interpreting visual culture*, p.49. London, England: Routledge).

However, the expressivist theory of art continues to underline how works are frequently viewed in a mental health framework, emphasising the ability of artmaking to 'paint your feelings' or as the Director of the CDC, Dr. Koh says, "...express what cannot be put into words" (Short, 2013, para. 5). By claiming that the origins of artistic production are an emotional experience then the interpretation of the artwork and intention of the artist is predetermined, frozen in the past, there is no scope for possibilities in the future. Graham (2005) also reports that many artists have denied that emotion lies at the heart of their work. Likewise, many of the women who participated in this research did discuss the role of emotion in their work at times, but the idea that emotion was the foundation of their work was not supported. Or, as Nora Heysen said, "painting can be an expression of self but it is never the whole self" (de Berg, 1965). There were not only differences between artists on their view of the role of emotion in their work, but also within artistic practice; sometimes works were designed to convey emotion, other times not (recall Norah's patchwork of functions for artmaking).

There were equally divergent thoughts on the idea of art as catharsis or therapy. This is significant for women artists as they have been anchored in the realm of the emotional for centuries and consequently their artworks have been aligned with emotion (Richards, 2005) – even more so for those who are 'mad', because beyond the notion that no woman is in control of her emotions – 'too emotional', mad women are construed as even more out of control and the quest becomes a search for the key to their madness in their art.

Despite feminist research and theory (Code, 1991; 1995; Wetherell, 2012) scrutinising 'emotion' and affective embodiment, traditional psychological research, like searching for determinants of creativity, frequently conceptualises emotions as discrete and distinct events to be isolated and controlled, much like the imagination, and by inference this means it would be possible to canvass a specific emotion. However, Graham (2005) questions how artworks can be described in emotional language. Which emotion are we trying to describe at which point in time? The emotion of the artist when conceiving the art work, when painting the artwork, when giving the artwork a title, or is it the emotion of the audience when viewing, or the emotive content of the artwork itself? He concedes that an artwork may potentially change our understanding of an emotion but not by making us actually feel that emotion. Furthermore, Richards (2005) contends we live in a continuous and constantly shifting emotional atmosphere, just as Virginia Woolf was interested in contesting linear notions of time, space, plot and neatly distinct emotional states. Just as creativity is not an attribute we turn on when entering the art class or off when doing the dishes, emotions and imagining are

not separate but infuse all existence. Gouk and Hill (2005) position “emotions as acts of the total embodied person” (p. 60), and Wetherell (2012) discusses emotions, not as discrete units inside a self, but as affective practices which are relational responses to the world and the “physicality of affect” (p. 25).

Another issue with expressivism is that it attributes states of mind to artists when there is no evidence to do so. So, as Graham (2005) elucidates, Shakespeare does not need to have experienced all the emotions of his characters to provide evocative characterisations. Expressivism not only ignores the value of imagination, it actually eliminates it (Salort, 2010). When the artist is seen to use an artistic medium to communicate an emotion then the artwork becomes nothing more than a tool to communicate experience and “An artist is really a psychological reporter, simply recording and relaying fact about internal feeling” (Graham, 2005, p. 38). The protagonist in Nicole Krauss’s novel, *Great House*, professes her frustration with those who insist

...on reading novels as the autobiography of their authors, as if there was no such thing as the writer’s imagination, *as if the writer’s work lay only in dutiful chronicling and not fierce invention*. I champion the writer’s freedom – to create, to alter, to amend, to collapse and expand, to ascribe meaning, to design, to perform, to affect, to choose a life, to experiment and on and on – (2010, p. 28)

Again, this resonates with the way in which the artworks of people with mental ill-health have been characterised, as windows to the soul, as ways to empathise with the person, as ways to understand mental illness. This annuls any other possible meanings and is potentially dismissive of the art, the artists and the audience. For artmaking is always much more than mere autobiography, or a mere outpouring of emotion, and mental ill-health is always more complex than an individual artwork. Keeping the above in mind, I briefly review the women’s responses regarding art program participation.

Revisiting art program participation. All 25 women who participated in an arts program commented on the benefits of attending. Clearly the programs differed in their orientation and expectations, both from the women’s and the service provider’s perspective, and the benefits and drawbacks of participation also varied widely. From skills-based art studios to skills-based women’s art and craft groups, women who were self-defined artists identified different benefits to those who identified as makers. Wreford (2008) notes, that people access supported programs for many reasons, such as; those on a pension unable to afford materials or space, want the camaraderie of a studio environment with other artistic people, learn new artistic skills, or need support to build skills and confidence in the artistic realm.

Freight Art Studio in Western Australia identified a number of other benefits of art program participation, including having your artistic practice acknowledged, breaking the cycle of isolation, a sense of place and belonging, and “It’s about discovering an identity from someone with a mental illness to someone who views himself or herself as an artist” (Lewis & Doyle, 2008, p. 39), or as Alice said, “creating an alternative identity”. Further benefits include a sense of achievement, a distraction or an escape and a means of expression, making connections, promoting a feeling of having ability – *it was the only thing I was really good at*. The power of art (as also nominated by Joy in my research) – was characterised by hope, motivation, change, involvement and the possibilities to ‘take people to other places’ (Stickley et al, 2007). Graham (1994) reported the ability to utilise more creativity in life situations – more flexibility. I would add that women in this research did not have to attend a formal program to report similar benefits associated with artmaking.

The findings in *Canvassing the emotions* also resonate with broader research studies which suggest that art does have a strong role to play in achieving social inclusion outcomes, including improved health findings (Barraket, 2005; Reynolds & Prior, 2003; Marsden and Thiele, 2000). So *Canvassing the emotions* supports these research findings and extends them. As discussed previously, focussing too heavily on the social aspects of art may limit artistic expression by reducing art to a utilitarian function – art as tool where art is justified in terms of its social usefulness (Wreford, 2008). Whilst it is apparent that many women did enjoy and find social benefits in attending art groups, particularly the makers who were less likely to be also making art in other settings, it is also clear from the women’s responses that there is no one meaning or role of artmaking in a person’s life. The meaning of artmaking fluctuates and weaves its way around life circumstances, entangled in, time of life, audience, and many other factors that are idiosyncratic. Just as there can never be the same painting, nor can there be the same meaning across and between artmakers. The opportunity to develop and sustain an art practice out from underneath the mental health umbrella, the freedom to create, was reported as pivotal for some – not as tool, but as transformer – to living a life authentically.

The responses of the women who participated in this project bear witness to a need to think outside and beyond the arts and health framework. Moreover, one woman who did not wish to participate in the research gave the reason that putting art and wellbeing together *was way too restrictive*. The idea that art is good for you is acceptable only with acknowledgement that this is only one of the possibilities in a prism of what art is, what art is for and what art does.

Revisiting theories of flow. Just as this research has supported previous research regarding art program participation, and participating in artmaking in general, responses from the women in this research also support some of the concepts of Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow. These include a sense of being part of some greater totality, a means for transforming chaos into order, time being altered and the sense that deep involvement and concentration in a task creates escape or distraction from worries, fears and anxieties. However, the idea of flow in this theory is spoken of in terms of control – excelling, exceeding and triumphing over the activity undertaken, and learning to gain order in consciousness or control over one's inner life. Other key aspects such as clear goals, immediate feedback, a sense of control over one's actions and monitoring success, were not how women in my research talked about their artmaking practices. The process appeared to be more dynamic and fluid, and as Barad reminds us, each meeting matters in relation to the direction or spreading out, the rippling effect of creating.

Concurring with Bloch's (2000) assessment that flow is a far more complex process than thus far reported, perhaps particularly when considered in relation to an artistic practice, the theory of flow appears insufficient theoretically to cover the range of views expressed by women as artists. Although the theory of flow, by investigating temporality, begins to expand an understanding of *what art does for the artist*, it is inadequate to encompass episteme-ontological investigations of lived space, relations, corporeality – an artistic style of being in the world: An entangled view of artmaking.

What Does Art Do?

In his little known and first published work, *Dream, imagination and existence*, Foucault (1954/1993) questions why it is that thinkers have never concertededly explored a theory of expression and that it will only be possible by going way beyond phenomenology, existentialism and psychoanalysis. His prediction is salient in the 21st century as the notion of representation, consistently held since Plato theorised that the arts are representational, or *mimetic* (Adajian, 2008), is inadequate, as Barad has argued, to theorise art and creativity. A variety of optical metaphors – mirror, lamp to illuminate, labyrinth of looking glasses – (reflective not diffractive and entangled) are surprisingly persistent in colouring ways we think about the imagination, art and creativity, partly because the imagination, the dream, even perception remain under-theorised in Western culture (Hoeller, 1993; Williams 1993). Melbourne jeweller, Sarah Haywood (2012), notes, "It's difficult to explain the creative process or the psychology of making because it's quite philosophical (para. 5)...Creativity is a different space...it really is another dimension. I think everyone should explore it because it's a completely unique way of communicating your ideas and experiences" (para. 6).

Furthermore, Coole and Frost (2010) observe that modern particle physics, chaos and complexity theories, as well as the emergence of new concepts informing genetics research and neuroplasticity, have changed understandings of the composition of matter and life, requiring the formulation of new political and ethical theories, and I contend also opening up space to consider new theories about why art matters and what artmaking does. Grosz (2008) is interested in “the peculiar relations that art establishes between the living body, the forces of the universe and the creation of the future, the most abstract of questions, which...may provide us with a new way of understanding the concrete and the lived” (p. 3).

Thinking Diffractively about Creativity, Imagination and Artmaking

“Art is mixed up with such things as ritual observance, play, fantasy, dreams, self-expression, creativity, communication, order, symbol making, and intensification of emotional experience. Art is also said to arouse feeling or sympathy, empathy for fellow human beings – the social ends of the arts” (Dissanayake, 1998, p. 73).

As I have discussed, in psychology, theory and research on creativity and the imagination has been primarily concerned with isolating facets of the cognitive process in order to understand individual human characteristics (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998). It is worth noting that the British Psychological Society vehemently criticised this overemphasis on classification and urged a reconsideration of the life conditions and reported experiences of people seeking psychological help (British Psychological Society, 2011). As Barad has illustrated, the more we attempt to measure and define does not correspond to the more we know about the world we inhabit, and the search for the ‘creative’ gene or trait/s is like Alice disappearing down the rabbit hole. Seeking definitive answers to the nature of creativity, and indeed existence, is unhelpful to understanding women, creativity and mental health or ill-health. “Imagination does not follow rules” (Thomasson, 2006, p. 245).

Graham (2005) notes that Kris has argued since the 1950s that there might be a common underlying process for all these human activities – dreams, fantasy or imagination – and artmaking, and more recently, Thomas (2006) believes that imagery is associated with fantasy and the imaginary, memory, perception and thought. The data or information processing model whereby humans are conceived as computational may not be the most useful way to understand imagination or creative processes. Rather, as Pepperell (2003) argues, complexity, not certainty, is the defining characteristic of life and imagery is formed from an engaged, ongoing, directed and perceptual exploration of the world involving all the senses, echoing Braidotti (2011) as discussed in Chapter 4. Furthermore, Colebrook (2008) reports new discoveries such as neuroplasticity (Doidge, 2010) which suggest that the brain is not

hard wired in ways evolutionary and biological theories claimed, but is adaptive and dynamic and is now seen as more of a network, with capacities being formed through time and in the body and its processes and affective practices.

Returning to the brittlestar to blur the boundaries. “It is impossible to say the brittlestar is a lens. Does it look at, or through, or with? There is no mirroring, imitation, reflecting, sameness of copying – there is no hall of mirrors...Brittlestars are living testimony to the inseparability of knowing, being and doing” (Barad, 2007, p. 380).

If the brittlestar blurs the boundaries between exteriority and interiority, as discussed in Chapter 4, what implications does this have for other boundaries imagined between bodies and minds, consciousness and unconsciousness, and dreaming or hallucinations and creativity? Orlie (2010) wonders why we consider that consciousness resides just in the brain, the neck being some arbitrary divider, and Pepperell (2003) considers how to measure a coastline, where does the sea start and the sand end? How far does a person’s scent extend and therefore where does a person start and end? He argues that if we can’t absolutely distinguish where the mind and body begin and end, or where the body and the environment start and begin, then we can’t absolutely distinguish between consciousness and the environment.

So, as de Beauvoir and Barad would no doubt agree, we are constantly changing, always becoming and the embodied brain and the embrained body take shape. According to Pepperrell, it cannot be said that there is a fixed state of living – the human is a fuzzy entity. “Does art play a part in responding to humanity’s fundamental sense of the arbitrariness and mutability of all things” (Malraux: cited in Derek, 2009, p. 298,) or as Margaret said ‘out of chaos, I make meaning’.

Multi-layered thinking: A continuum. “If you talk about creativity, when you look at a person’s delusions it really is the imagination working at the limits of its capacity” (Jeffs, 2002, p. 2).

By questioning the boundaries between where a human begins and ends, where consciousness ends and the environment begins and how the body and mind are interwoven, then it follows that it is necessary to also consider the arbitrary boundaries construed between various aspects of thinking and being, wakefulness and sleeping, imaginary and real (Nettle, 2001), which are seemingly highly relevant to the artistic process. Connolly (2001) discusses Gatens and Lloyd’s focus on Spinoza and the move towards a conception of thinking as layered activity. This is cogent with calls to conceive of experiences on a continuum – dreams, imaginings, consciousness, asleep, awake – and attends to Spinoza’s emphasis on the significance of *thinking for life*. Woody (2003) wonders if the unconscious mind is just the imagination anyway and

even the state of being in a coma has recently been questioned as being the totally disengaged state it was traditionally thought to have been. For example, in what is known as the Tennis experiment, people who are medically classified as being in a vegetative state, are asked to imagine playing tennis. Unexpected responses to this prompt have redefined thresholds of consciousness (Owen et al., 2006). Furthermore, recent research with magnetic brain stimulation at the Harvard Medical School indicates that humans “can change our brain anatomy simply by using our imagination” (Doidge, 2010, p. 198).

But imagining, delusion, illusion, hallucinations, dreaming, daydreaming and fantasising are modes of existence that are generally considered as secondary ways of gathering information and being in the world (Giorgi, 2003; Person, 2003). In contrast to rational conscious thinking and knowledge modes, they are often ignored as legitimate in everyday existence and at the most extreme, medicated to remove. However, Pepperell (2003) contends, all questions of meaning, perception and sense are related to the aesthetic. Hallucinogenic drugs, comas, sensory deprivation, mind control techniques, dreams, psychological and physical illnesses, may all produce altered states of consciousness. Similar to the artwork created by people with an experience of mental ill-health, there has been little interest in trying to understand their function and their relation to wellbeing or mental health, or the implications of these experiences in the world in which they exist (Bentall, 2003; Phillips & Morley, 2003). Kusama and Barton are two artists who discussed the role of hallucinations in artmaking. Hallucinations are seen on a spectrum of artistic existence not as a defining, diagnostic symptom. Without romanticising the experience of having hallucinations, for as Judy said “they can be fantastic fodder for creative output but way too frightening to want to continue to have”, such events are worthy of deeper consideration in the context of creativity and wellbeing.

Dreams and imagination. In this research Margaret, Alice, Artemisia, Judy, Joy and Janis discussed a relation between dreams and artmaking; as an apparatus for ‘working things out’, dreams incorporated in artworks, and artmaking where a hand-mind connection was ‘like watching a dream being painted before me’. However, several women mentioned being wary of discussing how they incorporated their dreamworld into art making practice as, similar to when Margaret and Alice talk about their found-art installations, this could be construed as ‘mad’ talk, not contemporary art practice.

On a continuum of wakeful and sleep behaviour, it is necessary to consider that time is a human construction which attempts to capture the idea of movement in space; it is not fixed and not as stable as we imagine. Is artmaking a means of stepping

outside of constructed time to move across and through the time space axis, expanding the past-present-future triad to encompass then, now, when, here, there and Braidotti's future *As If?* Or, as Phillips and Morley (2003) ask, is the dream the space where artists experiment with the boundaries between perception and imagination? What about daydreaming as a weaving in and out of fantasies, or as the women in this research said about artmaking, altered time, altered space, meditation, like a drug?

In *Dream, imagination and existence*, Foucault (1954/1993, pp. 31-78) sought to enunciate fundamental features of human existence, not in perception, but in the dream, arguing that it is impossible to understand the nature of imagination without considering the dream. The imaginary is a dimension of the spectrum of existence and experience. "Man has known, since antiquity, that in dreams he encounters what he is and what he will be, what he has done and what he is going to do, discovering there the knot that ties his freedom to the necessity of the world" (p. 47).

Foucault ponders on what does an image exist? Is it on a situation that exists, or has existed, or will exist? Williams (1993) argues that unlike the Freudian dream in psychoanalytic theory, which concentrates on events that have happened in the past and earlier repressed wishes as causes of dreams, Foucault's theory is far more complex and does not ignore temporality. Similarly for artwork that is analysed to reveal something of the experience of mental illness, by its nature this must assume that the artist is expressing what has been, what it has felt like, to have mental illness. It does not conceive of the act of expression containing that which may be and has no observance of spatiality or temporality and does not open up possibilities for what one may make or become. According to Foucault, the dream is not an oddity but a regular feature of existence and it recognises the temporality of existence. "The dream is all at once an effect of the past, an occurrence in the present and an anticipation of the future" (Williams, p. 23) – and as Braidotti would say, a playing with the space time axis; an engagement which artmaking can also facilitate.

On this line from near space to far space we will encounter a specific form of expression: there, existence knows the dawn of triumphal departures, voyages and circumnavigations, dazzling discoveries, the siege of towns, the mesh of exile, the stubborn return, the bitterness of coming back to things unchanged and aged, the whole course of that Odyssey of existence; on those 'great cloths woven of the dreamed and the real,' epic expression takes shape as a basic structure of the expressive act. (Foucault, 1954/1993 p. 63)

Foucault begins to elucidate why we may not be able to explain the word art, why we may not yet be able to explain why artistic expression is so integral to the existence of some, perhaps all of us, and why we might require a modicum of space to

create – not as a luxury but as a facet of human existence. Why, for some women in this study, artistic expression was far more than a career, a hobby, a talent – as evidenced by statements such as *It is who I am, It is what I do, I cannot survive without painting*. Foucault's expansion of the idea of expression and human existence is a theory which incorporates many ways of being.

This concept of expression on an axis of movement and coordinates, shimmers, and leads harmoniously back to theorists such as Barad and Braidotti where, with the uncertainty and indeterminacy in their work, there is also space that is pulsating with possibilities and a sense of hope. Morley (2003) conceptualises mania as involving the spilling of the imaginary into the real and depression as a collapse of the imaginary so that there is no reach into the future – no possibilities or hope – the present desolate and the future as only a repetition of the past. A realm of imaginative possibilities in the act of artmaking opens up the future again with the space to imagine alternatives. Without imagination, says Morley “the world is without colour, is flat and has no depth, is tasteless, space feels empty and time slows down” (p. 103). Church (2003) surmises, that “the crucial role of imagination then, is to present a world of possibilities” (p. 184). Barad's idea of every meeting being important and time folded in and on itself offers space for the imagination to open up possibilities and cast its line ahead to see what might happen – horizons of hope. Living becomes not only about what you have done or what you are doing, but what you might do, or as many of the women in this research explained, ‘I might have a go at that’. Where a diagnosis of mental ill-health has the potential to swamp life options, many of the women in this research reported the power of artmaking to open up and expand ways of seeing and being in the world.

Being an Artist: ‘It's a bit of a gamble’ (Ruby, 2007)

From the point of view of one who creates, everything is a gamble, a leap into the unknown...Each day I learned anew what an inscrutable, ambition filled, human struggle it is to paint, to create. (Kusama, 2011, p. 37)

What are artists doing when they take up this gamble or leap of faith to become an artist? This brings us back to the practice or the doing of artmaking and artworks. If creativity and artmaking are not representative of objects in the world and equally not representative of some hidden state of the mind of the artists or the manifestation of an illness possessed by the artist, what do they involve? A diffractive methodology has questioned the nature of an independent self-contained existence and individuals emerge as part of entangled intra-relations of time, space, matter and meaning, which come into existence and are iterative as they are being reconfigured by each and every intra-action, each and every brush stroke and stitch. Emergence is never a once and for all – you cannot just be – as you are always becoming (Barad, 2007), “we have to

meet the universe halfway...all real living is meeting. And each meeting matters” (p. 353).

According to Barad's agential cuts, Colebrook (2008) ponders the process of artmaking and concludes that a painting cannot be created or a sculpture moulded or a novel written again and it could not have been created at any other junction. Every artwork is unique, as is every artmaking practice. As de Beauvoir maintained, you can never go back and chose a different path. You are already changed by every action, you cannot go back and paint the same painting and no one else can paint that painting because it has come into being via intra-actions and the future is radically open at every turn. “Agency never ends; it can never ‘run out’” (Barad, 2007, p. 177). Grosz describes it as,

‘The smile of oil’ is the potential an oil painting has to represent joy and not just to represent a figure or a narrative or a story. Paint has within it not just colour qualities but also emotional qualities. I can't do it. I'm not an artist. Only a certain skilled person, an artist, can make materiality yield joy...So art is the extraction from this materiality of a sensation whose potential in that materiality has never been seen, heard, felt as such before. (McDonald, & Rothberg, 2006, pp. 15-16)

Remembering that, for Barad, the artist does not exist in a relation of absolute exteriority to the natural world – there is no such exterior observation point; the knowing, conscious, self-aware, self-contained, independent rational artist that comes to a project fully formed is dissolved by quantum physics. And with agential realism, the artist and the artwork are differentially constituted through specific intra-actions. In other words, the methods, techniques or practices we use in research or artistic practices are part of the intra-actions which create the knowledge which is always becoming – not fixed. So if science describes not the physical world but our knowledge of the physical world, then art likewise does not depict the world but our knowledge of the world. Artworks “...are not (more or less faithful) pictures of what is, but productive evocations, provocations and generative material articulations or reconfigurings of what is and what is possible. (Barad, 2007, p. 389)

The nomadic artist. But what sort of subject-artist are we talking about that is poised at the easel engaging in the process of artmaking?

...the subject...is an assemblage of forces or flows, intensities and passions that solidify in space and consolidate in time with the singular configuration commonly known as an “individual” self (Braidotti, 2011, p. 303)...The rhythm speed sequencing of affects and the selection of forces are the process of

becoming...A figuration is a living map, a transformative account of the self – it is no metaphor. (p. 14)

Nomadic theory imbues thinking with movement and mobility via a variety of locations so that thinking and creativity become structurally nomadic – change and motion rather than stability. This builds upon what I have been exploring above as layered thinking and engages the notion of entanglement more effectively, being concerned with the “embodiment of the mind and the embrainment of the body” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 221) and thus moving away from rational consciousness to perceptions, imaginings and practices. Braidotti works with an ontological force of becoming where all thinking becomes an affirmative activity and opens up horizons of hope. “The motions and passions of the cognitive, perceptive and affective faculties engender creative leaps of the imagination that animate the mind, illuminate the senses and connect transversally well beyond the frame of the individual self” (p. 3). The vision of the subject is nonlinear, non-unitary and completely relational, and to return to de Beauvoir, it is contingent, being in a world with multiple others (not just humans) within multilayered social structures. Braidotti’s affirmative nomadic theory does not lose touch with the immediate social cultural and material conditions of lived experience and imagination is vital for producing horizons of hope. Thus the structures (barriers and benefits) which operate around women and establishing an artistic practice are not ignored.

Braidotti maintains that to be a subject is also to be framed so that to be active, intensive and nomadic does not mean limitless. The subject does have to live at the intersection of external relational forces – *a life force that intersects with all that moves and exists*. “The individual neither possesses nor controls such a force but being a subject means partaking in a striving without an agent in control. A subject can’t have an adequate understanding of him/herself if they are inward looking as it fails to acknowledge the interconnectedness forever in motion...” (p. 309). The mind as a sensor helps to prompt understanding by choosing and discerning those forces that increase its power of acting – thinking through the body – the thinking body, or as Janis said, “my whole body thinks.” So, for Braidotti, the nomadic subject pursues and actively creates the kind of encounters that are likely to increase its becomings and avoid those that decrease its potential – “unfolding out and enfolding in – the subject in process” (p. 309). This is about becoming what one is capable of and attracted to and capable of becoming – a *freedom to*, as Grosz would say.

Braidotti’s idea of flow. Braidotti (2011) says that during the artistic process “a seemingly absent minded floating attention or a fluid sensibility...that is central to the creative process” (p. 152) is activated. The creative process assesses a corollary of

demands, like when “the sunlight turns dust to glitter” or when “I run my fingers over rough bark” (Lowery Collins, 1992, p. 18) or, as Braidotti (2011) observes, the curve of the wind just before the rain falls. In these moments of floating awareness... ‘life’ rushes into the sensorial/perceptive apparatus with vigour... There is an “onrush of data, information and affectivity” (p. 152). Perhaps as Braidotti muses, what Deleuze calls the folding in and out of perception – Barad may also like this description. The person both receives and recomposes themselves around this onrush. But Braidotti (2011) asks, how is one not overwhelmed by this onrush? Becoming is about emptying out the self and opening up to the potential encounters with the outside – a floating awareness where rational control loses its hold. To sustain the impact of the onrush of the outside, one needs to ‘hold it’, but this does not happen via a dialectically driven consciousness, rather via “an affective, depersonalised, highly receptive subject...” As Virginia Woolf put it: “I am rooted, but I flow” (Woolf, 1977, cited in Braidotti, 2011, p. 152).

...the quest for creativity is a form of experimenting with the immersion of sensibilities in the field of forces – music, colour, sound, light, speed, temperature, intensity... painters make visible forces that previously were not” (p. 153). Artistic genres coexist along a continuum and are navigational apparatus to negotiate a set of material coordinates and then assemble and compose a transformation of the affects and forces involved – this is what Braidotti calls the process of becoming and could also encapsulate the process of artmaking. Imagination is crucial to the process of becoming as it is responsible for opening up virtual spaces of possibility and it is always collective. Nomadic subjects are then collective assemblages, dynamic but framed, that organise time and space around them. Being and becoming confront one another constantly. Braidotti insists that this is not chaos but is generative and that the processes of becoming are relational, external and collective. Art is enlisted in the project of experimenting with transformations, and the artist is “a complex multiplicity, a factor of empowerment of potentia, that is to say, multiplier of virtual possibilities through the rigorous application of the rules of composition of assemblages. (Braidotti, 2011, p. 154)

As if. For Braidotti (2011), nomadic memory is a nonlinear notion of time that zigzags along coalitions of a dynamic subject in becoming and is closely related to imagination. Braidotti thinks of nomadic remembering as not being concerned about what I was like before – but about differing from myself and embracing a want to change actively. Viewing the self as a constant process of transformation means to re-invent yourself continually as you have changed with every meeting and as Barad says every meeting matters. Braidotti has called this ‘as if’ or future perfect – you will have changed, we will have been free – a process of creative imaginings and remembering

in the future, "...the tense of a virtual sense of potential" (p. 154). A sense of potential is an orientation that may seem attractive to women labelled with a static diagnostic category that has often come to define their lives, and artmaking becomes one way to contest these definitions.

Braidotti's (2011) nomadic subject is a becoming 'I' and in a permanent process of flux, outward bound and living with flows and shifts, "...becoming is a constant erasure and recomposing of the boundaries between self and others" (p. 33). Braidotti argues that the fundamental question is not who we are but what we are capable of becoming, and in a collective sense, what Lloyd and Gatens call collective imaginings, where there is a shared desire for transformations as a collaborative effort and, as Grosz might ask, what we are capable of making? "...a qualitative leap towards a more focussed, more precise, more accurate perception of one's own potentia, which is one's capacity to 'take in' the world, to encounter it, to go towards it" (p. 234) – or meet the universe halfway. This is the creative capacity to be able to render the more striking lines, forces or affective charges. "Creativity is a nomadic process because it actively displaces the dominant formations of identity. Artists can find a creative vision to create possible futures – visions that are untapped – and actualise them. Hope is dreaming up and imagining different futures" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 235).

This is a new feminist materialism combining critique with creativity. The nomadic artistic subject is not living a life of splendid isolation or confined to an attic but is outward looking, engaged, and "bound ethically to the multiple and external others." A "being in *this* together" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 53). And what might that look like in practice?

Enacting as *if*: Transformative Frameworks for Supporting Artmaking

Patti Smith, "...didn't feel for Warhol the way Robert did. His work reflected a culture I wanted to avoid. I hated the soup and felt little for the can. I preferred an artist who transformed his time, not mirrored it" (2010, p. 139).

Smith is more interested in art that transforms and this research has also been focused on artmaking opportunities that have the potential to transform life rather than continue to mirror the existing status quo. The debate regarding whether art is inherently beneficial or art is a tool to achieve a variety of benefits is ongoing, and this research indicates that it doesn't need to be an either/or scenario, but that programs need to be clear about the service they are providing. One way to clearly distinguish transformative art, via skills-based art practice, from art therapy is to work from a framework of cultural rights – artmaking and creativity as essential to human life and artmaking – starting young, dissolving the either/or science versus art paradigm in

secondary and tertiary education, and assessing and providing opportunities and conditions that are conducive to artmaking across the lifespan.

Thiele and Marsden (2008) advocate a community cultural development framework as the best means of encouraging artists to be active, directive, self-determining and empowered, where they have the potential to transfer such skills to experiences of life beyond the arts program. Such a framework is based on fostering the following:

- A sense of possibility: where people had the space to consider what life may offer differently – considering different paths and how to walk them.
- A sense of animation: or the right and responsibilities to be active culturally, socially, personally and politically.
- Critical engagement: encouraging a culture of debate and analysis of social and cultural processes.
- Using imagination is central to innovation and creativity and “is directly related to purpose, fulfilment and pleasure in life” (p. 96).

Such artmaking flourishes from the ‘what if?’, ‘what about?’, ‘we could try this’, ‘let’s try’? Or a realm of possibilities which, as Thiele and Marsden (2008) argue, all indicate a commitment to future scenarios. This is consistent with hope and a material feminist framework. *Art as transformer*, via a community cultural development framework, encapsulates a broader role for artmaking in people’s lives, as women in this study have attested.

Art Just Is/“I Just Do” (Ola, 2007)

Perhaps then, artists experiment and work with what Barad and Foucault were alluding to earlier; the axis of time-space-matter, or what Braidotti calls the material coordinates of forces and affects. Perhaps this is what we all feel traces of when daydreaming, fantasising, dreaming, taking drugs or hallucinating, although we do not all enact these experiments/ideas via the practice of artmaking. This and that, here and now, don’t pre-exist what happens, but come alive with each meeting. The world and its possibilities for becoming are remade with each moment (Barad, 2007). The artist is creating the conditions of possibilities of the future by looking for what is not contained in the present conditions. Transformation involves an ontology of process – affects of relations, and therefore a creative process, a praxis, an activity – which simply needs to be enacted - *Just do it* (Braidotti, 2011, p. 362).

Every act of expression is to be understood on the basis of its primary directions. It does not produce these ex nihilo, but locates itself on their trajectory, which makes it possible, as from the points of a curve, to rediscover

the whole, completed movement. To this extent, there can be an anthology of art which would in no way become psychological reductivism. One would not refer expressive structures to unconscious motivations, but reinstate them the whole length of that line along which human freedom moves. (Foucault, 1954/1993, p. 63)

Thus we have the outward looking nomadic artistic subject, embracing the idea of becoming via a constant state of flux. An artist who is dynamic, multilayered and enmeshed in many communities and encounters, where there are possibilities to reinvent oneself at every cut, turn and meeting. Life is pulsating with potential or horizons of possibilities with a degree of freedom to create, and as Braidotti so aptly remarks, hope is imagining different futures. Making art enacts the *as if*.

Art creates then, according to Grosz (2008), a “multiplicity of sensations” (p. 18)...and is the “art of affect more than representation, a system of dynamized and impacting forces” (p. 3)...that which intensifies and affects most viscerally (and has a) “capacity to enlarge the universe by enabling its potential to be otherwise...” (p. 24). Braidotti thinks this is just what Woolf achieves in her writing, “...Woolf’s texts enact a flow of positions, a crossing of boundaries, and an overflowing into a plenitude of affects where life is asserted to its highest degrees. She is an intensive multiplier of affects” (2011, p. 155).

Grosz believes this is why art is found across all cultures and times, as “it is the most vital and direct form of impact on and through the body...a link with forces it cannot otherwise perceive and act upon” (2008, p. 23). This brings us back to why this thesis has sought to find a way to accommodate the corporeal with the spatial, temporal and relational, and open the space to contemplate any other dimensions that are operationalised by the act of doing artmaking.

Cosmological imponderables – among the most obvious, the forces of temporality, gravity, magnetism – equally the objects of scientific, philosophical, and artistic exploration, are among the invisible, unheard, imperceptible forces of the earth, forces beyond the control of life that animate and extend life beyond itself. Art engenders becomings, not imaginative becomings – the elaboration of images and narratives in which a subject might recognise itself, not self-representations, narratives, confessions, testimonies of what is and has been – but material becomings, in which these imponderable universal forces touch and become enveloped in life, in which life folds over itself to embrace contact with materiality, in which each exchanges some elements or particles with the other to become more and other...Art is the opening up of the universe to becoming-other...(Grosz, 2008, p. 23)

When Janis grasps her paintbrush, Frances her needle, and Ola her chisel and stands contemplating the obtuse planes of the unmarked besser block in front of her, what happens next (when) is not divorced from what has happened before (then) or now (here) there is an idea and an action, an entanglement of thinking and doing – matter and meaning. When Norah switches on her radio at 9am and turns around to switch it off again at 9pm, the day did not disappear, clock time may have dissolved, but rather than an escape from life, this is an intense engagement with the rhythms, forces, affects that are enacted via artmaking. The artistic orientation is vibrating with choices on a vast temporal and spatial spectrum; not all possibilities are available, but enough to make Ruby's heart sing and Margaret an alchemist; Alice intoxicated. Artemisia is painting over an old work that showed her where she was then, but has no need for now. Judy is out sourcing recycled materials for her practice and Joy is leafing through her collection of works to organise a retrospective exhibition. It is not always like this. Sometimes it is about concentrating on gaining new artistic skills, or more mundane with a struggle to devise ideas or enact them. Sometimes focus is lost by interruptions from housemates, children, having to go to paid work or an experience of mental ill-health gets in the way of artmaking. But, for a variety of reasons, according to the women in this research, the doing, the act of artmaking, is nourishing and sustaining and often vital to 'who I am'.

When Canberra-based astrophysicist Brian Schmidt shared the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics for the discovery that the universe is accelerating in its expansion (The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2011), magnetism overturned gravity as the dominant force in the universe and it is now thought that dark energy and dark matter comprise the majority of the universe (not black holes and vacuums). Perhaps artists weren't as amazed by this discovery as much as the scientific world was, for isn't that something like what women have been saying all along, being attuned to 'energies', connections with the cosmos?

Niki de Saint Phalle seemingly already articulates much of what the theorists above have explored. "There is a natural block between the conscious and the unconscious and it seems to have disappeared. What is inner is outer and what is outer is inner. Maybe that's what being an artist is about. Boundary confusions: Something just a little bit off. Antennas that are normally shut..." (1999, p. 121).

Chapter 14: Conclusion: Artmaking Does Matter

During the course of this research in the first decades of the 21st century, there have been significant cultural and technological shifts. Australia has had its first female Prime Minister and Governor General. Del Kathryn Barton, a woman who has spoken openly about her struggles with mental health issues, won the Archibald prize in 2008, becoming only the seventh woman to win the prize in its 90 year history. However, despite such shifts, it appears that many of the barriers encountered to envisage, establish and sustain an art practice as a woman remain. Barton won this prestigious prize again in 2013 – a stellar achievement – even if it was “a factor of luck” as Steven Lowy, the chairman of the Art Gallery of NSW board of Trustees, explained the decision to award Barton the prize for a second time. Announcing the award winner, Lowy commented on the portrait of actor Hugo Weaving, “Overall, it’s an amazing photo - - excuse me, an amazing painting” (Taylor, 2013, p. 6). Should Barton believe her exceptional artistic talents have been duly recognised or was she merely lucky?

There has also been a significant increase in interest in the relationship between the Arts and Health in the United Kingdom and locally with, for instance, VicHealth (2003) endorsing the engagement in community based arts and the creative process as a health initiative. Equally, arts as therapy has gained momentum in the suite of ways art can be used as a tool for health agendas. Dr Cunningham Dax died in 2008 at the age of 99 years, ending a long career with an interest in what he called ‘psychiatric art,’ and Margaret Olley died aged 88 in 2011. As an artist who has won major prizes, been awarded a Companion of the Order of Australia and is represented in major state and national galleries, her obituary in *The Age* (26th July, 2011) began “Margaret Olley first drew attention as the subject of William Dobell’s Archibald Prize-winning portrait in 1948...” In 2011, Margaret Olley was again the subject of the winning Archibald portrait painted by Ben Quilty, and she commented at the award ceremony that she had been bookended. Arguably she was thus farewelled as a subject of paintings in what is Australia’s most well-known art prize arena, leaving her own considerable achievements sidelined.

But Margaret has bookended this project too, as she began painting as an artist in the 1950s at the time when art was first introduced to psychiatric institutions in Victoria, and her life as an artist spans the time examined in this thesis – the 1950s to the present. However (like the scope of this thesis), it was not art as tool that Margaret’s life of artmaking encapsulates, but art as transformative matrix. In the tribute to Margaret Olley on the ABC, two sentences cement the tone of this research project. The reporter Scott Bevan (2011) observed “she was more than someone who

painted for a living. Margaret Olley's life was art." In historical footage, Margaret says, "my life and my paintings are one and the same thing".

It was not my intention to answer the question *What does art do* for there is no definitive answer to this, just as there is no consensus on what art is. It was my intention to begin the conversation, although it could be argued that Csikszentmihalyi began this discussion several decades ago. However, he did not specifically consider women's nuanced, and at the same time collective and situated, experiences of artmaking and becoming an artist. This research has not sought to identify individual traits or intra-psychic processes, otherwise known as the determinants of creativity, but consistent with an entangled diffractive approach has sought to better understand a life of making where aspects of creativity are not separable: mind and body, consciousness and unconsciousness, awake, daydreaming and asleep, micro to macro – the here to there and now to then are all material for the artistic grist.

I have met an incredible range of people and viewed a vast spectrum of visual art pieces created with many mediums on both expected and surprising surfaces – besser block sculpture, Indian ink silk prayer flags, optical art, ephemeral tissue paper prints, to an installation of empty psychiatric drug packages, bold red lipstick on card and etchings in wardrobe doors. Work that was political, personal, beautiful and shocking: work that was technically proficient, other that was naïve or colourful or drab and incomplete, bold, hesitant, functional and downright silly. This dazzling array is testament to women's persistence and insistence to make art in sometimes dire circumstances, materially, structurally and psychically. It is also indicative of the vast array of meanings that artmaking can play in women's lives.

Whilst this research has confirmed many of the previous findings regarding artmaking, such as the benefits of making art in groups and the notion of altered time or flow, it has also moved beyond such proclamations and showcased a myriad of potential meanings and functions of artmaking for the maker/artist. Freeland (2001), notes works of art and practices of artmaking are so varied across the world it is difficult to make definitive comments, although for many life and art are interwoven (Dissanayake, 1998). Art and artmaking has traditionally been integral to health and wellbeing in indigenous cultures of Australia and associated with sense of place and ritual (Clifford & Kaspari, 2003). Consider Australian artist Kim Mahood (2009) as she meets the universe halfway:

I work in the slippage between ways of reading country...It's a curious process, having your mind colonised incrementally by a different way of seeing. I've been negotiating that particular process for many years now, looking for alternative ways to create the shimmer of energy, the compound of light and heat and

repetition and time-compacted stories that illuminates the desert, while staying true to the non-Indigenous traditions of painting and mapping. The map-making exercises have produced the simple iconographic device of dotting the grid, and I can't improve on it as a means of describing the conceptual conundrum in which I find myself. I like the reversals it implies, the organising structures of the settler culture infiltrated by the embedded and embodied aesthetics of the first people. This is the point where something genuinely creative happens, something without precedent because the conditions for it haven't existed until now. (para. 16)

It appears that many of the women in this research may regard artmaking in ways akin to this. I hope that this thesis has done justice to these testimonials and that this research, about the role and meaning of artmaking in women's lives, will provoke further attention, both in practice and research, to the artistic needs of a greater diversity of women; as Ruby said, to explore *the things that make your heart sing*.

What was striking about this research were the overlaps and indeed patterns of difference that were evident between and across the women who participated in the research who had all had an experience of mental ill-health, and the thoughts of women in the published sources I cobbled together from various sources. Lest it be said that women's thoughts on *what art does* are an artefact of mental illness, it would appear highly unlikely that this particular situation accounted for the passion in which art was embraced as a vital dimension of existence from many of the women who appear in this thesis, with or without an experience of mental ill-health. Perhaps what can be said is having an experience of mental ill-health was one of many barriers that women encountered when imagining, establishing and sustaining an art practice. Being thwarted in maintaining an art practice had serious ramifications for many women, including *making me sick*. *What happens if I can't do, can't make*, is currently under researched and under resourced in Australia and the consequences of an artistic life thwarted appear to be dire for many women in this research.

The Australia Council (Lally & Miller, 2012) *Report on Women in Theatre* confirms that there are indeed still structural barriers to women achieving creative practice and particularly creative leadership positions. Similarly, a review of census data informs that financial inequities for women artists in Australia remain steadfastly intact.

...even after accounting for differences in part-time/full-time participation rates, hours worked, and so on. The earnings gap is particularly acute for women artists...The *bleak* picture of the financial circumstances of women professional artists is further reinforced by a consideration of the distribution of incomes...It

can be seen that in all cases there is a greater proportion of women than men in the lowest income category. (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, pp. 74-75)

We know from studies that factors such as having parents who are supportive and encouraging of artistic endeavours from an early age, with the same replicated in the school environment, can help to establish a life of creating. However, we also know that throughout Western history, women have been excluded from art academies, training, apprenticeships (Borzello and Ledwidge, 1986) and, more recently, gallery representation, but more insidiously they have been making art or trying to make art in conditions hostile to an art practice – lack of uninterrupted time spans, lack of dedicated artmaking spaces, and lack of support that enables the artist to circumscribe traditional female roles, for example the right to paint through dinnertime. Or, as Drusilla Modjeska (2001) asks, who will make the lunch for the woman artist busy at her easel? And it is not just individual support that is lacking, but also institutional support. The advent of the Stella award for women's literature is a timely reminder that women in the arts in Australia still require support to pursue their creative lives.

In a world where assessment and intervention drive funding imperatives, it would also seem important that psychologists and other health care professionals explore an extra dimension in women's lives – the creative dimension. What does this mean to women; are they involved in artmaking and if so, are the conditions in which they exist, or their circumstances, conducive to a life of making? If this creative dimension is ignored, suppressed or thwarted, this research suggests that it may be perilous to wellbeing and living an authentic life, a life that has possibilities – horizons of hope.

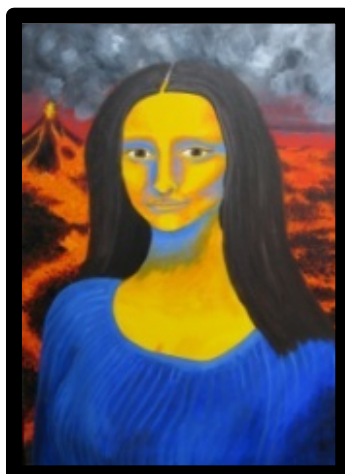
Women as artists have been articulating the central role of artmaking in their lives for many years. However, their words have not been heeded. This research is a call to take note of the importance of artmaking in women's lives and lobby for supports to live a creative life – *keep the antennas open*. It is not necessary to evaluate whether what is created is good, bad, or mad art; it is necessary to evaluate, then create and sustain conditions which are conducive to a life of making.

A diffractive methodology to underlie such evaluations and the design of future opportunities for artmaking and art programs is enunciated in this thesis. This methodology draws upon a multitude of theories and theorists that position life and artmaking, mind body connections, thinking and doing, as entangled. The process of artmaking is viewed, sometimes but not always, as a potentially transformative act with multiple meanings that vary not only with each maker but also at every meeting or agential cut within an artistic practice.

Furthermore, just because an artist chooses to portray the personal does not mean the process or the artwork should be denied artistic status or merit and become a therapeutic artefact or isolated hobby. Creativity and artmaking are not representative of some hidden state in the mind of the artist, for Braidotti's methodology in nomadic theory imbues thinking with mobility and creativity becomes structurally nomadic. It is important to acknowledge the distinction between viewing artworks as being an *expression of* and not always as *expressive of*. The nomadic artist requires a world where there is assessment of ethical practices and material conditions, about what constitutes conditions which are conducive to opening up horizons of hope, vibrating with possibilities and a contingent space to create. In favourable conditions, the artist having been embodied, now may be emboldened to claim *this is what I see, this is what I see*. And as Georgia O'Keeffe said, the capacity to "accept as true my own thinking" (1976, p. 1).

Or as Janet Frame observed, artists "...must stand on the rock of herself and her judgment or be swept away by the tide or sink in the quaking earth: there must be an inviolate place where the choices and decisions, however imperfect, are the writer's own, where the decision must be as individual and solitary as birth or death" (1985, p. 124).

To conclude this thesis, I will return to the Dinner Party before the women return to their respective studios, art classes, community projects and kitchen tables. Perhaps ideas generated by the women, such as *drop in art kiosks* scattered around the community, are transformative projects that begin to fulfil conditions conducive to a life of making. If artmaking is indeed a vehicle to imagining and enacting possibilities - 'I can' - then it is important that women, both with and without an experience of mental ill-health, are afforded the freedom to engage with opportunities to imagine different futures, unharnessed from the albatross of diagnostic categories for self and for art that are set for perpetuity by current modes of thinking and thereby services available – as Janet Frame and Elizabeth Grosz may advocate, an inviolate space with a sense of freedom *to*.

Figure 6. Returning to the Dinner Party: Advice to Other Women

Sara Wilson, *Mona Lisa*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm. Collection of the artist

Art is the most important human activity – Why? Because, that which is not imagined remains unclear to us – cloudy and unidentified Women have been defined in part through art but we have not created most of the art that has defined us. (Judy Chicago (1998) - Speech notes from the Women's Dinner, Wednesday, 20th January, 1988, Melbourne Exhibition Building, p. 5)

Having visited the exhibition, discussed the role and meanings of artmaking, invited others to join the Dinner Party and talk about artmaking, 32 women now return to the table to offer some thoughts to others about a life of making.

Sally: "So just finally, what would you say to women who were considering putting creativity in their lives or allowing themselves to be creative?"

Give it a go/Just do it.

"I'd say give it a go," said Pamela, "It's worth it. It's very empowering to be able to do it. ...I just found it really good. It really boosted my self-esteem."

"So I feel," said Angel, "it could become very beneficial to a lot of people with mental health problems. Go for it. Give it your best shot. And that it's a good way of clearing your mind - - is doing artwork."

"Oh, I'd say go for it," said Claudia, "If you have any urge to do it I'd say there's a lot to gain from it...- - and I think the effort and the time is well worth it".

"Just try it," said Anna, "I mean start whatever you can and don't feel that there is any right or wrong way or that I can't do it, because anybody can do it. If I can do it, anybody can do it. Forget about your low self-esteem because no one is going to judge you on that....Just to do what you can without being too self-critical - - be yourself and visualise it - - and try to get it finished (laughs)."

"I've found with mental health," said Meagan, "in the act of doing something is - - your wellbeing is your way of - - even when you are not well, if you do something and

you are happy with what you have done - - not even happy with what you have done, but like in the process of doing something is the benefit. Even if you don't feel like it, in the process of doing something is the healing..."

"Yeah," said Mary "So for someone else you might say to them, 'If you are feeling a certain way or whatever or something's happened to you or past experiences - - it's just to put it into the works and you will be surprised at what comes out....Just get that creativity, the ambition, the drive, the enthusiasm."

"Oh, do it." said Chess. "Give 'em something to think about and concentrate and work out and learn and - - it's fun. Muck around."

"Oh, I'd say, 'Go for it, absolutely, I think it's fabulous'" said Ruby. "If you never do it, you will always wish that you have...So, yeah, it's not easy and it's not a typical path...But you should still do it."

"Oh, definitely do it," said Judy. "It's such a good outlet. It's like - - you can use it as a diary; you can use it as an outlet. You can just have a go at it for fun. Its, yeah - - I think it should be something that most women do actually."

You can *Do* creative/you can.

"You can DO Creative" said Tina. "It doesn't have to be art. I mean some women are good at baking; some women are good at cooking. Just do something that you like doing and if it's relaxing - - and think of creativity in a broader sense - - you know you don't have to be a good painter. But I joined a group because when you are under someone it's good. It helps you."

"Oh, probably - -," said Yvette "Take your time and work out what you want to do, and basically you can do it. Yeah - - I always thought I couldn't do it and now I'm doing bits and pieces I never thought I would."

"Go for it" said Jane "because it keeps your brain going and...it gives you confidence and you make friends and you might have a hidden talent there sometimes that you don't know you've got. You know sometimes we don't know we can *do*, until we have a go."

"But yeah it's interesting," said Ola. "But I think if you've got enough - - alright you mightn't be a whiz bang master at everything, but a lot of people, if they gave it a go and kept trying at it and just enjoying it, you know, it's like anything - - the more you do it, the better you get. I think a lot of people sell themselves short when it comes to art."

Never give up.

"To keep on trying and just keep on trying" said Lesley "that's what you have to do. If you've got that creative thing inside, take the opportunity to get it out and it's

something you give - - once you do it on paper it is something you can give to other people...”

“Even if it’s just putting a jigsaw together” said Mahdi. “- - go ahead and put it together and if that then inspires you to then draw a landscape...then go ahead - - and progress and keep on going until you reach a point of satisfaction.”

“If you actually put your mind to it and have a go, I think, they’d actually be able to do it”, says Taylor “I’d say get in and have a go and if you don’t succeed at first, to keep trying and one day you’ll be able to do it if you keep at it.”

“I would say, give yourself permission” said Frances, “give yourself time and don’t think that what you are creating is silly or that you didn’t show anybody – and understand that you’re putting so much of yourself into that piece and whether your painting or - -...and if you want to do stitching, just do what comes: just let it happen and don’t give up.”

“Never give up. You might put it down for a while, but you’ll go back to it. But don’t give up, never give up because there a little niche for each one of us.”

It’s good for you.

“It really is helpful and it’s good for you” said Kezia. “Yeah, I’d encourage them to do it: Art or craft, whatever they like. I find it’s good for your mental health.”

“I’d say to them, well it’s helped me and just sort of keeping - - giving you something to think about” said Jessica. “They say you should have something to think about - - something to do - - someone to love - - and something to look forward to.”

“I think it would be a positive thing,” said Elizabeth “and sort of encourage them to do that as a way of...being creative...”

“I think it’s worthwhile, yes,” said Madonna.

“I’d encourage it because it’s an achievement, I guess” said Jacqueline. “It’s good to do it and it’s a good experience.”

“It will bring you confidence and it makes you feel better,” said Lisa “and...you forget about your problems.”

“Oh, I think it’s fantastic,” said Norah. “I don’t think it matters really what it is. Whether it’s music - - it’s like a meditation.”

Find your own passion.

“Find your own way,” said Margaret. “Don’t buy into the sense of systems, you know that - - I think the most important thing is how you feel about it and - - the connection that you’re getting from it - - It’s not about how popular you are or how much you sell or - -...”

“Well you’ve just got to find - - have some idea of an interest and some help - - you’ve got to have help to develop that interest,” said Josie.

"I tried sculpture,' said Inge "and I enjoyed it but it was not the thing for me. You have to find the right thing for you."

"Well, I'd just like to encourage women to do creative things," said Alice "- - but I think it's more about valuing creativity that women already do express in their life - - and seeing that as creativity and seeing that as an important role - -"

"So what would I say to others?" said Artemisia, "One thing that I heard, that quite stuck out for me...you never know what you will need...Yeah, a simple thing, like doing a humanities course, learning a language; you don't know when you will need it...Yeah, so if we're not doing the art, who else will."

"You have to have one thing...Find your own passion" said Norah.

"To me," said Janis, "it's as necessary to health as physical exercise is promoted to be. I'd like there to be painting dens around the place, where people can just drop in and paint when they need to, like gyms and bars and cafes, but not."

Artemisia (2007)

“Well, it wasn’t the best time of my life,
When I wasn’t doing art
I don’t feel that
I could ever - -
be apart from art after - -
I don’t think
I could ever do without it.”

References

- Ackerly, B., & True, J. (2010). *Doing feminist research in political and social science*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Adair, E. (2005, February 25). A tincture of madness: Zelda Fitzgerald and modernist art. *Resource Library*. Retrieved from <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa229.htm> (Reprinted from R.W. Norton Art Gallery, Shreveport, Los Angeles).
- Adajian, T. (2008). The definition of art. *The Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy*. Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/art-definition/>
- Akman, D. E., Toner, B. B., Stuckless, N., Ali, A., Emmott, S. D., & Downie, F. (2001). Feminist issues in research methodology: The development of a cognitive scale. *Feminism & Psychology*, 11(2), 209-227.
doi:10.1177/0959353501011002010
- Alaimo, S. (2008). Trans-corporeal feminisms and the ethical space of nature. In: S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 237-264). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Alaimo, S., & Hekman, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Material feminisms*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Alcoff, C. (2000). Phenomenology, Postmodernism and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience. In L. Fisher & L. E. Embree (Eds.), *Feminism and Phenomenology* (pp. 39-56). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishing.
- Alcoff, L. (2005). *Visible Identities: Race, gender, and the self*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ali, A. (2006). Identity as Contested Space: A Canadian Vantage on an Epistemological Challenge. *Feminism & Psychology*, 16(3), 345-349.
doi:10.1177/0959353506067852
- Amabile, T. M. (1990). Within you, without you: The social psychology of creativity and beyond. In M. A. Runco & R. S. Albert (Eds.), *Theories of creativity* (pp. 61-91). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: Update to the social psychology of creativity*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Ambrus, C. (1984). *The ladies' picture show: Sources on a century of Australian women artists*. Sydney, Australia: Hale and Iremonger.
- American Psychiatric Association's Task Force on Research Ethics. (2006). Ethical principles and practices for research involving human participants with mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 57(4), 552-557.

- Ames, K. L. (1994). Outside outsider art. In M. D. Hall & E. W. Metcalf (Eds.), *The artist outsider: Creativity and the boundaries of culture* (pp. 252-272). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Anderson, H. (2009, April 19). The Observer profile - Hilary Mantel: On the path from pain to prizes. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/apr/19/hilary-mantel-man-booker>
- Anderson, J.R. (1978). Arguments concerning representations for mental imagery. *Psychological Review*, 85, 249-277.
- Andreasen, N.C. (2006). *The creative brain: The science of genius*. New York, NY: Plume.
- Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Doing narrative research*. London, England: Sage.
- Appelbaum, P. S. (1998). Missing the boat: Competence and consent in psychiatric research. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 155(11), 1486-1488.
- Appelbaum, P. S. (2006). Decisional capacity of patients with schizophrenia to consent to research: Taking Stock. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 32(1) 22-25.
- Appignanesi, L. (2008). *Mad, bad and sad: A history of women and the mind doctors from 1800 to the present*. London, England: Virago.
- Apple, M. W., Au, W., & Gandin, L. A. (Eds.). (2009). *The Routledge international handbook of critical education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Archer, M. S. (2000). *Being human: The problem of agency*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, R. (2009). Idea of contemporary Australian artist. *Griffith Review. Essentially Creative*, 23. Retrieved from <https://griffithreview.com/editions/essentially-creative/>
- Armstrong, J. (2007, September, 22). Weighting on creativity: Book review – Creation, Gods and origins by Peter Conrad. *The Age*, A2, p. 22.
- Ashead, G. (2005). Re-evaluating confidentiality. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 11, 123-124.
- Astbury, J. (1996). *Crazy for you: The making of women's madness*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Astbury, J. (2008). Women and madness: An elusive conjunction. In S. Northfield (Ed.), *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* [Exhibition catalogue]. (pp. 4-5). Melbourne, Australia: Cunningham Dax Collection.
- Astbury, J., & Cabral, M. (2000). *Women's mental health: An evidence based review*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organisation.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *Profiles of health; Australia 2011-2013* (cat. no. 4338.0). Canberra, Australia: ABS.
- Australian Government. (2011). *National cultural policy discussion paper*. Canberra, Australia: Office for the Arts.
- Australian Government. (2013). *Creative Australia – The national cultural policy*. Canberra, Australia: Office for the Arts.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2012). *Mental health services – in brief* (cat. no. HSE125). Canberra, Australia: AIHW.
- Australian Women's Health Network. (2007). *Women's health: The new national agenda*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Women's Health Network.
- Bailey, B. (1994). *The remarkable lives of 100 women artists (20th century women)*. Avon, MA: Adams Media Corp.
- Baker, J. (2003, July). Don't believe the hype: Young women's experience of male violence in the 'girl power' era. *Women Against Violence: An Australian Feminist Journal*, 14, 27-34. Retrieved from <http://0-search.informit.com.au/library.vu.edu.au/documentSummary;dn=592937818591606;res=IELHEA> ISSN: 1327-5550.
- Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(3), 801–31.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum Physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Barad, K. (2008). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. In S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 120-156). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Barber, K. (Interviewer). (2008a). Louise Weaver in conversation with Kate Barber, online catalogue for *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers* [A Geelong Gallery & NETS Victoria touring exhibition]. Geelong, Australia: Geelong Gallery. Retrieved from http://www.netsvictoria.org/enchanted/pdf/INTERVIEWS-Enchanted_Forest.pdf
- Barber, K. (Interviewer). (2008b). *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers/Interviewee: Jazmina Cininas* [A Geelong Gallery & NETS Victoria touring exhibition]. Geelong, Australia: Geelong Gallery.
- Barbery, M. (2006). *The elegance of the hedgehog*. (A. Anderson, Trans.). Paris, France: Éditions Gallimard.

- Barraket, J. (2005). *Putting people in the picture? The role of the arts in social inclusion*. (Social Policy Working Paper No.4.). Melbourne, Australia: Brotherhood of St. Laurence and The Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne.
- Barrett, E. (2007). Introduction. In C. Barrett & B. Bolt (Eds.), *Practice as research: Approaches to creative arts enquiry* (pp. 1-13). London, England: I B Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Barsalou, L. W. (1999). Perceptual symbol systems. *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 22, 577-660.
- Battersby, C. (1989). *Gender and genius: Towards a feminist aesthetics*. London, England: The Women's Press.
- Beardsley, M. C. (1958). *Aesthetics: Problems in the philosophy of criticism*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Beer, G. (2004). Gillian Beer on the waves. In V. Woolf, *The waves* (pp. xi-xviii). London, England: Vintage. Random House. (Original work published 1931).
- Beevers, D. (1988). Bad mothers. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 1(3), 17.
- Beghetto, R. A. (2005). Does assessment kill creativity. *Educational Forum*, 69, 254-263.
- Beier, U. (Ed.). (1989). *Outsider art in Australia*. Paddington, Australia: Aspect Publications.
- Bentall, R. (2003). *Madness explained*. London, England: Penguin.
- Bergoffen, D. (2008). On female body experience: throwing like a girl and other essays by Iris Marion Young. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 23(3), 218-220.
- Berkman, C. (1991). Frances Burke. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 4(2), 4.
- Bevan, S. (Reporter). (2011, July 27). *Tribute to Margaret Olley* [Television broadcast]. Sydney, Australia: Australian Broadcast Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2011/s3278975.htm>
- Biehl, J., G. (2005). *Vita: Life in a zone of social abandonment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bigwood, C. (1991). Renaturalizing the body (with the help of Merleau-Ponty). *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 6, 54-73. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.1991.tb00255.x
- Biley, F. C., & Galvin K. T. (2007). Lifeworld, the arts and mental health nursing. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 14, 800-807. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2850.2007.01196.x

- Bjarnason, S., & Edgar, D. (2001). Mary Barnes: Gifted artist who documented her struggle with mental illness in paint and print. Obituary. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2001/jul/13/guardianobituaries.books>
- Blackman, B. (Interviewer). (1985, May 15). *Erica McGilchrist interviewed by Barbara Blackman* [Real Media file]. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn2248895>
- Bloch, C. (2000). Flow beyond fluidity and rigidity. *Human Studies*, 23(1), 43-61.
- Block, N. (Ed.). (1981a). *Imagery*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Block, N. (Ed.). (1981b). *Readings in philosophy of psychology* (Vol. 2). London, England: Methuen.
- Boden, M.A. (2004). *The creative mind: myths and mechanisms* (2nd ed.). London, England: Routledge.
- Borzello, F. (2000). *A world of our own: Women as artists*. London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Borzello, F., & Ledwidge, N. (1986). *Women artists: A graphic guide*. London, England: Camden Press.
- Bouchareb, R., & Brehat, J. (Producers), & Dumont, B. (Director). (2013). *Camille Claudel 1915* [Motion Picture]. France: Rialto Distribution Australia.
- Bourgeois, L. (2009, September 6). *Celebration of Jane Addams's 150th Birthday and the unveiling of Louise Bourgeois's maquettes for "Helping Hands"* [Exhibit Invitation]. Jane Addams Hull-House Museum Exhibits, University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Architecture and the Arts. Retrieved from https://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/_museum/_exhibits/helpinghands/helpinghands.html
- Bowen, S. (1941/1999). *Drawn from life: A memoir*. Sydney, Australia: Picador. (Original work published 1941).
- Bradley, J. (2009). Never real and always true. *Griffith Review. Essentially Creative*, 23, 115.
- Braidotti, R. (2002). *Metamorphoses: Towards a materialist theory of becoming*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, Blackwell Publishers.
- Braidotti, R. (2005). A critical cartography of feminist post-postmodernism. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 20(47), 169-180. doi:10.1080/08164640500090319
- Braidotti, R. (2010). The politics of "life itself" and new ways of dying. In D. Coole & S. Frost (Eds.), *New materialisms: ontology, agency and politics* (pp. 201-218). Durham, NC & London, England: Duke University Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2011). *Nomadic theory: A portable Rosi Braidotti*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

- Brand-Claussen, B. (1996). The collection of works of art in the psychiatric clinic, Heidelberg – from the beginnings to 1945. In I. Jadi, B. Brand-Claussen & C. Douglas (Eds.), *Beyond reason: Art and psychosis: Works from the Prinzhorn Collection* (pp. 7-23). London, England: Haywood Gallery.
- Brand-Claussen, B. (2006). Much noise, few works of art. In B. Brand-Claussen & V. Michely (Eds.), *Madness is female: women's art in psychiatry around 1900: The Prinzhorn Collection*. Gent, France: Museum Dr. Guislain.
- Brand-Claussen, B., & Michely, V. (Eds.). (2006). *Madness is female: women's art in psychiatry around 1900: The Prinzhorn Collection*. Gent, France: Museum Dr. Guislain.
- Brann, E. T. H. (1991). *The world of the imagination: Sum and substance*. Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- British Psychological Society. (2012). *The BPS still has concerns over DSM-5*. Retrieved from <http://www.bps.org.uk/news/britishpsychology-still-has-concerns-over-dsm-v>
- Britton, S. (1981). Motherhood, be in it. *Artlink*, 1(3), 5-7.
- Bronte, C. (2008). *Jane Eyre*. Camberwell, Australia: Penguin Group. (Original work published 1847).
- Brooks, G. S. (1995, September). *The meaning and experience of career as it is lived by women artists*. (Thesis: Doctor of Philosophy, University of Columbia, New York, NY).
- Brooks, M. (2004). *Beyond the divide: Women's experience in rural Victorian psychiatric rehabilitation services*. North Fitzroy, Australia: New Paradigm Press.
- Brown, W. (2005). *Edgework: Critical knowledge on knowledge and politics*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Brucoli, M. J. (Ed.). (1991). *The collected writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*. Tuscaloosa, AL & London, England: The University of Alabama Press.
- Brunskell, H. (1998). Feminist methodology. In C. Seale (Ed.), *Researching society and culture* (pp. 37-47). London, England: Sage.
- Bunch, C. (1974). The reform tool kit. *Quest*, 1, 37-87.
- Burke, J. (1980). *Australian women artists 1840-1940*. Melbourne, Australia: Greenhouse.
- Burke, J. (1990). *Field of vision: A decade of change: women's art in the seventies*. Ringwood, Australia: Viking.

- Burke, J. (1991, Winter). *Women in the arts: has anything happened since the 1970s?* [Seminar]. *Victorian Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 4(2), 7-8. .
- Burke, J. (Ed.). (1995). *Dear sun: The letters of Joy Hester and Sunday Reed*. Melbourne, Australia: William Heinemann Australia.
- Burke, J. (1996). Hester, Joy St Clair (1920-1960). In *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 14, 442-443.
- Burke, J. (2001). *Joy Hester*. Sydney, Australia: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1983).
- Burke, J. (2005). *The heart garden – Sunday Reed and Heide*. Sydney, Australia: Random House.
- Burke, J. (2012). *Nest: The art of birds*. Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Burwood, R. (2011, March 22). 'I, Miss Lorina Bulwer' - Embroidered letters from the workhouse. *Under wraps - Talks and events at Carrow House Museum*. Norwich, England. Retrieved from <http://www.mobilise.info/hidden-histories-discovering-disability-in-the-norwich-museums/>
- Butler, C., & Mark, L. G. (Eds.). (2007). *WACK! Art and the feminist revolution* [Exhibition catalogue]. Los Angeles, CA: The Museum of Contemporary Art & MIT Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cafarella, J. (1990). My life as a cartoonist. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 3(2), 12-14.
- Caine, B. (1994). Feminist biography and feminist history. *Women's History Review*, 3(2), 247-261. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612029400200049>
- Campbell, R., & Wasco, S. M. (2000). Feminist approaches to social science: Epistemology and methodological tenets. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(6), 773-786.
- Capp, F. (2008). *Musk and Byrne*. Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Cardinal, R. (1972). *Outsider art*. London, England: Studio Vista.
- Cardinal, R. (1994). Towards an outsider aesthetic. In M. D. Hall & E. W. Metcalf (Eds.), *The artist outside: Creativity and the boundaries of culture* (pp. 21-41). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Carrington, L. (1988). *The house of fear: Notes from down below*. (M. Warner, Trans.). London, England: Virago Press. (Original work published 1945)
- Carrington, L. (2008). *House of fear: Notes from down below*. New York, NY: E. P. Dutton. (Original work published 1945)
- Caro, J., & Fox, C. (2008). *The f word: How we learned to swear by feminism*. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press.

- Carroll, L. (2004). *Alice in Wonderland*. Melbourne, Australia: Hinkler Books. (Original work published 1865).
- Casey, E. S. (1976). *Imagining: A phenomenological study*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Castles, S. (2014, April 15). Love and loathing. *The Age, Spectrum*, pp. 12-13.
- Cater, M. (1994). The art world: More than a foothold. *Artlink, Art and the Feminist Project*, 14(1), 25-26.
- Chadwick, W. (1990). *Women, art and society*. London & New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Chadwick, W. (1993). Living simultaneously: Sonia and Robert Delaunay. In W. Chadwick & I. de Courtivron (Eds.), *Significant others: Creativity and intimate partnerships* (pp. 31-50). London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Chadwick, W. (2002). *Women, art and society* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Thames and Hudson.
- Chadwick, W., & de Courtivron, I. (Eds.). (1993). *Significant others: Creativity and intimate partnerships*. London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Champ, S. (2006). Simon Champ in conversation with Dinah Dysart: reclaiming imagination. *For Matthew and others: Journeys with schizophrenia* [Exhibition Catalogue entry]. Sydney, Australia: University of NSW.
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 311-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chaudhuri, N., Katz, S. J., Perry, M. E., & Burton, A. (2010). *Contesting archives: Finding women in the sources*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.
- Chesler, P. (2005). *Woman and madness: Revised and updated for the first time in thirty years*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan. (Original work published 1972).
- Chicago, J. (1998, April). Speech notes from the Women's Dinner, Wednesday, 20th January, 1988: Melbourne Exhibition Building. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 1(1), 6-8.
- Chisholm, D. (2008). Climbing like a girl: An exemplary adventure in feminist phenomenology. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 23(1), 9-40. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2008.tb01164.x
- Chomsky, N. (1971). *Problems of knowledge and freedom: the Russell Lectures*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Church, J. (2003). Depression, depth and imagination. In J. Phillips & J. Morley (Eds.), *Imagination and its pathologies* (pp.175-186). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

- Cininas, J. (2008). *The enchanted forest: new gothic storytellers*/Interviewer: Kate Barber [A Geelong Gallery & NETS Victoria touring exhibition]. Geelong, Australia: Geelong Gallery.
- City of Melbourne. (1998). *Visions of reality art in the community and the future*. Melbourne, Australia: City of Melbourne.
- Clifford, S., & Kaspari, J. (2003). Australian arts and health 1997-2003: A six year perspective. *Artwork, Arts, Health and Wellbeing*, 57, 10-13.
- Cline, S. (2004a). Creative voices, January 1927-1929. In S. Cline (Ed.), *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her voice in paradise* (pp. 199-215). New York, NY: Arcade Publishing. Retrieved from <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/4aa/4aa520.htm>
- Cline, S. (2004b). *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her voice in paradise*. New York, NY: Arcade Publishing.
- Code, L. (1991). What can she know? Feminist theory and the construction of knowledge. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Code, L. (1995). *Rhetorical spaces: Essays on (gendered) locations*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cohen, S. (1992). *The evolution of women's asylums since 1500: From refuges for ex-prostitutes to shelters for battered women*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Coleborne, C. (2003). Collecting "madness": psychiatric collections and the museum in Victoria and Western Australia. In C. Coleborne & D. MacKinnon (Eds.), *'Madness' in Australia: Histories, heritage and the asylum* (pp. 183-194). Brisbane, Australia: University of Queensland Press.
- Coleborne, C., & Mackinnon, D. (Eds.). (2003). *'Madness' in Australia: Histories, heritage and the asylum*. Brisbane, Australia: University of Queensland Press.
- Colebrook, C. (2000). From radical representations to corporeal becomings: The feminist philosophy of Lloyd, Grosz, and Gatens. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 15(2), 76-93. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2000.tb00315.x
- Colebrook, C. (2008). On not becoming man: The materialist politics of unactualized potential. In S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 52-84). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Coleman, V. (1981). *Miles Franklin in America: Her unknown (brilliant) career*. Sydney, Australia: Angus and Robertson Publishers.
- Collett, P. (1995). Western philosophy and women artists inferior, subordinate, private and other. *Australian Art Education*, 18(2), 28-34.

- Collett, P. (1998a). *Picturing artists: feminist poststructuralist study of nine women*. (Doctoral Dissertation: Doctor of Philosophy, School of Arts and Education, Faculty of Bendigo, La Trobe University, Australia).
- Collett, P. (1998b). Reflexivity and agency: a study of women's careers in the visual arts as a basis for reflection in art education. *Australian Art Education*, 21(2), 20-26.
- Committee for Individual Artists Inquiry. (1983). *The artist in Australia today*. Sydney, Australia: Australia Council.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (1994). *Creative nation: Commonwealth cultural policy*. Canberra, Australia: Department of Communications and the Arts.
- Community Indicators Victoria. (2007). *CIV survey*. Melbourne, Australia: VicHealth & University of Melbourne. Retrieved from www.communityindicators.net.au/civ_survey_2007
- Connelly, W. E. (2001). Spinoza and us. A theory of expression. Freedom, imaginations and dreams. *Spinoza Review, Political Theory*, 29(4), 583-594. doi:10.1177/0090591701029004006
- Connolly, W. E. (2010). Materialities of experience. In D. Coole & S. Frost (Eds.), *New materialisms: ontology, agency and politics* (pp. 178-200). Durham, NC & London, England: Duke University Press.
- Coole, D., & Frost, S. (2010). *New materialisms: ontology, agency and politics*. Durham, NC & London, England: Duke University Press.
- Copeland, J. (Interviewer). (2005, August 14). *The creative impulse/Interviewee: Elizabeth Grosz* [Radio Broadcast]. Sydney, Australia: ABC Radio National Sunday Morning. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/legacy/programs/sunmorn/stories/s1435592.htm>
- Cosgrove, L. (2003). Feminism, postmodernism, and psychological research. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 18(3), 85-112.
- Coslovich, G. (Interviewer). (2008, May 31). Stealing a kind of beauty – an interview with Del Kathryn Barton. *The Age*, A2, pp. 12-15.
- Coslovich, G. (Interviewer). (2008, October 18). Seeing in the dark. Louise Hearman. *The Age*, A2, p. 18.
- Costantoura, P. (2000). *Australians and the arts: What do the arts mean to Australians? A report to the Australia Council from Saatchi & Saatchi*. Surry Hills, Australia: Australia Council.
- Cox, C. (1926). The early mental traits of 300 geniuses. *Genetic Studies of Genius* (Vol. 2). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/stream/geneticstudiesof009044mbp#page/n7/mode/1up>

- Craddock, S. (2000). Reinventing the wheel. In D. Cummings (Ed.), *What is art good for?* London, England: Institute of Ideas/Hodder & Stoughton.
- Craven, O. (Interviewer). (2011). Del Kathryn Barton artist profile (2011). *Owen Craven Artist Profile*, 15, 52-60. Retrieved from <http://owencraven.com/2011/05/del-kathryn-barton/>
- Creagh, S. (2006, July 13). Solitary end to sculptor's intensely private life. Bronwyn Oliver. *Sydney Morning Herald*.
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs. *The Counselling Psychologist*, 35(2), 236-264.
doi:10.1177/0011000006287390
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond boredom and anxiety: Experiencing flow in wake and play*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). The Domain of Creativity. In M. A. Runco & R. S. Albert (Eds.), *Theories of creativity* (pp. 190-212). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life. Masterminds series*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1998). Creativity and genius: A systems perspective. In A. Steptoe. *Genius and the mind: studies of creativity and temperament*, (pp. 39-66) Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2008). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper and Row. (Original work published 1990).
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2013). *Creativity: The psychology of discovery and invention*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial. (Original work published 1996).
- Cubb, J. (1994). The romantic artist outsider: The artist as outsider. In M. D. Hall & E. E. Metcalf (Eds.), *The artist outsider: Creativity and the boundaries of culture* (pp. 79-95). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Cullen, R. (2012). My wild bird of paradise. In M. McIntosh & G. Jones. *Night flower: The life and art of Vali Myers*. Melbourne, Australia: Outré Gallery Press.
- Cultural Ministers Council. (2009). *National arts and disability strategy*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Cummings, D. (Ed.). *What is art good for?* London, England: Institute of Ideas/Hodder & Stoughton.
- Cummins, R. (1997). The LOT of the causal theory of mental content. *Journal of Philosophy*, 94, 535-542.
- Curthoys, A. (2000). Gender studies in Australia: A history. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 15(31), 19-3.

- Dallimore, E. J. (2000). A feminist response to issues of validity in research. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 23(2), 157-181.
doi:10.1080/07491409.2000.10162567
- Damoussi, J. (2005). *Freud in the antipodes: A cultural history of psychoanalysis in Australia*. Sydney, Australia: University of NSW Press.
- Darlaston-Jones, D. (2007). Making connections: The relationship between epistemology and research methods. *The Australian Community Psychologist*, 19(1), 19-27. Retrieved from
[http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/Darlaston-Jones_19\(1\).pdf](http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/Darlaston-Jones_19(1).pdf)
- Davey, N. (1999). The hermeneutics of seeing. In I. Heywood & B. Sandywell (Eds.), *Interpreting visual culture: Explorations in the hermeneutics of the visual* (pp. 3-29). London, England: Routledge.
- Davidson, R. J., & Begley, S. (2012). *The emotional life of your brain Richard*. London, England: Hodder and Staughton.
- Davies, N. (1994). I. Portrait of woman as artist and art object. *Feminism & Psychology*, 4(3) 430-438.
- Davies, T. (2001). Informed consent in psychiatric research. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178, 297-398.
- Dawson, J. (1985). *The ha-ha*. London, England: Virago. (Original work published 1961).
- Dax, E. C. D. (1953). *Experimental studies in psychiatric art*. London, England: Faber & Faber.
- Dax, E. C. D. (1955). The creative activities in mental hospital treatment. *Medical Journal Australia*, 42(1)(3), 57-64.
- Dax, E. C. D. (1961). *Asylum to community: The development of the mental hygiene service in Victoria, Australia*. Melbourne, Australia: F.W. Cheshire.
- Dax, E. C. D. (1965). The pictorial representation of depression. *Psychopathology and pictorial expression: An international iconographical collection* (Series 8). Basel, Switzerland: Sandoz.
- Dax, E. C. D. (1998). *The Cunningham Dax collection: selected works of psychiatric art*. Melbourne, Australia: University of Melbourne Press.
- Dearborn, M. (2006). *Peggy Guggenheim: Mistress of modernism*. London, England: Virago Press.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1989). *The second sex* (H. M. Parshley, Trans.). New York, NY: Random House. (Original work published 1949).
- de Beauvoir, S. (2011). *The second sex* (C. Borde & S. Malovany-Chevallier, Trans.). New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf. (Original work published 1949).

- de Berg, H. (Interviewer). (1965). *Nora Heysen interviewed by Hazel de Berg in the Hazel de Berg Collection* [Real media file]. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn1802052>
- Debold, E. (Interviewer). (2002). Flow with soul, an interview with Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. *What is Enlightenment Magazine*, 21, 100-107, 167-172.
- de Botton, A., & Armstrong, J. (2013). *Art as therapy*. London, England: Phaidon Press.
- Deepwell, K. (1996, December). Paint-Stripping: Feminist possibilities in painting after modernism. *N.Paradoxa*, 1, 4-11.
- Deepwell, K. (2002, February). Art and feminism, papers from session at ARCO '02 Madrid. *N.Paradoxa*, 16, 51-55.
- Del Busso, L. (2007). Embodying feminist politics in the research interview. Material bodies and reflexivity. *Feminism & Psychology*, 17(3), 309-315.
- de le Roy, J. (Interviewer). (1989). Interview Pamela Florance. Painter arts in the North East. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 2(2).
- Denner, J. (2001). The gap between feminist theory and practice: lessons from teenage women in California. *Feminism & Psychology*, 11(2), 162-166.
- Department for Health and Ageing. (2009). *Development of a new national women's health policy consultation discussion paper*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Health and Ageing. (2010). *National women's health policy 2010*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Health & Arts Council England. (2007). *A prospectus for arts and health*. London, England: Arts Council England.
- Department of Human Services. (2006). *Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy: Stage two: 2006–2010*. Melbourne, Australia: Department of Human Services.
- Derek, A. (2009). *Art and the human adventure, André Malraux's theory of art*. Amsterdam, Netherlands and New York, NY: Rodopi.
- de Saint Phalle, N. (1999). *Traces: An autobiography remembering 1930 – 1949*. Lausanne, France: Acatos.
- de Saint Phalle, N. (2002). *LA Donation*. Nice, France: Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain.
- de Saint Phalle, N., & Pietromarchi, G. (1999) *The tarot garden*. Lausanne, France: Edition Acatos.
- Descartes, R. (1972). *L'Homme*. (T.S. Hall, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1664).

- DeVault, M. L., & Gross, G. (2007). Feminist interviewing: Experience, talk and knowledge. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 143-154). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2003). *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the photographic iconography of the Salpetriere* (A. Hartz, Trans.). Cambridge MA: MIT Press. (Original work published 1982).
- DiPietro, M. (Interviewer). (2004, March 7). Close-up: Yayoi Kusama lost and found in art. *The Japan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2004/03/07/to-be-sorted/lost-and-found-in-art/#.VU2gUIGSzWJ>
- Dissanayake, E. (1998). *What is art for?* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Dodds, S. (2010). Feminist bioethics. In G. Oppy, L. Trakakis, S. Burns, S. Gardner & F. Leigh (Eds.), *A companion to philosophy in Australia & New Zealand* (pp. 187-194). Clayton, Australia: Monash University Publishing. Retrieved from <http://books.publishing.monash.edu/apps/bookworm/view/A+Companion+to+Philosophy+in+Australia+and+New+Zealand/56/xhtmll/chapter06.html#chapter06sec01>
- Doessel, D. P. (2009). A historical perspective on mental health services in Australia: 1883-84 to 2003-04. *Australian Economic History Review*, 49(2) 173-197. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8446.2009.00254.x
- Doidge, N. (2010). *The brain that changes itself: stories of personal triumph from the frontiers of brain science* (Rev. ed.). Brunswick, Australia: Scribe Publications.
- Dolphijn, R., & van der Tuin, I. (Interviewers). (2012). Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers: Interview with Karan Barad/Interviewers: Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin. *New materialism: Interviews & cartographies*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Open Humanities Press. doi:<http://doi.org/10.3998/oh.p.11515701.0001.001>
- Dolphijn, R., & van der Tuin, I. (Interviewers). (2012). *The notion of the univocity of being or single matter positions difference as a verb or process of becoming at the heart of the matter Interview with Rosi Braidotti*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Open Humanities Press. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/oh.p.11515701.0001.001>
- Douglas, C. (1996). Precious and splendid fossils. In I. Jadi, B. Brand-Claussen & C. Douglas (Eds.), *Beyond reason: Art and psychosis: Works from the Prinzhorn Collection* (pp. 35-47). London, England: Haywood Gallery.
- Dunn, J. (1998). *A very close conspiracy – Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf*. London, England: Pimico.

- Dunn, L. B., Candilis, P. J., & Roberts, L. B. (2006). Emerging empirical evidence on the ethics of schizophrenia research. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 32(1) 47-68.
- Dunn, L. B., & Jeste, D. V. (2001). Enhancing informed consent for research and treatment. *Neuropsychopharmacology*, 24, 595-607.
- Dyer, G., & Hunter, E. (2009). Creative recovery: Art for mental health's sake. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 17(s1), S146-S150.
- Edemariam, A. (Interviewer). (2009, September 22). Hilary Mantel interview. The devil and Hilary Mantel/Interviewer: Aida. *The Age*, A2, pp. 24-25.
- Einstein, A. (1931). *Cosmic religion with other opinions and aphorisms*. New York, NY: Covici-Freide.
- Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London, England: Sage publications.
- Ellis, C., & Flaherty, M. G. (1992). *Investigating subjectivity: research on lived experience*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, R. D. (1995). *Questioning consciousness: The interplay of imagery, cognition and emotion in the human brain*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Ellyard, H. (1991). Towards abundance. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 4(2), 5-6.
- Epstein, M. (2005, October 9). *Why I am a high profile nutcase*. Paper for Australian Democrats Forum, St Stephen's Anglican Church Hall Richmond Hill, Australia.
- Epstein, M. (2013). *The consumer movement in Australia: A memoir by Merinda Epstein*. Melbourne, Australia: State Government Victoria, Our Consumer Place.
- Epstein, M., & Shaw, J. (1997). *Developing effective consumer participation in mental health services: The report of the Lemon Tree Learning Project*. Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Mental Illness Council.
- Ewing, R. (2010). *The arts and Australian education: Realising potential*. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Fabiani, P. (2009). *The philosophy of the imagination in Vico and Malebranche* (G. Pinton, Trans. Ed.). Firenze, Italy: Firenze University Press.
- Felstead, A., Jewson, N., & Walters, S. (2004). Images, interviews and interpretations: Making connections in visual research. In C. Pole (Ed.), *Seeing is believing? Approaches to visual research*. Oxford, England: Elsevier Science.
- Ferguson, A. (1997). Moral responsibility and social change: A new theory of self, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 12(3), 116-141.
- Ferguson, A., & Nagel, M. (2009). *Dancing with Iris: The philosophy of Iris Marion Young*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fine, C. (2010). *Delusions of gender*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

- Fine, M. (2012). Troubling calls for evidence: A critical race, class and gender analysis of whose evidence counts. *Feminism and Psychology*, 22(1), 3-19.
- Fisher, L. (2000). Phenomenology and feminism: perspectives on their relations, In L. Fisher & L. E. Embree (Eds.), *Feminism and phenomenology* (pp. 17-38). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishing.
- Fisher, L., & Embree, L. E. (Eds.). (2000). *Feminism and phenomenology*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishing.
- Fitzgerald, Z. (2001). *Save me the waltz*. London, England: Vintage. (Original work published 1931).
- Flug Colin, B. (Interviewer) (1982). *A conversation with Louise Bourgeois*. Retrieved from <http://www.frigatezine.com/essay/lives/eli02bou.html>
- Fodor, J. A. (1975). *The language of thought*. New York, NY: Crowell.
- Fonow, M. M., & Cook, J. A. (2005). Feminist methodology: New applications in the academy and public policy. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 30(4), 2211-2235.
- Fossey E., Bennetts, W., Saunders, S., McDermott, F., & Harvey, C. (2004, March). Participating lives: learning more about consumers' aspirations and options for meaningful employment and other forms of occupation. *New Paradigm*, 30-37.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power-Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. Brighton, England: Harvester Press.
- Foucault, M. (1993). "Dream, imagination, and existence" – Introduction to L. Binswanger, *Dream and existence* (F. Williams, Trans.). In L. Binswanger, *Dream and existence* (pp. 31-78) (K. Holler, Ed. J. Needleman, Trans.). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press. (Original work published 1954. Published in English 1985).
- Foucault, M. (1988, October 25). Truth, power, self: An interview with Michel Foucault. In L. H. Martin, H. Gluckman & P.H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 9-15). London, England: Tavistock Publications.
- Fox, D., Prilleltensky, I., & Austin, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Critical psychology: An introduction* (2nd ed.). London, England: Sage Publications.
- Fox, S. (2008). *The idea of madness in Dorothy Richardson, Leonora Carrington and Anaïs Nin*. (Thesis: Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Western Australia, Crawley, Australia).
- Frame, J. (1961). *Faces in the water*. New York, NY: George Braziller. Retrieved from <http://janetframe.org.nz/default.htm>

- Frame, J. (1982). *To the is-land: Autobiography 1*. London, England: Paladin Grafton Books.
- Frame, J. (1984). *An angel at my table: Autobiography 2*. New York, NY: George Braziller.
- Frame, J. (1985). *The envoy from mirror city: Autobiography 3*. London, England: The Women's Press. Retrieved from <http://janetframe.org.nz/default.htm>
- Fraser, V. (Ed.), (1947). *A book about Australian women*. North Fitzroy, Australia: Outback Press.
- Freeland, C. (2001). *Art theory*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Freeman, J. (1994, February) *Picasso and the weeping women – The years of Marie-Thérèse Walter and Dora Maar*. Los Angeles, CA & New York, NY: Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- Freeman, M. (1993). *Finding the muse: A sociopsychological inquiry into the conditions of artistic creativity*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman-Greene, S. (Interviewer). (2009, November 28). Interview with Anne Riggs. Out of the shadows. *The Age*, A2, pp. 18-19.
- Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Friedman, S. S. (2006). The futures of feminist criticism: A diary. *Publications Modern Language Association* 121(5), 1704-1710. Retrieved from <http://0-www.jstor.org.library.vu.edu.au/stable/25501650>
- Friend, D., & Laming, A. (2004). *Stables Art Studio: origins and current practice 2001–2004*. Prahran, Australia: Prahran Mission.
- Frosh, S. (2007). Disintegrating qualitative research. *Theory Psychology*, 17(5), 635-653. doi:10.1177/0959354307081621
- Fullbrook, E. (1999). She came to stay and being and nothingness. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 14(4), 50-69.
- Gandolfo, E., & Grace, M. (2009). *...it keeps me sane...women craft wellbeing*. Carlton, Australia: The Vulgar Press.
- Gannon, S., & Davies, B. (2007). Postmodern, poststructural and critical theories. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp.71-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ganzini, L., Volicer, L., Nelson, W., Fox, E., & Derse, A. (2005). Ten myths about decision-making capacity. *Journal of American Medical Directors Association*, 6, 100-104.
- Garden Castro, J. (Interviewer). (2005). Vital signs: A conversation with Louise Bourgeois. *Sculpture*, 24(6), 29-33.

- Garton, S. (2003). Stephen Garton, 'Asylum histories: reconsidering Australia's lunatic past'. In C. Coleborne & D. Mackinnon (Eds.), *'Madness' in Australia: histories, heritage and the asylum* (pp.11-21). St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press.
- Geller, J. L., & Harris, M. (1994). *Women of the asylum: Voices from behind the walls, 1840-1945*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Gergen, M. M. (2001). *Feminist reconstructions in psychology: Narrative, gender and performance*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage.
- Gerrand, V. (1993). *The patient majority: mental health policy and services for women*. Geelong, Australia: Centre for Applied Social Research, Deakin University.
- Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2000). *The madwoman in the attic: The woman writer and the 19th-century literary imagination*. New Haven, CT & London, England: Yale University Press. (Original work published 1979).
- Gill, R. (2007, January 20). The arts and Australian identity. *The Age*, pp. 12-13.
- Gill, R. (2011, March 26). Creative funding. *The Saturday Age*, Life and style, p. 7.
- Gilligan, C., Spencer, R., Weinberg, K., & Bertsch, T. (2006). On the listening guide: A voice-centred relational method. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. L. Leavy (Eds.), *Emergent methods in social research* (pp.253-271). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gilroy, A. (2008) Taking a long look at art reflections in the production and consumption of art in art therapy and allied organisational settings. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 27(3), 251-263.
- Giorgi, A. (2003). A phenomenological approach to research on hallucination. In J. Phillips & J. Morley (Eds.), *Imagination and its pathologies* (pp. 209-224). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Girkup, G., & Keller, S., F. (Eds.). (1992). *Inventing women: Science, technology and gender*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Gisborne, M. (1994). French clinical psychiatry and the art of the untrained mentally ill. In M. D. Hall & E. W. Metcalf (Eds.), *The artist outsider: Creativity and the boundaries of culture* (pp. 228-251). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Goldie, D. (2003). *Portrait of a modernist. Portrait 7*. Canberra, Australia: National Portrait Gallery. Retrieved from <http://www.portrait.gov.au/UserFiles/file/Portrait07.PDF>

- Gonzalez, M. M. (2008). Feminist praxis challenges the identity question: Toward new collective identity metaphors [Special Issue: In honor of Iris Marion Young: theorist and practitioner of justice]. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 23(3), 22-38.
- Gouk, P., & Hill, H. (Eds.). (2005). *Representing emotions. New connections in the histories of art, music and medicine*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.
- Graham, D. W. (2011). Heraclitus. *The Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy*. Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/heraclitus/>
- Graham, G. (2005). *Philosophy of the arts: Introduction to aesthetics* (3rd ed.). London, England: Routledge.
- Graham, H. (1994). *Arts and therapy: Exploring the relationship between the approaches of arts access projects and arts therapy*. South Melbourne, Australia: Arts Access.
- Grant-Smith, R. (1922). *The experiences of an asylum patient*. London, England: Allen & Unwin.
- Gray, J. (2007). (Re)considering voice. *Qualitative Social Work* 6(4), 411-430. doi:10.1177/1473325007083354
- Greenberg, J. (1964). *I never promised you a rose garden*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Greer, G. (1979). *The obstacle race: The fortunes of women painters and their work*. New York, NY: Farrar Straus Giroux.
- Greer, G. (1995). *Slip shod sibyls: Recognition, rejection and the woman poet*. London, England: Penguin Books.
- Gridley, H., & Turner, C. (2010). Gender, power and community psychology. In G. Nelson & I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Griffiths, M. (1995). *Feminisms and the self: Webs of identity*. London, England & New York, NY: Routledge.
- Grossman, F. G. (1981). Creativity as a means of coping with anxiety. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 8(3-4), 185-192. doi 10.1016/0197-4556(81)90030-7
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Towards a corporeal feminism*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Grosz, E. (2008). *Chaos, territory, art: Deleuze and the framing of the earth*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Grosz, E. (2010). Feminisms, materialism, and freedom. In D. Coole & S. Frost (Eds.), *New materialisms: ontology, agency and politics* (pp.139-157). Durham, NC & London England: Duke University Press.

- Gunzenhauser, M. G. (2006, June). A moral epistemology of knowing subjects: Theorizing a relational turn for qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(3), 621-647. doi:10.1177/1077800405282800
- Haese, R. (2011). *Permanent revolution Mike Brown and the Australian avant-garde 1953-1997*. Melbourne, Australia: Miegunyah Press.
- Hales, E. (2012). Work in progress Ev Hales. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 51, 4.
- Hall, M. D., & Metcalf, E. E. (Eds.). (1994). *The artist outsider: Creativity and the boundaries of culture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Hallstein, D., & O'Brien, L. (2000). Where standpoint stands now: an introduction and commentary. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 23(1), 1-15.
- Hamilton, A. (2006). SAIC commencement address. In M. J. Jacob (Ed.). *On the being of being an artist* (pp. 43-52). Chicago, IL: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
- Hannay, A. (1971). *Mental images-A defense*. London, England: Allen & Unwin.
- Haraway, D. (2008). Otherwordly conversations, terrain, topics, local terms. In S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 157-187). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Harding, S. (Ed.). (1987). *Feminism and methodology: Social science issues*. Bloomington, IN & Indiana, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Harding, S., & Norberg, K. (Eds.). (2003). Call for papers [Special issue: Dilemmas in feminist social research]. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 28(3), ix-x.
- Harding, S. G. (2004). A socially relevant philosophy of science? Resources from standpoint theory's controversiality. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 19(1), 25-47.
- Harrison, M. (1941). *Spinner's lake*. London, England: John Lane, The Bodley Head.
- Hartstock, N. (1987). The feminist standpoint: Developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism. In S. Harding. (Ed.), *Feminism and methodology: Social science issues*. Bloomington, IN & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hawkesworth, M. (2005). Engendering political science: An immodest proposal. *Politics & Gender*, 1, 141-156. doi:10.1017/S1743923X0523101X
- Heartney, E., Posner, H., Scott, S., & Princenthal, N. (2007). *After the revolution: Women who transformed contemporary art*. Munich, Germany: Prestel.
- Heaslip, B. (1972). *Saints and strait jackets: An intimate view of life in an Australian psychiatric hospital, by an ex-patient*. Adelaide, Australia: Barbara Heaslip.
- Heil, J. (1998). *Philosophy of mind*. London, England: Routledge.

- Heinämaa, S. (1997). What is a woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the foundations of the sexual difference. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 12, 20-39.
doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.1997.tb00169.x
- Heinämaa, S. (1999). Simone de Beauvoir's phenomenology of sexual difference. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 14(4), 114-132.
- Hekman, S. (2008). Constructing the ballast: An ontology for feminism. In: S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 85-119). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Helson, R. (1990). Creativity in women: Outer and inner views over time. In M. A. Runco & R. S. Albert (Eds.), *Theories of creativity* (pp. 46-58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hemmings, C. (2009). Generational dilemmas. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24(59), 33-37.
- Hennessey, E. (1993). *A cup of tea, a Bex and a good lie down*. Townsville, Australia: Department of History and Politics, James Cook University of North Queensland.
- Henwood, K., & Pidgeon, N. (1995). Remaking the link: Qualitative research and feminist standpoint theory. *Feminism and Psychology*, 5(1), 7-30.
- Henzell, J. (2003, November 13-16). *Creating art psychotherapy training in Australia*. 'inscape' ARTCAP Symposium, Australian Research and Training Centre for the Arts in Psychotherapy at Edith Cowan University School of Contemporary Art, Mt Lawley, Australia. Retrieved from http://arn.cci.ecu.edu.au/data/tmp/john_henzell.pdf
- Herrera, H. (1993). Beauty to his beast: Frida Kahlo & Diego Rivera. In W. Chadwick & I. de Courtivron (Eds.), *Significant others: Creativity and intimate partnerships* (pp. 119-136). London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Herrera, H. (2003). *Frida – The biography of Frida Kahlo*. London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. L. (Eds.). (2006). *Emergent methods in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Heyes, C. J. (1997). Anti-essentialism in practice: Carol Gilligan and feminist philosophy. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 12(3), 142-163.
- Heyward, S. (2012, January 20). *On steel, Kandinsky and the psychology of making*. Retrieved from <http://egetal.com.au/news/post/sarah-heyward-on-steel-kandinsky-and-the-psychology-of-making>

- Heywood, I., & Sandywell, B. (Eds.). (1999). *Interpreting visual culture*. London, England: Routledge.
- Higgle, J., & Heiser, J. (Eds.). (2007, March). *Frieze*. [Special Issue: Feminism], 105 London, England: Durian Publications Ltd.
- Higonnet, A. (1993). Myths of creation. Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin. In W. Chadwick & I. de Courtivron (Eds.), *Significant others: Creativity and intimate partnerships* (pp. 15-30). London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Hoban, P. (2010). *Alice Neel: The art of not sitting pretty*. New York, NY: The St. Martin Press, Macmillan.
- Hoeller, K. (Ed.). (1993). Editor's foreword. In L. Binswanger, *Dream and existence* (pp. 7-17) (J. Needleman, Trans.). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press. (Original work published 1954. Published in English 1985).
- Hoff, J. (1994). Gender as a postmodern category of paralysis. *Women's History Review*, 3(2), 149-168.
- Hogan, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Feminist approaches to art therapy*. London, England: Routledge.
- Hogan, S. (2001). *Healing arts: The history of art therapy*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hogan, S. (Ed.). (2003). *Gender issues in art therapy*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hojgaard, L., & Sondergaard, D. M. (2011). Theorizing the complexities of discursive and material subjectivities: Agential realism and poststructural analyses. *Theory Psychology*, 21(3), 338-354.
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (Eds.). (2003). *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Holt, R. R. (1964). Imagery: The return of the ostracized. *American Psychologist*, 19, 254-266.
- Hoorn, J. (1994). *Strange women: Essays in art and gender*. Carlton, Australia: Melbourne University Press.
- Horst, S. W. (1996). *Symbols, computation and intentionality: A critique of the computational theory of mind*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hubert, S. J. (2002). *Questions of power: The politics of women's madness narratives*. Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press.
- Hull, A. (1998). Culture and national identity: priorities, possibilities. In *City of Melbourne, Visions of reality art in the community and the future*. Melbourne, Australia: City of Melbourne.

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. (1993). *Report of the national inquiry into the human rights of people with mental illness*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Hyden, M. (2008). Narrating sensitive topics. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou, M. (Eds.), *Doing narrative research* (pp. 121-136). London, England: Sage.
- Irigaray, L. (2002). *To speak is never neutral* (G. Schwab, Trans.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Isherwood, C. (1939). *Goodbye to Berlin*. London, England: Hogarth Press.
- Itoi, K. (Interviewer). (1997, August 22). Kusama speaks. *Artnet Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/ittoi/ittoi8-22-97.asp>
- Jack, D. C., & Ali, A. (2010). *Silencing the self across cultures: Depression and gender in the social world*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2012). Thinking with theory in qualitative research: Viewing data across multiple perspectives. Oxon, England: Routledge.
- Jacob, M. J. (2006). *On the being of being an artist*. Chicago, IL: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
- Jadi, I. (1996). Points of view – Perspectives – Horizons. In I. Jadi, B. Brand-Claussen & C. Douglas (Eds.), *Beyond reason: Art and psychosis: Works from the Prinzhorn Collection* (pp. 24-34). London, England: Haywood Gallery.
- Jadi, I., Brand-Claussen, B., & Douglas, C. (Eds.). (1996). *Beyond reason: Art and psychosis: Works from the Prinzhorn Collection*. London, England: Haywood Gallery.
- James, S. (Interviewer). (2000). Interview with Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, The power of Spinoza: Feminist conjunctions [Special Issue: Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism and Philosophy]. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 15(2), 40-58. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2000.tb00313.x
- Jamison, K. R. (1994). *Touched with fire: Manic-depressive illness and the artistic temperament*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Jeffri, J. (Ed.). (1992). *The craftperson speaks: Artists in varied media discuss their crafts*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Jeffri, J. (Ed.). (1993). *The painter speaks: Artists discuss their experience and careers*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Jeffs, S. (2000a). *Poems from the madhouse*. Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press. (Original work published 1993).
- Jeffs, S. (2000b). *Blood Relations*. North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press.

- Jeffer, S. (2004a). The language of madness: A meditation on madness, language and poetry. In S. Robertson, K. Kellehear, M. Tesson, V. Miller, C. Issakidis, J. Farhall, ...D. Shaw (Eds.), *From rhetoric to reality – Proceedings of 13th annual the MHS conference 2003* (pp. 45-51). Rozelle, Australia: Standard Publishing House.
- Jeffer, S. (2004b). *The wings of angels: A memoir of madness*. North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press.
- Jeffer, S. (2009). *Flying with paper wings: Reflections on living with madness*. Carlton, Australia: The Vulgar Press.
- Jerrems, C. (1974). *A book about Australian women*. (V. Fraser, Ed. C. Jerrems, Photographs.). North Fitzroy, Australia: Outback Press.
- Johnson, H. (1999). A matter of time. In J. Kerr & J. Holder (Eds.), *Past and present. The national women's art anthology* (pp. 40-48). Sydney, Australia: Craftman House.
- Johnson, K. (1998). *Deinstitutionalising women: An ethnographical study of institutional closure*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, N., & Purcell, L. (Eds.). (1985). *Yarns: Stories of creative women in Melbourne's west*. Williamstown, Australia: Melbourne's Living Museum of the West.
- Jones, P. (2004). *Art and life: The memoir of a man bearing witness to the remarkable world of Heide*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Jodelet, D. (1989). *Madness and social representations*. (G. Duveen, Ed. T. Pownall, Trans.). Hertfordshire, England: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Joubert, L. (2008). Childhood trauma: Do the arts in education have a role to – play? In A. Lewis & D. Doyle (Eds.), *Proving: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health. Disability in the arts disadvantage in the arts Australia* (pp. 108-121). Freemantle, Australia: DADAA.
- Kandinsky, W. (1977). *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. (M. T. H. Sadler, Trans.). New York, NY: Dover Publications. (Original work published 1914).
- Karidis, N. (2012). Vali Myers: A life. In M. McIntosh & G. Jones. *Night flower: The life and art of Vali Myers*. Melbourne, Australia: Outré Gallery Press.
- Kaufmann, G. (1980). *Imagery, language and cognition*. Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.
- Kaufman, J. C., & Sternberg, R. J. (Eds.). (2010). *The Cambridge handbook of creativity*. Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Keleher, H., & Armstrong, R. (2005). *Evidence-based mental health promotion resource*. Melbourne, Australia: Department of Human Services and VicHealth.

- Kerr, J. (Ed.). (1995). *Heritage: The national women's art book*. Roseville East, Australia: Craftsman House.
- Kerr, J., & Holder, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Past and present. The national women's art anthology*. Sydney, Australia: Craftman House.
- King, A. (2010). The odd couple: Margaret Archer, Anthony Giddens and British social theory [Special Issue: The BJS: Shaping sociology over 60 years]. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 61(1), 253-260.
- King Murdoch, A. (Interviewer). (2003, July 12). Taking art in her stride/Interviewee: Davida Allen. *The Age*. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/07/12/1057783281509.html>
- Kirby, S. (1992). *Sight lines: Women's art and feminist perspective in Australia*. Sydney, Australia: Craftsman House.
- Kirby, V. (2008). Natural convers(at)ions: or, what if culture was really nature all along? In S. Alaimo & S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 214-236). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Klepac, L. (2000). *Nora Heysen* [Exhibition catalogue]. Canberra, Australia: National Library of Australia.
- Knowles, C. (2000). *Bedlam in the streets*. London, England: Routledge.
- Koh, E. (2002). *About the Cunningham Dax Collection of Art: A preliminary paper for the teacher's workshop*. Melbourne, Australia: Mental Health Research Institute.
- Koh, E. (2008). Ethical issues concerning the creative works of people with an experience of mental illness. In H. Thomashoff & E. Sukhanova (Eds.), *The person in art: Conceptual pictorial frames on art and health* (pp. 79-91). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Koh, E., & Fox, D. (2003). *Still lives: between creativity and shadowland: Works from the Cunningham Dax Collection of Psychiatric Art*. Melbourne, Australia: Mental Health Research Institute.
- Kosslyn, S. M. (1980). *Image and mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kosslyn, S. M. (1994). *Image and brain: The resolution of the imagery debate*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kosslyn, S. M., & Pomerantz, J. R. (1977). Imagery, propositions and the form of internal. *Cognitive Psychology*, 9, 52-76.
- Kosslyn, S. M., Thompson, W. L., Kim, I. J., & Alpert, N. M. (1995). Topographical representation of mental images in primary visual cortex. *Nature*, 378, 496-498.
- Kramarae, C., & Treichler, P. A. (Eds.). (1992). *Amazons, bluestockings and crones: A feminist dictionary*. London, England: Pandora Press.
- Krauss, N. (2005). *Great house*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton Company Inc.

- Kris, E. (1952). *Psychoanalytic explorations in art*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.
- Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B., & Lozano, P. (Eds.). (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organisation.
- Kruks, S. (2001). *Retrieving experience: Subjectivity and recognition in feminist politics*. London, England: Cornell University Press.
- Kruks, S. (2010). Simone de Beauvoir: Engaging discrepant materialisms. In D. Coole & S. Frost (Eds.), *New materialisms: ontology, agency and politics* (pp. 258-280). Durham, NC & London, England: Duke University Press.
- Kul-Want, C. (2010). *Philosophers on art from Kant to the postmodernists: A critical reader*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Kusama, Y. (2011). *Infinity nets: the autobiography of Yayoi Kusama*. (R. McCarthy, Trans.). London, England: Tate Publishing.
- La Caze, M. (2009). Hipparchia's choice: An essay concerning women, philosophy, etc. [Special Issue: Oppression and moral agency: Essays in honor of Claudia Card] (2nd ed.). (M. le Doeuff, Ed. T. Selous, Trans.). *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 24(1), 191-195. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.00013_4.
- Lacourarie, C. (2002). Painting and writing: A symbiotic relation in Virginia Woolf works. *Interdisciplinary Literacy Studies: A Journal of Criticism and Theory*, 3(2), 66-81.
- Lally, E., & Miller, S. (2012). *Report on women in theatre: A research report and action plan*. Surrey Hills, Australia: Australia Council for the Arts.
- Langer, E. J. (2005). *On becoming an artist: Reinventing yourself through mindful creativity*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Lapsley, H., Nikora, L. W., & Black, R. (2002). *"Kia Mauri Tau!" Narratives of recovery from disabling mental health problems*. Wellington, New Zealand: Mental Health Commission.
- Larner, B., & Considine, F. (1988). *A complimentary caste: A homage to women artists in Queensland past and present*. Surfers Paradise, Australia: The Centre Gallery.
- Lather, P. (2001). Postbook: Working the ruins of feminist ethnography. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 27(1), 199-228.
- Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost: Feminist efforts toward a double(d) science*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lawless, E. (2001). *Women escaping violence: Empowerment through narrative*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri.
- Le Doeuff, M. (2004). Engaging with Simone de Beauvoir. In M. A. Simons (Ed.), *The philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir - Critical essays* (pp. 11-20). Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

- Lee, P. (2004). *Developing the Cunningham Dax Collection into a community resource*. [Draft report]. Melbourne, Australia: Cunningham Dax Collection.
- Le Grange, L. (2002). Educational research, democracy and praxis. *South African Journal of Education*, 22(1), 36-39.
- Lejsted, M., & Nielsen, J. (2006). Art created by psychiatric patients [Essay]. *The Lancet*, 368, S10-S11. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69906-6
- Lewis, A., & Doyle, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Proving: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health. Disability in the arts disadvantage in the arts Australia*. Freemantle, Australia: DADAA.
- Lewis, M. (1988). *Managing madness: Psychiatry and society in Australia 1788–1980*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Institute of Health, Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Leys, S. (2011, October 11). *Simon Leys on literary criticism: Why and how*. Paper presented at the Wheeler Centre, Melbourne, Australia.
- Liamputtong, P. (2007). *Researching the vulnerable: A guide to sensitive research methods*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Linsenbard, G.E. (1999). Beauvoir, ontology, and women's human rights. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 14(4), 145-162.
- Lippard, L. (1976). *From the centre*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- Lippard, L. (1994). Crossing into uncommon ground. In M. D. Hall & E. W. Metcalf (Eds.), *The artist outside: Creativity and the boundaries of culture* (pp. 2-18). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Lipton, E. (1990). Representing sexuality in women artists' biographies: The case of Suzanne Valadon and Victorine Meurent. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 27(1), 81-94.
- Lloyd, G. (1984). *The man of reason: Male and female in western philosophy*. London, England: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Llewellyn Smit, J. (2008, July 15). A career of one's own: Rebecca Miller interview. *The Age*.
- Longino, H. E. (1993). Feminist standpoint theory and the problems of knowledge. *Signs: Journal of Women's Culture and Society*, 19(11), 8-19.
- Longino, H. E. (2007). Reason, truth and experience: Tyrannies or liberation? In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 547-552). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Lowery Collins, P. (1992). *I am an artist* (Illus. R. Brickman). Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press.

- Mackenzie, J. (2009). Refiguring universalism: Martha Nussbaum and Judith Butler - An uneasy alliance? *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24, 343-358.
- MacNeil, A. (1999). Portrait of the artist as a young woman. *Musical Quarterly*, 83(2), 247-279. doi:10.1093/mq/83.2.247
- Magarey, S. (2007). What is happening to women's history in Australia at the beginning of the third millennium? *Women's History Review*, 16(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/09612020601049637
- Maguire, P. (1988-1989). Portrait of Erica. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 1(4), 3-5.
- Mahood, K. (2009). Calling myself an artist: In the gap between two ways of seeing. *Griffith Review. Essentially Creative*, 23, Retrieved from <https://griffithreview.com/articles/in-the-gap-between-two-ways-of-seeing/>
- Maines, R. (1999). *The technology of orgasm: "Hysteria," vibrators and women's sexual satisfaction*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Maizels, J. (1996). *Raw creation: outsider art and beyond*. London, England: Phaidon Press Ltd.
- Mann, M. (1994). The amazingness of women to just do it. *Artlink, Art and the Feminist Project*, 14(1), 81.
- Mantel, H. (2009). *Wolf Hall*. London, England: Fourth Estate.
- Mariette, N. (1997). *Painting myself in*. North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex.
- Marincola, P. (Ed.). (2006). *What makes a great exhibition?* Philadelphia, PN: Philadelphia Center for Arts and Culture.
- Marsden, S., & Thiele, M. (Eds.). (2000). *Risking art: Art for survival. Outlining the role of the arts in services to marginalised young people*. Richmond, Australia: Jesuit Social Services.
- Martin, D. (2007). Charlotte Perkins Gilman and "The yellow wallpaper". *American Journal Psychiatry*, 164(5), 736-736.
- Marx, M. (2001). Invisibility, interviewing, and power: A researcher's dilemma. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 28(3-4), 131-155.
- Matarasso, F. (1996). *Defining values: Evaluating arts programmes*. Stroud, England: Comedia.
- Matarasso, F. (1997). *Use or ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts*. Stroud, England: Comedia.
- Matthews, J. J. (1989). *Good and mad women*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Maxwell, H. (1994). Helen Ogilvie: Obituary 1902-1993. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 20, 8-9.

- Maynes, M. J., Pierce, J. L., & Laslett, B. (2008). *Telling stories: The use of personal narratives in the social sciences and history*. New York, NY: Cornell University Press.
- McCormick, C. (2012). The spirit drawings of Vali Myers. In M. McIntosh & G. Jones. *Night flower: The life and art of Vali Myers*. Melbourne, Australia: Outré Gallery Press.
- McDonald, H. (2008a). Appearing to disappear. In *A time like this* [Exhibition catalogue] (pp. 15-21). Margaret Lawrence Gallery, South Melbourne, Australia: Victorian College of the Arts.
- McDonald, H., & Rothfield, P. (2006). Art and Deleuze: A round table interview with Elizabeth Grosz [online]. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, 7(2), 4-22. Retrieved from <http://0-search.informit.com.au.library.vu.edu.au/documentSummary;dn=704668374846762;res=IELLCCISSN:1443-4318>
- McDonald, L. (2008b). Under the bridges: A community narrative on the impact of DADAA's Freight Gallery. In A. Lewis & D. Doyle (Eds.), *Proving: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health. Disability in the arts disadvantage in the arts Australia* (pp. 24-45). Freemantle, Australia: DADAA.
- McGilchrist, E. (1980). Introduction to women and art: Into the eighties [Exhibition Catalogue: Monash University Gallery]. In McGilchrist, E. *Selected works 1951–1995: A retrospective of works by Melbourne artist Erica McGilchrist* [Exhibition, L. Short Curator]. Exhibited at Heide Museum of Modern Art, 23 October 2013–27 April 2104.
- McGilchrist, E. (2013). Wall text accompanying 'Organic and Inorganic Forms' (1956). In McGilchrist, E. *Selected works 1951-1995: A retrospective of works by Melbourne artist Erica McGilchrist*, October 23, 2013–April 27, 2014 [Exhibition, L. Short Curator]. Bulleen, Australia: Heide Museum of Modern Art
- McGuiness, M., & Wadsworth, Y. (1991). *Understanding anytime: A consumer evaluation of an acute psychiatric hospital*. Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council.
- McGuire, M. E. (Interviewer). (1993). Evelyn Healy: Artist of the left: A personal experience 1930s–1990s. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 18, 16-17.
- McIntosh, M., & Jones, G. (2012). *Night flower: The life and art of Vali Myers*. Melbourne, Australia: Outré Gallery Press.
- McKeith, E. (2003). *Louise Bourgeois: Stitches in time at the Irish Museum of Modern Art*, November 2003–February 2004 [Exhibition]. Retrieved from http://www.recirca.com/cgi-bin/mysql/show_item.cgi?post_id=1908

- McKetta, E. (2009). *Asymptotic autobiography: Fairy tales as narrative map in the writing of Zelda Fitzgerald* (Doctoral dissertation: University of Texas Austin). Retrieved from <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/ETD-UT-2009-08-263>
- McLaughlin, M. (2003, December.) The haves and have nots: State arts and health programs. *Artwork, Arts, Health and wellbeing*, 57, 40-42.
- McLeod, J. (2009). What was poststructural feminism in education? In M. W. Apple, W. Au & L. A. Gandin (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of critical education* (pp. 137-149). New York, NY: Routledge.
- McNay, L (1991). The Foucauldian body and the exclusion of experience. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 6(3), 125-139.
- McPhee, J. (1988). *Quilts Australia: The quilters guild*. Sydney, Australia: Bay Books.
- Melbourne International Arts Festival. (2007). *John Cage's Musicircus*, [Brochure]. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne International Arts Festival.
- Mencimer, S. (2002, June). The trouble with Frida Kahlo: Uncomfortable truths about this season's hottest female artist. *The Washington Monthly*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/0206.mencimer.html>
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2010). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). New York, NY: Routledge Classics. (Original work published 1962).
- Meskimmon, M. (2003). *Women making art: History, subjectivity, aesthetics*. London, England: Routledge.
- Metcalf, E. W. (1994). From domination to desire: Insiders and outsider art. In M. D. Hall & E. E. Metcalf (Eds.), *The artist outsider: Creativity and the boundaries of culture* (pp. 215-222). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Meyers, D. T. (2005). Who's there? Selfhood, self regard, and social relations. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 20(4), 200-215.
- Mikkola, M. (2006). Elizabeth Spelman, gender realism, and women. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. 21(4), 77-96. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2006.tb01129
- Miller, L. J. (2000). The poverty of truth seeking: Postmodern, discourse analysis and critical feminism. *Theory & Psychology*, 10(3), 313-352. doi:10.1177/0959354300103002
- Millett, K. (1990). *The loony-bin trip*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Mills, D. (2003). Art and wellbeing: securing the connections – integrating policy and practice. *Artwork, Arts, Health and wellbeing*, 57, 18-21.
- Mishler, E. G. (2004). *Storylines: Craftartists' narratives of identity*. London, England & Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Modjeska, D. (2001). *Stravinsky's lunch*. Sydney, Australia: Picador.
- Moi, T. (1999). *What is a woman?* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Moi, T. (2006). "I am not a feminist, but..." How feminism became the f-word. *PMLA*, 121(5), 1735-1741. Retrieved from <http://0-www.jstor.org.library.vu.edu.au/stable/25501655>
- Moi, T. (2007, April-May). Portrait of the artist as a young woman. *Bookforum*. Retrieved from http://www.bookforum.com/inprint/014_01/114
- Moi, T. (2008). 'I am not a woman writer': About women, literature and feminist theory today. *Feminist Theory* 9(3), 259-271. doi:10.1177/1464700108095850
- Monshat, N., & Staker, A. (2011). *The future of feminism: Collaborative action and moving beyond internal divisions*. Seminar October 19, 2011. East Brunswick, Australia: Melbourne Free University.
- Montz Adams, S. (2011). Transforming the stories of adolescent girls. *Radical Psychology*, 9(1), 5.
- Mora, M. (2000). *Wicked but virtuous: My life*. Melbourne: Penguin Books.
- Morgan, A. (2009). Simone de Beauvoir's ethics, the master/slave dialectic, and Eichmann as a sub-man. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 24(2), 39-53. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01031.x
- Morgan, M. (1998). Discursive acts: Reading 'Discourse and social psychology-Eleven years after. *Theory and Psychology*, 8(3) 389-398.
- Morgan, M. (2005). Remembering embodied domination: Questions of critical/feminist psy-discourse on the body. *Theory and Psychology*, 15(3) 357-372.
- Morley, J. (2003). The texture of the real: Merleau-Ponty on imagination and psychopathy. In J. Phillips & J. Morley (Eds.), *Imagination and its pathologies* (pp. 93-112). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Morris, D. B. (1998). *Illness and culture in the postmodern age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Moss, P. (2007). Emergent methods in feminist research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 371-390). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mowbray, C. T., Lanir, S., & Hulce, M. (Eds.). (1986). *Women and mental health: New directions for change*. New York, NY: The Haworth Press.
- Murphy, M. A. (2003). The theory and practice of counting stitches as stories: Material evidence of autobiography in needlework, *Women's Studies*, 32, 641-655.
- Musées de Senlis. (2008). *Thematic issues: Séraphine Louis called Séraphine de Senlis*. Senlis, France: Musées de Senlis. Retrieved from <http://www.musees-senlis.fr/Dossiers-thematiques/seraphine-louis-dite-seraphine-de-senlis.html>

- Muskett, A. (1933). *Among the reeds*. Sydney, Australia: Cassell and Company.
(Published under pseudonym – Laker, J.).
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2014). *National statement on ethical conduct in human research*. Canberra, Australia: National Health and Medical Research Council. (Original work published 2007).
- NEAMI. (2003). *The secret life of Splash: Putting words to a visual experience*. Melbourne, Australia: NEAMI.
- NEAMI. (2004). Neami Splash Art Studio: A collection of art works. Melbourne, Australia: NEAMI.
- Neel, A. (1975). Alice Neel. In C. Nemser, *Art talk: Conversations with 12 women artists* (pp. 97-122). New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Nelson, C. B. (2005). *The creative process: A phenomenological and psychometric investigation of artistic creativity*. (Thesis: Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Psychology, The University of Melbourne, Australia).
- Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (Eds.). (2010). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nelson, L. H., & Wylie, A. (2004). Introduction [Special Issue on Feminist Science Studies]. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 19(1), vii-xiii.
- Nemser, C. (1975). *Art talk: conversations with 12 women artists*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Nemser, C. (1995). *Art talk: Conversations with 15 women artists*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Nettle, D. (2001). *Strong imagination: Madness, creativity and human nature*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Neuman, W. L. (1997). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Newmarch, G. (2009). *Ruby and Will: the art of Ruby Lindsay and Will Dyson* [Catalogue of exhibition held at Creswick Museum, 24 January – 27 April 2009]. Creswick, Australia: Creswick Historical Museum.
- No, I. (2009). *Percipience: Outside the range of understood sense*. Scotts Valley, CA: printed by Createspace.
- Nochlin, L. (1971). Why have there been no great women artists? *ARTnews*, 69(1), 22-39.
- Nochlin, L. (1999). *Representing women*. London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Nolte, K. (2006). A woman's inability to resist to emotional pangs. In B. Brand-Claussen & V. Michely (Eds.), *Madness is female: women's art in psychiatry around 1900: The Prinzhorn Collection* (pp. 60-62). Gent, France: Museum Dr. Guislain.

- Northfield, S. (Ed.). (2008). *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* [Exhibition catalogue]. Melbourne, Australia: Cunningham Dax Collection.
- Northfield, S. (2009). *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* [Conference poster presentation at the 44th Annual Australian Psychological Society Conference, Darwin, October, 2009].
- Northfield, S., Lawrence, D., & Wilson, S. (2010). Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health: An exhibition. *Women Against Violence: An Australian Feminist Journal*, 22, 4-17.
- Nussbaum, M. (2000). *Women and human development: the capabilities approach*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Brien, B. (1958). *Operators and things: The inner life of a schizophrenic*. London, England: Ace.
- O'Brien, K. (Reporter). (2006, August 30). *People with schizophrenia exhibit artwork* [Television broadcast transcript]. Sydney, Australia: Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1728425.htm>
- O'Connor, A. (1982). *Unfinished work: Articles and notes on women and the politics of art*. Richmond, Australia: Greenhouse.
- Office for Women. (2007). *Women in Australia 2007*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Oisteanu, V. (2005, March 14). *The chimeras of Unica Zürn. Unica Zürn: Drawings from the 1960s* [Exhibition]. Ubu Gallery, New York, N.Y. Retrieved from <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/reviews/oisteanu/oisteanu3-14-05.asp>
- O'Keeffe, G. (1976). *Georgia O'Keeffe: A studio book*. New York, NY: The Viking Press.
- Oksala, J. (2004). Anarchic bodies: Foucault and the feminist question of experience. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 19(4), 99-121.
- O'Regan, J. K., & Noë, A. (2001). A sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness. *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 24, 939-973. Retrieved from <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=BBS>
- Orlie, M. A. (2010). Impersonal matter. In D. Coole & S. Frost (Eds.), *New materialisms: ontology, agency and politics* (pp. 116-136). Durham, NC & London, England: Duke University Press.
- Ottley, D. (2007). *Grace Crowley's contribution to Australian modernism and geometric abstraction*. (Dissertation: Master of Philosophy, Department of Art History and Theory, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, Australia).

- Our Consumer Place. (2010). *So, you've got a "mental illness"? ...What now?* [Booklet 1]. Melbourne, Australia: Our Consumer Place Resource Centre, Our Community Pty Ltd.
- Our Consumer Place. (n.d.). *What do we mean by "consumer perspective"?* [Help sheet]. Retrieved from <http://www.ourconsumerplace.com.au/helpsheet?id=4755>
- Paget, M. A. (1983). Experience and knowledge. *Human Studies* 6(1), 67-90.
- Paivio, A. (1971). *Imagery and verbal processes*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Parker, R. (1996). *The subversive stitch: Embroidery and the making of the feminine*. London, England: The Women's Press. (Original work published 1984).
- Parker, R., & Pollock, G. (1981). *Old mistresses: Women, art and ideology*. London, England: Pandora Press.
- Peckham, P. (2010-2011). Erica McGilchrist drawings at Heide. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 49, 4.
- Peers, J. (1990a). Anne Montgomery. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 3(1), 10-11.
- Peers, J. (1990b). June Stephenson. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 3(2), 3-5.
- Peers, J. (1993). *More than gumtrees: A personal, social and artistic history of the Melbourne society of women painters and sculptors*. Melbourne, Australia: MSWPS & Dawn Revival Press.
- Peers, J. (1994). Well done sisters. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 21, 8-9.
- Peers, J. (1999). Place aux dames: Women artists and historical memory. In J. Kerr & J. Holder (Eds.), *Past and present. The national women's art anthology* (pp. 30-39). Sydney, Australia: Craftman House.
- Peers, J. (2001). Another look: Six women artists of the 1950s [Exhibition review: Inge King, Erica McGilchrist, Helen Maudsley, Mirka Mora, Norma Redpath, Dawn Sime. Exhibited at Heide Museum of Modern Art 18 November -7 January 2001. *Artlink*. 21(1). Retrieved from <http://www.artlink.com.au/articles/2481/another-look-six-women-artists-of-the-1950s/>
- Peers, J. (2008). Sometimes madness is wisdom. In S. Northfield (Ed.), *Canvassing the emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context* [Exhibition catalogue] (pp. 6-7). Melbourne, Australia: Cunningham Dax Collection.
- Peiry, L. (2001). *Art Brut: The origins of outsider art*. (J. Frank, Trans.). Paris, France: Flammarion.
- Pepper, S. (2003). *Arts-based practice in psychosocial rehabilitation: An overview*. North Fitzroy, Australia: VICSERV.

- Pepper, S. (2005, September). Rehabilitation and recovery: Exploring the relationship. *New Paradigm*, 1-11.
- Pepperell, R. (2003). *The posthuman condition: Consciousness beyond the brain*. Bristol, England: Intellect.
- Percival, L. (Interviewer). (2009, December 18-19). My space: Louise Baker. *The Age*, A2, p. 11.
- Pereira, M. (2012). Feminist theory is proper knowledge, but...The status of feminist scholarship in the academy. *Feminist Theory*, 13(3) 283-303.
doi:10.1177/1464700112456005
- Perkins Gilman, C. (1913, October). *Why I wrote the yellow wallpaper*. *The Forerunner* 4(8), 197-201. Retrieved from
<http://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/history/files/lavender/whyyw.html>
- Person, E. S. (2003). The creative role of fantasy in adaption. In J. Phillips & J. Morley (Eds.), *Imagination and its pathologies* (pp. 175-186). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Petersen, K., & Wilson, J. J. (1976). *Women artists: Recognition and reappraisal from the early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*. London, England: Women's Press.
- Pfieffer, S. I. (Ed.). (2008). *Handbook of giftedness in children: Psychoeducational theory, research and best practices*. New York, NY: Springer. doi:01.1007/978-0-387-7440-8_13
- Phillips, J., & Morley, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Imagination and its pathologies*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Pilgrim, D., & Rogers, A. (1999). *A sociology of mental health and illness*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Plath, S. (1963). *The bell jar*. London, England: Faber and Faber.
- Polanyi, M., & Prosch, H. (1975). *Meaning*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Pole, C. (Ed.). (2004). *Seeing is believing? Approaches to visual research*. Oxford, England: Elsevier Science.
- Pollock, G. (1988). *Vision and difference: Feminist, feminism and the history of art*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pope, R. (2005). *Creativity: Theory, history, practice*. London, England & New York, NY: Routledge.
- Post, F. (1994). Creativity and psychopathology; a study of 291 world-famous men. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 165, 22-34.
- Power, R. (2008). *The divided heart: Art and motherhood*. Fitzroy, Australia: Red Dog.

- Poylo, M. (Producer), & Provost, M. (Director). (2008). *S raphine* [Motion Picture]. France: Rialto Distribution Australia.
- Price, H. H. (1953). *Thinking and experience*. London, England: Hutchinson.
- Price, N. (2008). Without the labels: Narratives of a diagnosed culture. In A. Lewis & D. Doyle (Eds.), *Proving: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health. Disability in the arts disadvantage in the arts Australia* (pp. 46-59). Freemantle, Australia: DADAA.
- Prieto, L. R. (2001). *At home in the studio: The professionalization of women artists in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Probert, B., & Wilson, B. W. (1993). *Pink collar blues: Work, gender and technology*. Carlton, Australia: Melbourne University Press.
- Putland, C. (2003). Practising arts and health: What's in a name. *Artwork, Arts, Health and wellbeing*, 57, 3-6.
- Raik, H., & Mangiamiele, R. (1991). *Survey of the health and work practices of artists*. (Graduate Diploma: Occupational Health Practice, Latrobe University, Melbourne, Australia).
- Ramazanoglu, C. (1996). 'Unravelling postmodern paralysis: a response to Joan Hoff.' *Women's History Review*, 5(1), 19-23 [Reaction to Joan Hoff, Gender as a postmodern category of paralysis. With a reply by Joan Hoff]. *Women's History Review* 3 (1994), 149-168.
- Ratcliff, E., & Kirby, K. (2001). Psychiatry in Tasmania: from old cobwebs to new brooms. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 9(2), 128-132.
- Reckitt, H. (Ed.). (2012). *Art and feminism*. New York, NY: Phaidon.
- Reilly, N. (2009, February 15). Rewind 1960. *Sunday Life: The Sunday Age Magazine*, p. 30.
- Reinharz, S., & Chase, S. E. (2003). Interviewing women. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp.73-90). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Reissman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Reynolds, F., & Prior, S. (2003). A lifestyle coat hanger: a phenomenological study of the meanings of artwork for women coping with chronic illness and disability. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 25(14), 785-794.
- Rhodes, C. (1994). *Primitivism and modern art*. London, England: Thames & Hudson.
- Rhodes, C. (2000). *Outsider art: spontaneous alternatives*. New York, NY: Thames & Hudson.

- Richards, G. (2005). Emotions into words – Or words into emotions? In P. Gouk & H. Hill. Representing emotions. *New connections in the histories of art, music and medicine*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.
- Richards, R. (1996). Does the lone genius ride again? Chaos, creativity, and community. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 36(2), 44-60.
- Richardson, I., & Harper, C. (2006). Imaging the visceral soma: A corporeal feminist interpretation. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 6(1), 1-13.
- Ricketson, M. (Interviewer). (1994). Interview with Carole Shephard. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 21, 12-13.
- Ridgway, P. (2001). ReStorying psychiatric disability: Learning from first person recovery narratives. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 24(4), 335-343.
doi:10.1037/h0095071
- Ripa, Y. (1990). *Women and madness: The incarceration of women in 19th-Century France*. (C. du Peloux Menagé, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rix Nicholas, H. (2010). The man for the job [Reprinted from Press Release for Exhibition held January 23-April 5, 2009, Bendigo Art Gallery]. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 48.
- Roberts, L. W., Dunn, L. B., Hammond, K., A., & Warner, T. D. (2006). Do research procedures pose relatively greater risk for healthy persons than for persons with schizophrenia? *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 32(1), 153-158.
- Roberts, L. W., Hammond, K. A., Warner, T. D., & Lewis, R. (2004). Influence of ethical safeguards on research participation: Comparison of perspectives of people with schizophrenia and psychiatrists. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 161(12), 2309-2311.
- Robinson, H. (Ed.). (2001). *Feminism-Art-Theory: An anthology 1968-2000*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.
- Robson, B. (2000). The making of a distinguished English psychiatrist: Eric Cunningham Dax and the mythology of heroism in psychiatry (1951-1969) (Doctor of Philosophy: University of Melbourne).
- Robson, B. (2002). The making of a distinguished English psychiatrist: Eric Cunningham Dax and the Victorian Mental Hygiene Authority (1951-1969). *History of Psychiatry*, 12, 69-87.
- Robson, B. (2003). Preserving psychiatry through art: historical perspectives on the Cunningham Dax Collection of Psychiatric Art. In C. Coleborne & D. MacKinnon (Eds.), *'Madness' in Australia: Histories, heritage and the asylum* (pp. 195-205). Brisbane, Australia: University of Queensland Press.

- Robson, B. (2006). *Recovering art: a history of the Cunningham Dax Collection*. Melbourne, Australia: The Cunningham Dax Collection.
- Rollins, M. (1989). *Mental imagery: On the limits of cognitive science*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rosenberg, M. (2008). The evaluation game: Determining the benefits of arts engagement on health. In A. Lewis & D. Doyle (Eds.), *Proving: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health. Disability in the Arts Disadvantage in the Arts Australia* (pp. 122-131). Freemantle, Australia: DADAA.
- Rosewarne-Foster, J. (1992). Feminisms. Representation, motherhood. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 16, 7-9.
- Rosewarne-Foster, J. (1993). Feminism and representation: Towards a postmodernist curriculum. *Australian Art Education*, 16(3), 43-48.
- Rosser, S. V. (Ed.). (1988). *Feminism within the science and health care professions: Overcoming resistance*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press.
- Rosser, S. V. (2007). The link between theory and methods: Feminist experimental research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 223-256). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Rothenberg, A., & Greenberg, B. (1975). *The Index of Scientific writings on creativity: Creative men and women*. Kent, England: The Shoe String Press.
- Rule, D. (2010, August-September). Yayoi Kusama – polka dots eternal. *Oyster*, 88. Retrieved from <http://danrule.tumblr.com/post/1083613066/yayoi-kusama-polka-dots-eternal-published>
- Runco, M. A. & Albert, R. S. (Eds.). (1990). *Theories of creativity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Runco, M. A.; & Albert, R. S. (2010). Creativity research. In J. C. Kaufman & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of creativity* (pp. 3-19). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Rupprecht, C. (2000). Introduction. In U. Zurn. *Dark spring* (C. Rupprecht, Trans.). (pp. 1-31). Cambridge, England: Exact Change. (Original work published 1969).
- Rusden, H. (Interviewer). (1994, August 25). *Nora Heysen interviewed by Heather Rusden* [Real media file]. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn404432>
- Russell, D. (1995). *Women, madness and medicine*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Russo, N. F. (1999). Feminist research: Questions and methods. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23, i-iv.

- Salort, C. R. (2010, March). *How to inquire when the eye jumps over the wall*. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/theme3ramoncabreraen.pdf>
- Salmon, F. (2005). *European collections of creative works by psychiatric patients: A comparative survey*. Melbourne, Australia: Cunningham Dax Collection.
- Sanfilippo, A. (2005). *The collector's exhibition 2005: A selected exhibition of Australian contemporary art* [Exhibition catalogue entry]. Richmond, Australia: Contemporary Art Society.
- Sartre, J-P. (1948). *The psychology of imagination*. New York, NY: Philosophical Library. (Original work published in 1940).
- Saunders, L. (1987). *Glancing fires: An investigation into women's creativity*. London, England: The Women's Press.
- Scarfield, K. (2009). *Yayoi Kusama: Mirrored years*. [Education kit to accompany the exhibition]. Wellington, New Zealand: City Gallery Wellington Education Programme.
- Schmidt, G., Steck, H., & Bader, A. (1961). *Though this be madness: A study in psychotic art*. London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Scott, J. W. (1991, Summer). The evidence of experience. *Critical Inquiry*, 17, 363-387.
- Scott, J. W. (2004). Feminism's history. *Journal of Women's History*, 16(2), 10-29.
- Scully, A., T. (1979). *Museums of madness: The social organisation of insanity in 19th century England*. London, England: Allen Lane.
- Secker, J. (2009). Development of a measure of social inclusion for arts and mental health project participants. *Journal of Mental Health*, 18(1), 65-72.
doi:10.1080/09638230701677803
- S  raphine of Senlis. (2012, May 5). Retrieved from <http://beach-combingmagpie.blogspot.com.au/2012/05/seraphine-of-senlis.html>
- Short, M. (Interviewer). (2010, November 1). Dr. John Armstrong, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Melbourne. Interview by Michael Short. *The Age*, The Zone, p. 11.
- Short, M. (Interviewer). (2013, June 10). Painting your feelings/Interviewee: Dr Eugen Koh. *The Age*, The Zone. <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/painting-your-feelings-20130609-2ny4d.html>
- Showalter, E. (1985). *The female malady: women, madness, and English culture, 1830-1980*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

- Simons, M.A. (1989). Two interviews with Simone de Beauvoir [Special Issue: French Feminist Philosophy]. (J. M. Todd, Trans.). *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 3(3), 11-27. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.1988.tb00185.x
- Simons, M. A. (1999). The philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 14(4), 1-2. Retrieved from <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/hypatia/toc/hyp14.4.html>
- Simons, M. A. (Ed.). (2006). *The philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir - Critical essays*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.
- Simons, M. A. (2010). Confronting an impasse: Reflections on the past and future of Beauvoir scholarship. [Special Issue: Feminist Legacies/Feminist Futures: The 25th Anniversary]. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 25(4), 909-926. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01132.x
- Simonton, D. K. (1997). *Genius and creativity*. Greenwich, CT: Ablex Publishing Corp.
- Skipper, S. (2005). *My Story: tales from a pioneer of Montsalvat*. Carlton, Australia: Black Jack Press.
- Slatkin, W. (1997). *Women artists in history (from antiquity to the present)* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Slezak, P. (1995). The "philosophical" case against visual imagery. In P. Slezak, T. Caelli & R. Clark (Eds.), *Perspectives on cognitive science* (pp. 237-271). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Slezak, P., Caelli, T., Clark, R. (Eds.). (1995). *Perspectives on cognitive science*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Smith, P. (2010). *Just kids*. London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Snyder-Ott, J. (1978). *Women and creativity*. Millbrae, CA: Les Femmes Publishing.
- Sorkin, J. (2007). Social construction feminism. *Frieze: Contemporary art and culture*, 105, 35-36.
- Spaak, I. (2010). Art and psychosis: Séraphine de Senlis (1864-1942). A self-taught naïve painter prodigy's tormented ascent to fame. *Medicographia*, 32(2) 210-216.
- Spaniol, S. (2001). Art and mental illness: where is the link? *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 28(4), 221-231.
- Spelman, E. (1990). *Inessential woman*. London, England: The Women's Press.
- Spelman, E. V. (2007). *Inclusive feminism: A third wave theory of women's commonality* [Book Review]. By Naomi Zack. (2005). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 22(3), 201-204.

- Spink, J. D. (2000). *Gender and psychosocial rehabilitation. A study of the different perspectives of service users, service providers and policy makers*. North Fitzroy, Australia: VICSERV Inc.
- Spinks, T. (2005, February 21). Vali Myers. *LiVEJOURNAL*. Retrieved from <http://vali-myers.livejournal.com/2865.html>
- Spivak, G. C. (1998). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-313). Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Spongberg, M. (2009). The 'f' word [Editorial]. *Australian Feminist Studies* 24(62), 389-390. doi:10.1080/08164640903338562
- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1990). Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes. In Stanley, L. (Ed.), *Feminist praxis* (pp. 20-60). London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Stapleton, K. (2001). Constructing a feminist identity: Discourse and the community of practice. *Feminism & Psychology*, 11(4) 459-491.
- Stephoe, A. (1998). *Genius and the mind: studies of creativity and temperament*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Stewart, M. (1985). *Autobiography of my mother*. Richmond, Australia: Penguin Books.
- Stewart, M. (2005). *Margaret Olley: Far from a still life*. Sydney, Australia: Random House.
- Stickley, T., & Hui, A. (2012). Social prescribing through arts on prescription in a UK city: Participants' perspectives [Part 1]. *Public Health*, 126(7), 574-579.
- Stickley, T., Hui, A., Morgan, J., & Bertram, G. (2007). Experiences and constructions of art: a narrative discourse analysis. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 14, 783-790.
- Strand, D. (1998). *Research in the creative arts*. Canberra, Australia: Australian National University.
- Stuckey, H. L., & Nobel, J. (2010, February). The connection between art, healing, and public health: A review of current literature. *American Journal Public Health*, 100(2), 254-263.
- Sturgess, H. (2008, March). *Towards a language of interruption*. (Master of Visual Arts 2007 Research Paper/Dissertation: Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney, Australia).
- Suleiman, S. R. (1993). The bird superior meets the bride of the wind: Leonora Carrington & Max Ernst. In W. Chadwick & I. de Courtivron (Eds.), *Significant others: Creativity and intimate partnerships* (pp. 97-118). London, England: Thames and Hudson.

- Summers, A. (2009). *The lost mother: A story of art and love*. Carlton, Australia: Melbourne University Press.
- Suther, J. D. (1993). Separate studios: Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy. In W. Chadwick & I. de Courtivron (Eds.), *Significant others: Creativity and intimate partnerships* (pp. 137-154). London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Swartz, S. (1999). Lost lives: Gender, history and mental illness in the cape, 1891–1910. *Feminism & Psychology*, 9(2), 152-158.
doi:10.1177/095935359900900200
- Taft, A. (2003). *Promoting women's mental health: the challenge of intimate partner/domestic violence* (Issues Paper No. 8). Sydney, Australia: Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, University of New South Wales.
- Taguchi, H. L. (2012). A diffractive and Deleuzian approach to analysing interview data. *Feminist Theory*, 13, 265. doi:10.1177/1464700112456001
- Tait, P. (1990). Stretching definitions of feminist art. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 3(1), 6-8.
- Tanner Boll, P. (Producer & Director). *Who does she think she is?* [Motion Picture]. USA: Artistic License.
- Taube, D., & Burkhardt, S. (1997). Ethical and legal risks associated with archival research. *Ethics and Behaviour*, 7(1) 59-67.
- Taylor, A. (1991). Women's art and feminism. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 4(3), 12.
- Taylor, A. (Interviewer). (1992). Interview with Carole Wilson. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 16, 12.
- Taylor, A. (2013, March 23). Women steal the show on and off the canvas. *The Saturday Age*, p. 6.
- Taylor, S. (2010). Negotiating oppositions and uncertainties: Gendered conflicts in creative identity work. *Feminism & Psychology*, 21(3), 354-371.
- Taylor, S., & Littleton, K. (2006). Biographies in talk: A narrative-discursive research approach. *Qualitative Sociology Review* 11(1), 22-38.
- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. (2011). *Information for the public: Written in the stars*. Retrieved from http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/2011/popular-physicsprize2011.pdf
- Thevoz, M. (1994). An anti-museum: The collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne. In M. D. Hall & E. W. Metcalf (Eds.), *The artist outside: Creativity and the boundaries of culture* (pp. 66-74). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Thiele, M., & Marsden, S. (2003). *Engaging art: The Artful Dodgers Studio – A theoretical model of practice*. Melbourne, Australia: Jesuit Social Services.

- Thiele, M., & Marsden, S. (2008). P(ART)icipation: art, dual diagnoses and the Artful Dodgers Studio? In A. Lewis & D. Doyle (Eds.), *Proving: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health. Disability in the arts disadvantage in the arts Australia* (pp. 60-73). Freemantle, Australia: DADAA.
- Thomas, N. J. T (2006, January 15). Mental imagery, philosophical issues about. *Encyclopaedia of cognitive science*. [Online publication].
doi:10.1002/0470018860.s00210
- Thomas, N. J. T. (2007). Mental imagery. In E. N. Zalta. (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy* [Online publication]. Stanford, CA: CSLI. Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mental-imagery/>
- Thomashoff, H., & Sukhanova, E. (Eds.). *The person in art: Conceptual pictorial frames on art and health*. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Thomasson, A. (2006). Debates about the ontology of art: What are we doing here? *Philosophy Compass*, 1(3), 245-255.
- Throsby, D., & Hollister, V. (2003). *Don't give up your day job: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*. Sydney, Australia: Australia Council.
- Throsby, D., & Mills, D. (1989). *When are you going to get a real job? An economic study of Australian artists*. Sydney, Australia: Australia Council.
- Throsby, D., & Thompson, B. (1994). *But what do you do for a living? A new economic study of Australian artists*. Sydney, Australia: Australia Council.
- Throsby, D., & Withers, G. (1983). Measuring the demand for the arts as a public good: Theory and empirical results. In W. S. Hendon & J. L. Shanahan (Eds.), *Economics of cultural decisions* (pp. 177-191). Cambridge, MA: Abt Books.
- Throsby, D., & Zednik, A. (2010). *Do you really expect to get paid? An economic study of professional artists in Australia*. Sydney: Australia Council.
- Tomkins, C. (2008). *Lives of artists*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.
- Topliss, H. (1996). *Modernism and feminism: Australian women artists 1900–1940*. Sydney, Australia: Craftsman House.
- Tracinshki, J. (Interviewer). (2009, May 16). Bohemian rhapsody/Interviewee: Mirka Mora. *Herald Sun*, Home life, pp. 20-22.
- Turley, L. (Director). (2010, June 22). *Artists at work. Del Kathryn Barton* [Television broadcast]. (Originally broadcast as part of the ABC1 Artscape Artists at work series). Sydney, Australia: ABC TV.
- Turner, G. (1999). Yayoi Kusama. *BOMB Magazine*, 66, ART. Retrieved from <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2192/yayoi-kusama>
- Tye, M. (1991). *The imagery debate*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Tyrer, P., Seivewright, H., Ferguson, B., & Johnson, T. (2003). "Cold calling" in psychiatric follow up studies: Is it justified? *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 29, 238-242.
- UNESCO. (1980). *Legislation, social status and international standards. The artist and society*. Retrieved from http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=8092&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
- University of Queensland Art Museum. (2007). *Del Kathryn Barton*. [Exhibition interpretive guide]. Retrieved from <http://www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/docs/NeoBarton.pdf>
- Ussher, J. M. (1991). *Women's madness: misogyny or mental illness?* New York, NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- van der Tuin, I. (2009). 'Jumping generations': On second- and third-wave feminist epistemology [Special issue: Generation: On Feminist Time-Lines. C. Colebrook and R. Braidotti]. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24(59), 17-31.
doi:10.1080/08164640802645166
- van der Tuin, I. (2011). A different starting point, a different metaphysics: Reading Bergson and Barad diffractively. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 26(1), 22-42.
- Van Lith, T., Fenner, P., & Schofield, M. (2009). Toward an understanding of how art making can facilitate mental health recovery. *Australian e-Journal for the advancement of mental health*, 8(2), 1-11.
- Van Lith, T., Fenner, P., & Schofield, M. (2011). The lived experience of art making as a companion to the mental health recovery process. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 13(8), 652-660.
- Vasek, L. (2010, June 24). The secret history of me. *The Weekend Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/life/weekend-australian-magazine/the-secret-history-of-me/story-e6frg8h6-1225883829455>
- Vernazza, T. (2006). *Women, art and mental illness*. Oceanside, CA: W. S. Publishing.
- VicHealth. (2003). *Victorian health promotion foundation creative connections: Promoting mental health and wellbeing through community arts participation*. Carlton, Australia: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
- VicHealth. (2004a). *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence*. Carlton, Australia: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
- VicHealth. (2004b). *VicHealth Letter*, 23. Carlton South, Australia: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

- Vintges, K. (1999). Simone de Beauvoir: A feminist thinker for our times. *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 14(4), 133-144. doi: 10.1111/j.1527-2001.1999.tb01257.x
- Voigt, A. (1996). *New visions, new perspectives: Voices of contemporary Australian women artists*. Roseville East, Australia: Craftsman House.
- Vreeland, S. (2002). *The passion of Artemisia*. London, England: Review.
- Wadsworth, Y. (2001, June). *What is feminist research?* Paper presented at Bridging the Gap: Feminisms and Participatory Action Research Conference, Boston College, Boston, MA.
- Wagner, A. M. (1993). Fictions: Krasner's presence, Pollock's absence. In W. Chadwick & I. de Courtivron (Eds.), *Significant others: Creativity and intimate partnerships* (pp. 223-243). London, England: Thames and Hudson.
- Wallach, A. (Interviewer). (2001, December 25). The artist Louise Bourgeois at 90, weaving complexities. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/25/arts/louise-bourgeois-at-90-weaving-complexities.html>
- Ward, M. J. (1946). *The snake pit*. New York, NY: New American Library.
- Warner, M. (1988). Introduction. In L. Carrington (1945/1988). *The house of fear: Notes from down below* (M. Warner, Trans.). London, England: Virago Press.
- Warren, C. A. B. (1987). *Madwives: Schizophrenic women in the 1950s*. New Brunswick, NJ & London, England: Rutgers University Press.
- Watson, J. (2009, August 21). *Conversations, insights and anecdotes. Proceedings of the inaugural Cairns indigenous art fair*. Cairns, Australia: Centre of Contemporary Arts.
- Weilgosz, M., & Imms, W. (2007). A brief history of creative research. Turning back the pages of creativity research. *Australian Art Education*, 30(1), 47-67.
- Weir, R. (1998). *Leonardo's ink bottle: The artist's way of seeing*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts.
- Weiss, A. S. (1992). *Shattered forms: Art brut, phantasms, modernism*. Albany, GA: State University of New York Press.
- Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- White, A. (2005). *The artist and mental illness: An art historical perspective*. Melbourne, Australia: School of Art History, Cinema, Classics and Archaeology, University of Melbourne.
- White, A. R. (1990). *The language of imagination*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

- White, C. (Ed.). (2001). *Working with the stories of women's lives*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- White, M. (2008). Are we there yet? Towards an international exchange of practice in community-based arts in health. In A. Lewis & D. Doyle. (Eds.), *Proving: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health. Disability in the arts disadvantage in the arts Australia* (pp. 94-107). Freemantle, Australia: DADAA.
- Wilkinson, S. (1996). *Feminist social psychologies: International perspectives*. Buckingham, England & Philadelphia, PN: Open University Press.
- Wilks, S. (2005). *Designing a thinking curriculum*. Camberwell, Australia: ACER Press.
- Wilks, S. (2005). The visual arts as a thinking tool. In S. Wilks. *Designing a thinking curriculum* (pp. 65-76). Camberwell, Australia: ACER Press.
- Williams, D. (1996). *Creating social capital: a study of the long-term benefits from community-based arts funding*. Adelaide, Australia: Community Arts Network.
- Williams, F. (1985). Translator's preface; Michel Foucault, Dream, imagination, and existence – Introduction to L. Binswanger. Dream and existence. In L. Binswanger, *Dream and existence* (pp. 21-28) (K. Holler, Ed. J. Needleman, Trans.). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press. (Original work published 1954. Published in English 1985).
- Williams, K. (1991). A pleasant occupation: Painting and the colonial lady artist. *Women's Art Register Bulletin*, 3(3), 12-15.
- Wilmoth, P. (Interviewer). (2010, October 16). Building an empire/Interviewee: Rebecca Barnard. *The Melbourne Times*, p. 29.
- Wilson, E. A. (2008). Organic empathy: Feminism, psycho-pharmaceuticals, and the embodiment of depression. In S. Alaimo and S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 373-399). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Winter, N. (1978). *Interview with the muse. Remarkable women speak on creativity and power*. Berkeley, CA: Moon Books.
- Winterson, J. (1994). *Art and lies: A piece for three voices and a bawd*. New York, NY: Vintage International.
- Winterson, J. (1995). *Art objects: Essays on ecstasy and effrontery*. New York, NY: Vintage International-Random House.
- Winterson, J. (2004). Jeanette Winterson on The waves. In V. Woolf. *The waves* (pp. vii-x). London, England: Vintage-Random House. (Original work published 1931).

- Wirshing, D. A., Sergi, M. J., & Mintz, J. (2005). A videotape intervention to enhance the informed consent process for medical and psychiatric treatment research. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 161(1), 186-188.
- Witzling, M. R. (1991). *Voicing our visions - writings by women artists*. London, England: The Women's Press.
- Wolff, J. (1990). *Feminine sentences: Essays on women and culture*. Oxford, England: Polity Press.
- Woody, M. J. (2003) The unconscious as a hermeneutic myth: Defence of imagination. In J. Phillips & J. Morley (Eds.), *Imagination and its pathologies* (pp. 113-124). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Woolf, V. (1977). *To the lighthouse*. London, England: Triad/Granada. (Original work published 1927).
- Woolf, V. (2004). *The waves*. London, England: Vintage-Random House. (Original work published 1931).
- Worell, J. (1996). Opening doors to feminist research. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 469-485.
- Wreford, G. (2003). DADAA Place of disability in arts, health and wellbeing: *Artwork, Arts, Health and wellbeing*, 57, 26-30.
- Wurzer, W. S. (2002). *Panorama: Philosophies of the visible*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Yates, F. A. (1966). *The art of memory*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd.
- Young, I. M. (1980). Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility, and spatiality. *Human Studies*, 3, 137-156.
- Young, M. (2005). *On female body experience: Throwing like a girl and other essays*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Zavos, A., & Biglia, B. (2009). Embodying feminist research: Learning from action research, political practice, diffractions and collective knowledge. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 6(1), 153-172.
- Zürn, U. (1993). *The house of illnesses: stories and pictures from a case of jaundice*. (M. Green. Trans.). London, England: Atlas Press. (Original work 1958. Original work published 1977).
- Zürn, U. (2000). *Dark spring*. (C. Rupprecht, Trans.). Cambridge, England: Exact Change. (Original work 1967. Original work published 1969).

Appendix A

'I' Poems

Seeing the world differently (Alice, 2009)

I have been quite passionate
I really do think that creativity is really, really important
Life can be pretty miserable without that
If your whole life is a mental health service
Which for some people it is
I had a ... accident
I sort of shifted my brain
I lost music
I don't understand music anymore because music to me was a big passion

I started seeing the world differently

The world literally did look different
It just had different dimensions and shapes and the colours were different
Everything was different
I don't know if
I decided to be an artist because the world was different
I said
I was an artist a long time before
I think
I was
But then what is an artist?
There's many different ways of being an artist
It was about me taking a stand
Are you are person with a disability?
Or are you an artist?
And which one comes first.
'I'm an artist
I have these issues
Full stop.'
I was trying to inspire other people too.
For me it was also about an alternative to being
a person with mental illness
or a person who's ill

or a person who's sick
or a person who doesn't have a job
or a person who's not contributing
or a person who's not a pensioner – all those things
I say "I'm an artist," and then nobody asks more, initially.
I do know when
I'm painting
I can get into this space where
I'm loving it
It was all about the process and that beautiful - - um, high
It's like a drug high, I suppose.
You just feel great.
I always feel very inspired, you know, energised. It's about the only time
I actually feel really calm - My anxiety is really low
I think being ill
Your world becomes smaller.
There is more time to actually see what is around you
I found I needed to do
I had to find some sort of beauty or some greatness in this much smaller world.

If I don't, I get sick (Janis, 2007)

I got my great grandfather's oil paints

I actually really discovered something that was sort of like my - - thing

I could do, when stuff wasn't too happy

I could just go into like - a focus.

I remember at twelve,

I got his oil paints - beautiful, amazing, luscious, probably chemically dangerous things,

But I paint

It took me into that little world where nothing matters

The conditions of, who

I am, who

I'm supposed to be, what

I'm supposed to be doing, are gone. Suddenly

I'm sort of free to do anything

I want there.

"Don't scribble during [class] - while we're talking,"

I defy that.

I followed

I basically was very much a follower as a kid

I let everybody sort of paint over me [laughs].

I now have a visual language

I get a sensory intake

I feel like

I sense things - - through my skin

I'm calling them electromagnetic frequencies but - - they could be called vibes

They could be called anything

I intake

If I don't do anything with it, it sticks there and turns into a mood.

I get these moods

I know there is something

I have to do.

Sometimes it's writing, sometimes it's dancing, sometimes it's playing an instrument - -

but more often than not - -

If I'm at home I just get out this sketch pad

I just do.

I'm prepared to work long hours at creating a visual impression of the world around and within me.

If I don't,

I get sick,

I stopped doing it for a few years because it was expensive.

I didn't have the space

I lived with other people

I made a mess - - splattered paint on the wall [Laughs]

I do have to paint.

I can't just draw in the sketchpad.

It's absolutely essential

I like painting big pictures

I was sort of, you know, wanting to go out and just graffiti things [Laughs]

I was painting all my furniture

I really needed the place to paint and be around other people who kind of accepted it.

I think stopping

I was sort of like at a bottleneck, no middle of the road

I had no - - it's like not being able to talk.

It's like somebody's, you know, *taken away my voice box*.

I'm trying to say that it just - - you have to do it.

I can't just do it with my mind

I've very much got a mind hand connection

I have to do the visual.

I like singing while I'm painting.

I like singing and dancing and painting.

I'm supposed to be doing - -

The artist rebels (Joy, 2009)

I used to draw before

I can even remember

I assume it was there in me all the time

People would say 'Ah, you're going to be - - Oh, you're an artist are you?

It was sort of embedded in my head that

I was an artist as well

Before I was four

Drawing meant a lot to me

It was my first language.

I went to school

I used to draw in the back of other people's - - books

I've always drawn.

I went to a high school that specialised in languages

Art was their last thought in the school

Art wasn't considered valuable.

Art wasn't considered a sensible thing to be putting your mind to

Particularly in a working class family like ours - - you wouldn't mess around with art.

I was still drawing in books

I got married

I had two kids in two years and at that stage ***the artist in me started to rebel*** (laughs)

I think the groundswell of the women's movement was coming

I hated being Mum

I really didn't - -

I wasn't cut out for it - -

I sort of made a pact with the artist side of me

I'd do my duty by the kids

I'd just - -

I always sold my work easily and well, which some artists have to struggle with

I never did have to

I always thought of myself as an artist because of that early indoctrination

You are an artist.

I do understand being an outsider

For me it saved my life

I've been plagued with depressions

I've had - -

I was in a depression

I felt worthless

I hadn't achieved anything you know, just being a mother

I started to collect photographs of all the artwork that

I had done and sold and so forth and put it in a book - -

Whenever I felt low

I could look and think

'I haven't done too badly

I've done all these.'

I wrote about the river and then - - saw the process in relation to the self.

All the different emotions, like the seasons of the river

I'd been through a tremendous flood

I was likening the flood to that terrible tumultuous time

I was an older and wiser person on the other side of it

I took note of how the river changes

I felt I kept myself afloat

I never had to be put in an institution or anything

I would be in bed for a fortnight, not eating - - and you know, not there.

I was in the heavy depression

I know the power of art

I know that - -

I could not have got through without the artwork.

I wrote a lot about - - falling in the pit - - and always trapped - - dark ignorance round
and around

Time passing and trapped

To no avail

And the merry go round

I felt

I was on, all the time, entertainment without satisfaction.

Without art I just couldn't have made it through life

I'm sure

It's kept me alive

Sometimes it's personal: A place to put (Judy, 2007)

I've been drawing since
I was a little girl
I never really realised my passion, until lately, for it
I started a course - - an Art course
I'm in second year
I hope to sell some works and share my work with other people
Sort of, to be a known artist - -
Known as an artist.
I'm pretty green
I haven't had many shows
Hopefully, I'll get to do more of that
I do feel like an artist but...
I still feel pretty unknown at the moment - -
I've only done - -
I've done a few bits and pieces around in the mental health field
I haven't really broken the scene in - - sort of mainstream artists
I'm hoping to do that.
I find - - you are more categorised if you have a diagnosis
I just practice art in the house
I set up on the table – or in the lounge room --- with the easel
I'm creating. Yeah it's good
I think that it's a very good therapeutic tool
It helps me get out some emotions and dreams
I can look back and remember them
Or even get them out of my head and just totally get them out
I don't have to think about them
I just put them away
I produce things on issues that are surrounding me
Sometimes it's personal
I think it should be something that most women do actually

Alchemising troubles (Margaret, 2007)

I've got a picture in my head of being very little, winning an award for - -
I won a book
I had to walk across the auditorium
I've learnt to hide in my art working
It's always been about coping with - - whenever - -
I feel I can't say - - just expressing emotions and troubles and values - -
I just feel it's all really private.
I've felt like it's saved me
It's a really great place to put a lot of difficulty
I felt like taking a lot of really difficult issues and alchemising them
Taking something and turning them into something else.
I felt that - - it was a really positive thing to do with pain
I was thinking about it
All I wanted to do was travel, but then even in primary school
I loved - -
I think I felt the most meaning, the *sense of awareness of being alive* when
I was making art.
I was in primary school
I got allowed to go inside the art room at lunchtime
- it made me feel like
I was special
It was really pleasurable - - to be acknowledged in a positive way like that -
encouraged.
I had quite a bit of trouble in high school
I just wanted to do what
I wanted to do
I didn't want to do it that way. "Learn how to draw and do all your freestyle stuff in your
own time,"
I wanted to do the freestyle stuff - -
I felt like - -
I was on the outside and - - ...
I think I lost that sense of love between high school and primary school
I just really struggled with always being not good enough
All I wanted to do was travel but then
I was craving to stop travelling so that I could make art.
I think sometimes artmaking can help people keep their sanity.

Artmaking as emptying and artmaking to formula (Norah, 2007)

I guess I do remember as a child going to kindergarten
Being shown an easel, a big easel with paint blocks
That was my first experience of painting
I thought, 'Oh, that was fantastic.'
'I don't want any other activity.'
I just wanted to keep going
I thought that was really good
I loved the mark that it made.
I always liked drawing at school
I really loved drawing
I wasn't much good at maths
I did an art course
I liked that but then
I didn't really think I was all that good enough to do anything.
I had my daughter
I was at home
I started because I was housebound
I kinda had to fill in my day
I started to paint and enjoy it
I thought it was really great.
I felt a bit inferior
I was doing an art course
I didn't feel as if
I was as good as anybody else
I tended not to want to go on with it
I was at home
I didn't care any more
I just felt it was for myself
I didn't have to compete.
I felt as if I'd come through something
I'd cleansed myself of it
I'd got rid of it
I felt it was a cleansing of those emotions
I kinda felt it was an emptying
I felt, 'I'm just throwing everything here'
I felt it was like a venom coming out of me.

I thought, 'that's it.
I don't want to do anymore.'
Then I thought, 'I quite enjoyed doing that actually.
I did quite like this process.'
I was thinking
I started to look around
'I wondered how - - composition and colour
I became interested in it all again
I started to look at the local art shows
I got really interested in producing artwork for the local art shows
I really liked it
I thought it was great
I was quite mercenary
I started to do some painting
I started to sell some painting
I was really amazed
I was really amazed that people would buy them
I started to get a real - - you know, my self-esteem or my ego really liked this attention
I sold them
I thought this was fantastic
I'd find I was working towards a show
I felt a bit of an impostor really
I felt as if I was just selling to an audience
I felt
I'm really just a - -
I felt that it was different
It was just making art to a formula
I thought it was to a formula.
I did a couple of paintings and there was pictures of the artists, I thought,
'I didn't really feel like I was an artist,'(laughs)
I was just there sort of mucking around with a bit of paint.
I called myself
I suppose, a designer
If I'd gone through the painting stream
I might have been called a painter.
I suppose
I felt very pigeonholed

I think that would be a bit presumptuous really

To do that

I really enjoy the process of painting

I've got the time

I'm free

I like it

I couldn't call myself, you know, really an artist

I like to muck around with paint

No I don't think so.

I suppose I never think about it

I belonged to the artist group

But you wouldn't really call yourself an artist.

Would you?

Do you think?

I just do: It's just me (Ola, 2007)

I haven't done much limestone

I did with him

I find the ideas

I've got - it's fine

See, I'm doing

I found he was a bit stunted in his ideas

I really wanted to do detail on it and different things, and he said, "Oh, you should be doing that in painting"

Well, I don't really agree.

I felt

I liked some of his work but a lot of it I didn't

I found it a bit restrictive

I didn't lose my confidence

I thought, 'No'

I can't draw

I can't paint

I can't do this

I've never thought like that

I just do

It's just me.

The things that make your heart sing (Ruby, 2007)

For as long as I can remember
Drawing has been a major part of my life.
My favourite thing to do from kindergarten onwards
I got sick
I had bipolar
I was sick in high school
I got diagnosed when I left
After that art chose me because there wasn't anything else
I could do
I was that unwell
Even if I end up not wanting to be an artist
I'll always do it. It's huge.
It was like the slack subject
I mean my family didn't really care what
I chose to do
I sort of felt, just generally, it wasn't a valued thing.
I was seen as one of the more skilled people art-wise in my year level
You just didn't get any, I guess, credit for it
"Oh yeah, you were born with that skill."
"What do you do?"
I say,
I'm an artist
I paint
I draw
That's what I do with my time.
"Oh, you took a gamble doing that."
I don't actually like to
I feel kinda stupid using the word artist
I just wouldn't use the word
There's something so pretentious about it
I think that people associate that word with art masters
I didn't like to use it
I would just go, "Oh well, I draw and I paint,"
"Oh, so you're an artist,"
I'd go, "Yeah, I guess."
I'm not that comfortable with that term.

I'll probably call myself an illustrator
Artist is just so fraught
You know it just covers so much.
I guess out of desperation
I sort of sat with myself and thought, 'what makes me feel?
What makes me really happy?
What have I done through every class that
I've ever been in since
I've been a little kid?' - which is just draw all over all of my notebooks.
I went, 'Well, that's what makes me happy and
I should just give it a go'
And then I never really stopped.

I think it is absolutely essential

I'm one of those people whose got a zillion journals everywhere
I'm always scribbling something, like writing or drawing or doing something
It's just like an extension of my arm
I need it all the time
I don't show anyone
It's not for anyone else
It's just for me and most of the time, what I make
I wouldn't show anyone, you know.
I had an exhibition
I sold all of the works
That was really a nice surprise
I wasn't prepared for it
I didn't know
I was never going to see the paintings again
I felt like they were mine
Even though I had put them up for sale
I just didn't expect that they would sell
I am learning about being an artist
You have just got to be really honest with yourself about where you're at and what you
believe in
Sometimes, when you paint them - - ***they just make your heart sing***
The things that make you sing are the things
I think you should do.

If someone had said to me, "If you could have any ridiculous dream in the world what would you have?"

I would say

"I'd live in studio and

I'd have a cat and a dog and

I would get up every morning and be able to go downstairs and

I'd have a darkroom and it would be somewhere really great."

I would have believed that would never be possible

Now it's like actually kind of likely

If I hadn't of taken the risk

Even though everyone was saying, "Oh, it's so hard to be an artist,"

I wouldn't have had the fun I've had.

It's not easy

It's not a typical path

If you need that security then maybe you should do it on the weekends

But you should still do it

Appendix B

Interviews and Ethics

The ethical process for this research project, although complex and arduous, involving eight separate ethics submissions (3 x Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, 2 x CDC & 3 x ethics committees at supported mental health services) ensured that every phase of the project was discussed and evaluated for potential ramifications by a community which extended well beyond University Ethics bodies. I also took account of comments made by women who attended information sessions I ran prior to conducting the research in each agency, to inform and modify the research process as it evolved.

The Interview Questions

Particular methodological attention is given here to the interview process, as this is where procedures employed can have the greatest impact upon vulnerable groups, such as women experiencing mental ill-health. Design of the interview is thus methodologically driven and determines the spaces available to both seek and receive women's stories of creativity and wellbeing. Being an exploratory rather than comparative study, allows these questions to be explored and adjusted as required by the participants input. For example when women asked me if I was an artist, this would frequently lead to a conversation about how to define creativity and I decided to incorporate this question into the interview schedule (See Appendix F for Interview Questions).

As Elliott (2005) notes, researchers are clearly not able to impose a set of structured questions in biographical interviews. Many of the stories women told adhered to a chronological sequence because I asked them to begin with their earliest memories of artmaking in their lives. Some women began in the present and swung back and forth across time weaving in different important moments relating to their artmaking and its place in their lives at the time. Some women found it difficult to give an account of their lives and asked for prompts. I discussed with them from the start that they could tell me whatever they thought was relevant. Some offered a few sentences and then would also stop for reassurance 'Is that right?' Is that what you want? I would respond with there is no right or wrong and that this is an interview for you to tell me what you think is important about artmaking and how it fits into your life now and in the past and in the future. And this will help me know a bit more about what artmaking brings to a person's life and state of health.

Elliott (2005) also emphasises it is important that the questions address the interests of the participants, not the research concerns of the interviewer. I found this in

some of the earlier interviews when I posed questions such as do you think being a woman has influenced your artmaking – some participants switched off or glazed over and others just didn't seem to understand the question or it had no relevance or interest to them. Others took the invitation and gave their considered standpoints about women's position in the art world or the world generally. I took the lead from the women and offered my own thoughts when asked. I also learnt to leave the long pauses untroubled by a need to fill the silence with another question which would have altered the content and course of the interview.

I was exploring not interrogating and I did not ask all of the potential questions in any interview. Often I did not get past the first question *Tell me about the role of artmaking in your life.....* I

In these instances a participant would run through their life of artmaking – “creating and sequencing plots from a series of experiences and creating unity that neither the past nor nature possess” (Reissmann 2008, p. 7). So these are stories structured temporally and spatially. People try to do this as Western thought is obsessed with linearity and time marching on and *then what happened* type questions. But women with mental ill-health do not necessarily want to represent stories in this manner. They can be organised thematically and episodically. And yes some did talk about episodes of artmaking or themes in art making processes during their lives rather than a chronological narration following temporal conventions. Knowles (2000) found in her research that the invitation to tell your story often leads people to try to uphold the conventions of storytelling with a beginning, middle and end. This is not always possible as experiences can be episodic, fragmented and non-sequential more like piecing together a jigsaw than reading a novel. Thus the women's stories differed in many ways, in style, in content, in form, in articulation; however, like Lawless (2001), I found that across the many there were also some striking overlaps.

What about Mental Illness Stories Told in Interviews?

In Gray's (2007) study with women who had an experience of mental ill-health, they described their lives being organised around a psychiatric disorder. The consequences of such a label could linger even after the psychological distress that precipitated the diagnosis had diminished or disappeared. One woman said, 'It probably will stick – it probably will be part of who I think I am or who I think I could be. Whether or not I feel depressed or anxious I still feel that part of me is going to have it' (p. 429).

Knowles (2000) says articulating the experience of “breakdown” descent into madness is often difficult as ordering episodic and traumatic events into a narrative is only a partial version of the material and somatic lived experience. As Frosh (2007) has

argued it is simply not possible or desirable to say all that could be said. Disturbing, disordered and vivid events are not sequenced as in a story. And trying to make one – a story – is hard. Likewise the visual representation of this is another way of telling but still only partial.

“Illness stories are likely to be highly rehearsed as they are required to be told – stories of breakdown and recovery are elicited – told and retold at every step of the psychiatric system, – counsellors, therapists, psychiatric units in hospitals, day support services. These stories or versions of the mentally ill self are required as part of the therapeutic and social management contexts of contemporary madness” (p. 105).

Knowles (2000) observes that some stories are structured as a before and after in which a former life is disrupted by the appearance of a mental illness. Similarly there are before and after in the art story where a former life is transformed by the appearance of engagement in artmaking. For some there is not so much a before and after in the art story as it is something that has always been there and is part of me or it’s who I am in an ontological sense. So sometimes these stories work in parallel a story of decline is told in relation to mental illness and then stories of how this is overcome or accommodated in a truce that makes it possible to carry on against the odds – sometimes artmaking is the vehicle to achieve this truce.

Lawless (2001) posits that until many of the women were asked to ‘tell their life story’ they had not ever consciously done this work of self focus before and many women in her study found the act of speaking significant. I believe that this was potentially the case in my research also. A number of the women in this study may not have had the opportunity to relate a life story previously, particularly in relation to artmaking. Or if they had it may have been framed within the context of counselling or a mental illness framework.

Questions which provoke particular types of information may also create a new awareness in the participants – *no one has asked me that before, I haven’t told anyone this before*. This in turn will change their responses and create new meanings and thus alter the topic. While it is common to give brief anecdotes in everyday life it is rarer to have the opportunity to give an extended account of life experiences such as in an interview. These stories are not necessarily waiting ‘in’ the person to be collected but are produced in intra-actions of the interview research process. The stories of artmaking are less likely to have been elicited than those of the mental illness story – less likely to have been rehearsed prior to this research encounter and in fact almost a third of participants commented that that they had really enjoyed the opportunity to talk about their artmaking as this was not something they had done for any length of time

before. Thus in my research I was not asking women to relay their mental illness story, although some participants chose to reveal some of this story or it arose incidentally.

Lawless (2001) also says that remembering is a gendered activity. Girls and women have often been taught and encouraged not to speak and when they have their words have been received as hysterical and emotional storytelling. This is particularly salient to women who have encountered the mental health system, where in the past women's stories of injustices such as violence perpetrated against them, have led to a label of madness. She contends that female outrage has been punished with a diagnosis and generationally this has created difficulties for women in both the remembering and the telling of stories. For Barad (2007) memory does not reside in individual brains but is the enfoldings of time and space and is not a record of a fixed past. Remembering is not a replay of a sequence of moments. It is enlivening and reconfiguring of the past and the future and it is never finished. Again echoing de Beauvoir who says we can never close the books.

Issues in Research – The Interview as a Safe Space

Lawless (2001) views orally constructed life stories with women as an opportunity to craft a narrative self that has cohesion and meaning with reference to the past and future. In particular the life stories in her study of women escaping intimate partner violence had usually not been consciously rendered before, although certain stories within the larger story have been rewritten or retold. The 'self' crafted evolves from earliest memories to the present moment and the telling provides a kind of recollecting of the parts of her 'self': A making sense of the past, a reconstructing of what seemed to be disparate parts of being into the construction that is the 'I' of the voiced narrative. This voicing, Lawless (2001) says can be healthy, the glue that holds memories together to create a new self. Whilst there may be some benefits associated with research interview participation, Elliott (2005) observes that generally there is very little attention given to the impact of interviews on participants and that this is particularly concerning for research with vulnerable groups. Dunn, Candilis and Roberts (2006) state that more studies are needed on the dimensions of non-biological risks, for example emotional expenditure. Reinharz and Chase (2003) also say there is little research regarding the impact of interviews on participants, and although an interview appears unremarkable, for some women where cultural narrative has silenced them – be seen and not heard – it can be a very extraordinary experience (p.77). Some women may not know how to use this experience to just talk in an open ended interview which is seeking to discuss her everyday life and her particular circumstances. Sometimes an interview can be traumatic. So there is a need to be able to offer support and referral if necessary.

Lapsley, Nikora and Black (2002) interviewed 40 people who had experienced mental ill-health about their recovery journeys. Two thirds of these people had spent time in hospitals and were asked to give a narrative of their mental ill-health. The authors reported that quite a few participants said they had found the interview unsettling or at least thought provoking, and the researchers note that although distress was sometimes obvious during the interview, everyone wanted to continue. They contacted all participants after the interviews and found that none wanted to access counselling, even though they had been talking about their mental health, recovery and life afterwards. Participants in fact offered some insights into the benefits of discussing aspects of their mental health (p. 10). Other studies in Scandinavia and Germany have asked participants to relate their experiences of life in a psychiatric hospital including issues of coercion and involuntary treatment. One study in America collated patients' experiences of ECT. These studies elicit responses from people experiencing mental ill-health in areas that are considered very sensitive and the potential risk could be assumed to be much greater than in this study proposal. This research project does not directly explore potentially sensitive areas such as psychiatric treatment as questions were framed in a manner which focuses upon the experience of art making and perceptions on the role of art in the participant's life.

However, I was also wary of assuming that because the interview was talking about artmaking that this was a relatively 'safe' topic which I would not expect to be disturbing. Distressing and unexpected accounts did emerge. Asking about earliest memories even in relation to artmaking could constitute a process of remembering aspects of childhood that they did not wish to follow in this interview situation. At times women did choose to relay painful experiences, such as sexual abuse and intimate partner violence or incomprehension and anger at the treatment they had received within the psychiatric health system in Victoria, including ECT and psychotropic drugs. Where episodes of distress were evident the participant was offered contact details for appropriate support services, including WIRE (Women's Information).

Safety Strategies

Hyden (2008) advises researchers to use interruption or disruption as a strategy to keep people safe if it looks like they are becoming distressed. Two of the women used this technique themselves within the interview when they appeared to become uncomfortable with the process.

Furthermore, in order to provide an account of women's experience which gives voice to their active agency, not merely passive victims of dominant institutions of power, Ramsey, Panteli and Beirne (1997) suggest research needs to include not only women's subjectivities, but also the outcomes of their activities. Hyden (2008) also

suggests that researchers use 'empowerment' as a closing remark. Charmaz (2003) also says that researchers should conclude the interview on a positive note and try to bring the rhythm and pace back to normal conversational level. I tried to do this by finishing the interview with a projection of an artistic self into the future and as a person with creative knowledge advising other women – as a skilled person passing on knowledge.

Minimising Risks

Appelbaum (1998) asserts that studies that are non-therapeutic involve fewer risks or discomforts beyond diminution of privacy and loss of time. However, studies have also revealed the need to be attendant to the possibility of the therapeutic misconception – the belief that research participation will be of direct benefit to the individual. Ashead (2005) explains the distinction between non-therapeutic research and therapeutic research is the decision to be altruistic. Davies (2001) says that where people are invited to participate in non-therapeutic research, the researcher has a duty to make clear the aims of the research and ensure participants are aware that they may not benefit personally. I included this in the initial consent process.

Returning Transcripts

In feminist research, returning transcripts to participants is a common method used to acquire validation by checking for accuracy and that meanings are shared by participants and the researcher (Jones, 2005; Creswell et al (2007) and to show respect for participants (Liamputtong, 2007). I incorporated this step into my research process and initially transcripts were returned to participants after the interviews. However, as the research progressed and eight transcripts had been returned to participants, several factors, contributed to the need to reconsider transcripts. Two participants contacted me to query their 'voice' via the transcripts. One thought she sounded inarticulate and the other thought her 'voice sounded stupid.' When a third woman became very distressed following the return of her transcript, for reasons unclear to myself or her support persons, the research process was halted and these matters were discussed with my supervisors as quickly as possible for advice regarding the most appropriate way to support the woman. Subsequently the VUHERC halted the automatic handing back of transcripts as an unacceptable risk for potentially causing distress.

Research Modification due to Transcript Issues

Paget (1993) who conducted research with women artists also has issues with transcripts where sometimes, when seen for the first time, this way of displaying speech can make the speaker appear as an uneducated and inarticulate person. Spontaneous speech is always produced as a series of pauses and bursts of sounds.

Listen to any naturally occurring conversation and you will notice these phenomena. Also natural speech is always produced in dialect. In-depth interviews are contextual rather than abstract in their organisation.

Poland (2003) says that verbal interactions follow a pattern that is different from verbal prose and can look remarkably disjointed, inarticulate and incoherent on the page. This can come as a shock to participants and especially to already marginalised groups whose articulation is already in question via the biomedical model. This is a reason why researchers may need edit or tidy up the transcript to make it readable. Thus I was actually (re) presenting the interview as textual data.

I also consulted with Hilary Lapsley (personal communication, 2007), lead researcher for *Narratives of Recovery*, who sent transcripts back to research participants. She was now of the opinion that she would prefer not to send back transcripts. "...because often people don't much like reading a literal transcription of what they said – for people who care about written language, their transcripts can look full of grammatical errors etc. – and for others, I don't believe that it's a very good account of their life experience as it's usually kind of messy and long-winded. I think it's also a bit misleading as it encourages people to think that their interview might be used in full, as is, in the research publication, and that will rarely be the case. Also, lots of people who consent to be interviewed are simply uninterested in the transcript, and I think it's too much to expect them to return it with further comments - the interview should be sufficient for them to say what they want to say".

Taking the above into consideration, the consent forms were altered. Initially there was a box to tick for having the transcript returned which sat alongside the other procedures, e.g., the interview would be taped, consent to publish and a third option to have your transcript sent to you. People appeared to be ticking all three and I did not specifically discuss the implications for receiving transcripts. Because the transcript had caused distress it was decided that when women asked for transcripts back I would return with the transcript to offer support and renegotiate meanings rather than sending it back. I verbally asked women if they would like their transcripts back. The majority said that they did not want them. Participants who said that they would like the transcript were given my contact details and asked to contact me directly after four weeks when I had time to transcribe the interview. No participants subsequently pursued this option, although some women did continue contact after the interview by writing letters, sending photos of their artworks and links to articles or websites they had mentioned in the interview or had subsequently established.

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate in Research Interview

TO WOMEN WHO PARTICIPATE IN XXX Art Studio
Are you willing to be interviewed?



My name is Ms. Sally Northfield and as part of my PhD I am conducting a research project called: ***Canvassing the Emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context.***

Would you be willing to be interviewed about your experiences of attending art programs at XXX or your experiences of visual art making in general? This is a chance to talk about the aspects of art making that are important to you. It is also a chance for you to contribute to research examining how women's wellbeing is related to creativity.

Like other areas of art history where women are rarely mentioned, very little has been written about the relationship between women's creativity and wellbeing. Even less has been written about the actual experiences and views of women who produce creative works and who have lived with or are living with mental ill-health. This project attempts to fill this gap by including the voices of women who produce creative works.

Your story will be most valuable in telling us more about the role and meanings of art in women's lives and how this may influence wellbeing. The interview will take about one hour and the information you provide will be confidential. I will conduct the interview at a place suitable to you and I will tape record the interview with your permission. No details that could identify you will appear in my final report or any related publications. You will receive \$20 to cover your time and expenses such as travel costs.

So if you would you like to share your stories, thoughts and experiences of art making or of taking part in art programs, or if you are interested in finding out more about the research project, you can contact me with any questions you may have or to arrange a time for the interview. You may choose to invite a support person to accompany you at the interview. Alternatively, you and some of the other women at your studio, may choose to talk to me in a group rather than individually.

To discuss the options, you can phone me on 0408 141 332 or if you would prefer to use email, my address is sal@infoxchange.net.au I am hoping to interview a small number of women from a selection of art-based community initiatives across Victoria. If I have already arranged to interview enough women for this project, I will let you know when you contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you

Sally Northfield

Any queries about participation in this project may be directed to:
 Ms. Sally Northfield – 0408 141 332 or the Principal Researcher – Professor
 Jill Astbury – (03) 9919 2335. If you have any queries or complaints about the
 way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, Victoria University
 Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428,
 Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4710

Appendix D

Invitation to Participate in a Research Interview/Plain Language Statement


Invitation to Participate in a Research Interview/ Plain Language Statement to (insert agency) creators

My name is Ms. Sally Northfield and I am coordinating a project called ***Canvassing the Emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context***. This research is supervised by Professor Jill Astbury and Ms. Heather Gridley, as part of the requirements to complete the Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Psychology at Victoria University.

The research is concerned with the role and meaning of art in the lives of women who have experienced mental ill-health. Like other areas of art history where women are rarely mentioned, very little has been written about the relationship between women's creativity and wellbeing. I am therefore inviting you to talk to me about the role art has played in your life and how your creative works were produced. Your contribution will be most valuable in adding to what we know about the role and meanings of art in women's lives and how this may influence wellbeing.

Procedures

Interviews are expected to take approximately one hour, and will be audio taped with your consent. The information you provide will be stored in a secure and confidential manner. A typed copy of your interview will be available if you request this. No identifying details will appear in my final report or any related publications, unless you particularly request this. I will conduct the interview at a place suitable to you. You can choose to have a support person with you at the interview. You will receive \$20 to cover your time contribution and expenses such as travel costs that are related to attending the interview.

I encourage you to consider both the pros and cons of participating in this research and talking about the role art has played in your life. You may wish to talk with appropriate support persons before making a decision about whether to participate. You will have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, and you may also revoke your consent for the inclusion of any comments in the thesis or any related publications.

If you (or anyone else involved) experience any distress in relation to participation in the project, we will discuss the available support options with you. I can be contacted on 0408 141 332. Any of your support persons can also contact me on this number if needed. You may prefer to speak with support persons at [insert relevant agency name and contact details]. You can also contact (Women's Information [WIRE] and specific regional 24-hour mental health service numbers inserted here).

Yours sincerely,

Sally Northfield

NB: This study has ethics approval from Victoria University and (insert agency). Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to Ms. Sally Northfield – 0408 141 332 or the Principal Researcher – Professor Jill Astbury – (03) 9919 2335. If you have any further queries you may also contact the Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4710

Appendix E

Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research

**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH****INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:**

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study about women, creativity and mental health. The study aims to investigate the role and meaning of art in the lives of women who have experienced mental ill-health. Women will be asked to offer their opinions, perspectives and experiences of producing creative works in relation to their wellbeing. Your contribution will add to our understanding of the relationship between women, creativity and mental health.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT:

I,
of

certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: ***Canvassing the Emotions: Women, creativity and mental health in context*** being conducted at Victoria University by Ms. Sally Northfield with supervision by Professor Jill Astbury and Ms. Heather Gridley, as part of the requirements to complete the Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Psychology.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed below to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Ms. Sally Northfield, and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these procedures:

Procedures: *(please tick procedures below in which you agree to participate)*

- ☐ An interview of approximately one hour.
- ☐ The interview will be audio taped with my consent.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I also understand that within the interview I may choose to answer some but not all of the questions. I may also revoke my consent for the inclusion of my comments or images in the thesis or any related publications.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Witness other than the researcher:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to Ms. Sally Northfield – 0408 141 332 or the Principal Researcher – Professor Jill Astbury – (03) 9919 2335. If you have any further queries you may also contact the Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4710

Appendix F

Research Interview Questions

The interview will be semi-structured. The interview will be directed by the artmaker's story and where appropriate I will pose questions relevant to the research and/or questions seeking clarification regarding statements made during the sessions. Checking tools will also be utilised to clarify meaning and include phrases such as

"So what you seem to be saying is ..."

"So what I understand you to be saying is that you felt..."

"Do you mean..."

"Can you explain that some more..."

Sample Questions**The role and meaning of creativity in relation to wellbeing**

- What role has creativity and art making played in your life? Prompt: What are your earliest memories of your relationship with visual art?
- What role does creativity or art- making play in your life now?
- Have you had any art training prior to attending (insert agency)? Have you always made art or has your artwork resulted from your experiences of mental ill-health?
- How do you see art making being part of your life in the future?

Influence of art on mental health

- Has art making played a role in influencing your wellbeing? How? Do you think art making has had any impact on your mental health?

Influence of mental health on art making

- Do you think experiencing mental ill-health has influenced your art making/identity as an artist/ productivity/content? How? Do you see any direct connection between your artwork and your experience?

Influence of being a woman

- Has being a woman influenced your art making/ identity as an artist? How? How are your experiences as a woman embedded in your work?
- Do you think mental ill-health has influenced your experience of being a woman?
- Do you think being a woman has influenced your experience of mental health and mental ill-health?
- What struggles as a woman artist have you overcome?

Creative production

- Can you describe your experience of the creative process? (What do you think/feel before/during and after art making?)
- What are your preferred mediums?
- Can you tell me something about where you produce your creative works?
- What inspires you?
- Do you think medication has had any impact on the content of your artwork or productivity?
- What resources and support enabled you to achieve and maintain a professional level of art practice?
- How do the cultural and physical landscapes of Victoria affect your work?
- How do you feel about people interpreting your work?
- Have you experienced any difficulties associated with mental ill-health and art practice? – e.g. being outside the mainstream/ lack of visibility

Self Image

- Have you established an artistic identity?
- How did you do this?
- How do you maintain an artistic self?
- For what purpose do you produce your creative works? (personal/commercial/therapeutic). Is your artwork produced primarily for self-expression or to communicate to an audience?
- What do your art works mean to you?
- How would you describe your creative works?
- Would you like to make any comments about any of your creative works?
- How do you think others view your creative works?

Context questions – Terminology

- Have you heard the terms mental illness or psychiatric disability? What do you think they mean? Do you use these terms? Do you have other terms you would prefer to use?
- Have you heard the term psychiatric art? What do you think it means? What do you think about this term? Do you have other terms you would prefer to use?
- Have you heard the term wellbeing? What does this mean to you?
- What is your understanding of how you ended up using mental health services?

- Finally what would you say to other women who might be considering putting creative pursuits into their lives?
- Do you have any questions or would you like to make further comments about the research?

Demographic Information (taken from ABS 2006 census)

Using 2006 Census guidelines, demographic questions for age, marital status, citizenship, ancestry, language other than English, education level and occupation will be collected for each interview.

- Age at last birthday
- Country of origin: In what country were you born?
- Are you an Australian citizen?
- Year of arrival in Australia:
- Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?
- What is your primary ancestry? With which do you most closely identify?
- Marital Status?
- Language spoken at home:
- Highest Educational Qualification
- Occupation

Appendix G

Exhibition Catalogue



The Cunningham Dax Collection gratefully acknowledges the significant support of Fleur Spritzer for this exhibition.



CANVASSING THE EMOTIONS

WOMEN, CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH IN CONTEXT

SELECTED WORKS BY WOMEN, 1950s to NOW
FROM THE CUNNINGHAM DAX COLLECTION



Donna Lawrence, *Empower Me* 2006



CANVASSING THE EMOTIONS: WOMEN, CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH IN CONTEXT

11 - 29 February 2008, Queen Victoria Women's Centre, Melbourne
17 - 20 March 2008, 3rd International Congress on Women's Mental Health, Melbourne

This exhibition features art created by women who have experienced mental illness and/or psychological trauma. Spanning the 1950s to the present day, the exhibition explores the intersection of women, creativity and mental health within cultural, socio-economic and political contexts. The selected art and artists in this exhibition represent various periods of time and production sites, from Victorian psychiatric institutions to contemporary practising artists. This innovative exhibition acknowledges women's contributions to the cultural and historical landscape of Victoria and seeks to educate from the past to provide thoughts for the present (and future) regarding women, creativity and wellbeing.

DONNA LAWRENCE

Donna Lawrence is an award winning practising artist who has exhibited regularly over the past fifteen years. She is one of thirteen artists in this exhibition and has donated twelve works to the Cunningham Dax Collection.



Donna Lawrence, *Empower Me* 2006, oil, encaustic and collage on canvas, 100 x 75 cm each.

Artist's Statement (2007)

"I believe artwork can be aesthetically pleasing as well as politically motivated or intellectual. I aim for both of these elements in my work. I believe artwork can be empowering in its shared meaning as opposed to simply its aesthetic qualities. It can allow some people to feel a significant adherence to a group of similar minded experienced people, and lead others to experience empathy and gain knowledge, concerning the occurrences of others. Similarly, I hope that my work will reach people who have experienced mental illness, and people who have not. It is ultimately an issue that affects us all.

Seeking help from the psychiatric community can sometimes be antithetical to really gaining assistance. Diagnosis is sometimes seen as the be all and end all to psychiatric assistance, oddly enough when the DSM IV doesn't give us a definitive answer to our illnesses."

Front cover: Donna Lawrence, *See Beyond This*, oil and acrylic on canvas, 110 x 100.4 cm. Collection of the artist.

Disclaimer: The essays appearing in this catalogue have been commissioned by the guest curator and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the Cunningham Dax Collection.



Donna Lawrence, *Empower Me* (collage) 2006, oil, acrylic and collage on canvas, 40.6 x 122 cm. Collection of the artist.

"Empower Me is an image that epitomises the experience of living with a mental illness. Sometimes painful, sometimes confusing, sometimes even surprisingly enlightening, illness can change the way one views the world. This image refers to these attributes by depicting a figure that is bound by bandages – a means usually of healing the body, but in this case unable to heal the mind. It refers not only to the illness itself, but also to the society that classifies us, aims to help us, and sometimes even means to control us.

The figure's head is bandaged, and this is paramount to the reading of the work. The brain is the centre of our universe. It defines us and allows us to be individuals. Ironically, for many it limits and even defines us because of our illnesses. We are bound by our mood swings, our delusions, our uncertainty, all arising from the workings of the mind. The head is bandaged denoting illness, and the title emphasises the will to escape or gain knowledge from this illness. Although the image itself could be viewed as portraying a negative view of mental illness, it is meant also to show hope. That we may learn and grow from our troubles and that good can indeed arise out of difficulty."

SARA WILSON

Sara Wilson is a practising artist and visual arts student and has loaned her works for this exhibition.

Artist's Statement (2007)

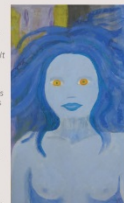
Monia Lisa 2006
"I was trying to capture the Fauvist movement's colour on her face. I changed the background (to what it would have been in the original) to a volcanic eruption (booming danger). I did this because they say she was pregnant in this painting and unmarried. In this time frame it was frowned upon to be unmarried and pregnant, so she would have had a tough time looking ahead, without support and with society discriminating against her."



Sara Wilson, *Monia Lisa*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm. Collection of the artist.

Artist's Statement

"This was the first painting I did after my first admission to hospital. I felt so washed out of emotion (hence expression or lack of...) and felt, But I also felt turbulent on the inside. This is why the eyes are so vivid."



Sara Wilson, *The Blue Lady*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 129.4 x 68 cm. Collection of the artist.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

WIRE: Women's Information - provides free information, support and referrals to women across Victoria.
Phone Support: 1300 134 130. 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.
Face to Face: Ground Floor, Queen Victoria Women's Centre, 210 Lonsdale St, Melbourne
Search the comprehensive database at www.wire.org.au

Women's Health Victoria
1st Floor, 123 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, 3000
Victoria, Australia
Phone: (03) 9662 3755
Fax: (03) 9663 7955
www.wihv.org.au

The Victorian Women's Trust
1st Floor, 250 Bourke Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000
Phone: (03) 9642 0422
Fax: (03) 9642 0016
www.vwt.org.au

Women's Legal Resource Group
3rd Floor, 43 Flinders St
Melbourne, Victoria 3000
Advice & Information: (03) 9642 0343
Toll Free: 1800 133 302
TTY (03) 9642 0344
Fax: (03) 9642 0232
Email: justice@vic.net.au

CANVASSING THE EMOTIONS: WOMEN, CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH IN CONTEXT

BY SALLY NORTHFIELD, GUEST CURATOR
PHD RESEARCHER, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

Canvassing the Emotions seeks to disrupt the notion that locates women solely within the domain of 'the emotional'. The works are exhibited as imaginative responses to the circumstances in which women live/d rather than unblemished manifestations of illness or as 'mirrors to the soul'. While the art may express the emotions and personal struggles of individual women artists, and may reveal something about the artist's experience of mental ill health, these works may also reflect experiences of being a woman, exploration of sexual identity, the medicalisation of women's bodies, the impact of institutionalisation, and/or the impact of being labelled as having a mental illness, with the attendant aspects of treatment and stigmatisation. The works also reflect cultural and artistic influences specific to time and place, and offer a variety of lenses through which to consider what is being conveyed. The women behind the paintbrush, pencil, pastel, charcoal or needle provide perspectives which challenge traditional representations of women and offer reflections on a society which has frequently marginalised women experiencing mental ill health.

The title of this exhibition contains other highly contested terms; that of 'women', 'creativity' and 'mental health'. Although gender binds women artists into a marginalised group in culture and in cultural representations of women, gender alone would rarely encompass all the concerns of individual artists.¹ Women's art is not one kind of practice, type of work, or focus on a particular medium. Similarly, women cannot be categorised as a homogeneous group, although they may share common experiences. Being female does not predispose the artist to present work from a feminist perspective, and it is unknown whether any of these artists would identify as feminist; however, the very experience of becoming and being a woman in Australia can influence the art produced in response to this experience. The exhibition acknowledges that each work embodies both an individual and a collective history, and that individual examples may illuminate the experiences of some or many women with mental ill health at a particular time, place and social circumstance. Gender and the experience of mental ill health remain the overriding organising principles in this exhibition, given that the scant records held at the Cunningham Dax Collection mean the influences of other dimensions, such as race and ethnicity, cannot be surmised.

The nature of treatments, theories of mental ill health and societal attitudes have changed dramatically since the 1950s.

Women's mental health has increasingly been argued to be construed in terms of the socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances in which they live, and their responses to the wider social environment.² The focus upon and search for illness within the individual is now unsustainable as the dominant way of understanding women's mental health or ill health. The health burden that is created by gender discrimination, poverty, social position and various forms of violence against women as gender specific risk factors on women's mental health can no longer be ignored.³

Much has also been written and discussed about the links between creativity and madness. Visions of the artist as a mad genius, eccentric, antisocial, unconventional loner, or outsider who rejects and challenges established art culture values, are surprisingly enduring. However, this imagery does not encompass women, who were frequently not included in this art culture in the first place.⁴ The identification of women with procreancy also characterised all their other activities as the antithesis of cultural creativity. Works produced in institutions were traditionally considered as therapy, not art, and were not available to the public domain to challenge the ideas of fine/decorative art, or the enduring art/craft dichotomy. Such art made by women was safely confined behind the walls of the institution and, like the art made by women in the domestic sphere, could be considered different to that made in art school or at the studio. The conditions of production thus defined its status.

Undoubtedly, the position of women as artists has changed since the 1950s in Victoria, an era which Mirka Mora and Janine Burke have depicted as a very conservative place to be as an artist and a woman.⁵ Nevertheless, creativity remains an extraordinarily difficult concept to define, and researchers have tended to concentrate upon capturing the 'nuggets' of genius via explorations of publicly renowned genius throughout history (overwhelmingly lists of male contributors to the arts and sciences) and their manifestations of symptoms of mental ill health. The majority of research on creativity has thus little to contribute to the understanding of women, creativity and mental health, and this remains an area where women's thoughts on their own creativity and creativity in general can provide a rich basis for releasing the constraints which inhibit the way we think about and express our creativity and artistic productions. Women's contributions are particularly pertinent

when considering the now almost ubiquitous claim that involvement in arts activity can contribute significantly to individual and community wellbeing. The manifestation of creativity in artmaking may well have more to do with mental health than mental ill health.

This exhibition aims to display examples of women's artmaking and their ability to be creative in daunting circumstances, both physically and emotionally. These works are displayed with respect for artistic abilities and in a spirit of enquiry as to what we can gain from them, rather than from a position of authority.

THE ORIGINS OF THE WORKS

Victoria has an interesting history concerning the use of art in mental health services, being the only state in Australia to introduce art programs in the mid to late 1950s across a number of psychiatric institutions. Some of the works produced in these art programs are now held at the Cunningham Dax Collection. The conditions in which the works were created and collected are complex, ranging from works created in psychiatric institutions prior to the introduction of art programs, works created in art programs in institutions and more recently work donated by practising artists. Some of the art programs were run by artists and conducted as skills-based initiatives. Others were run via occupational therapy departments and were considered as therapy. The distinctions between programs in the various institutions remain unclear⁶ and it is not known how the artists represented here viewed the opportunity to engage in artmaking.

Furthermore, little information is available about the lives of many of the women represented in this exhibition, despite attempts to trace them. Some of the women who made artwork in Victorian psychiatric institutions and who appear in this exhibition remain untraceable and for this reason their intentions for their art works are unknown. Legally these works are considered to be part of the person's medical records and are thus governed by the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) and *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). To uphold common law obligations, identifying information on some works has been masked to maintain confidentiality of the artist and the images cannot be reproduced in this catalogue.

Practising artists, or women who have artistic training have created the later works in this exhibition. All these works have

been donated to the Collection by the artists or are on short-term loan to appear in this exhibition.

SELECTING THE WORKS

Strength is the unifying word I would nominate for this exhibition. This is not a description that would typically be bestowed upon women who have experienced mental ill health or psychological trauma. But as I sifted through the more than 4,000 works held in the Cunningham Dax Collection created by 355 women, it was strength of conviction, strength of protest and strength of imagery that I found. I also found humour, anguish and political awareness as the art positioned women as the subject rather than the object of representation – women portraying women.

The task of selecting 40 works from over 4000 spanning six decades was guided by gathering works that highlighted the dominant discourses which shaped the lives and experiences of these women and their artmaking. I was also cognisant of the theme of resistance, subverting the male gaze and the psychiatric gaze from representations of women, to focus upon women's depictions of themselves and other women, and subjects and images reflecting the gendered experience of becoming and being a woman. The negotiation between what was omitted and what is displayed was inevitably a stating of preferences by the curator: what is missing is as crucial as what is displayed. However the works were generally selected from women who had a body of work in the Collection rather than those who had only one or two pieces. Additionally, I searched for works that had a thread of intention from the artist – a title, a word, a signature – a hint of what they wished to convey. The majority of the works in the Collection completed by women are from the 1960s and to a lesser extent the 1950s. This balance is also reflected in the work selected for the exhibition.

Two of the three artists from the 1950s have works that were not completed in art programs. The textiles, the image etched in a wardrobe door and the image daubed with lipstick may indicate examples of particular women's desire to create with materials available to them within the confines of rural psychiatric institutions in Victoria. As Rozsika Parker notes, 'From suffragette banners to domestic quilts, women have inscribed textiles with the stories of their lives, as a source of pleasure and as a weapon against constraint.'⁷ The other artist from the 1950s has over 200 works in the Collection,

including portraits, landscapes, depictions of events in her community, which she often describes as sagas, and images of world events such as the Berlin crisis in the late 1950s. It is unclear whether all or any of these works were completed in art programs.

The images from the five artists who made works in the 1960s are likely to have been completed in institutional art programs. I have not been able to trace these artists and thus have been unable to speak with them about their art practice or the role and meaning of artmaking in their lives. It is known that several of these women had art training in their lives outside the institution. Of the five contemporary artists, two have loaned works for this exhibition and have participated in the selection of their works to be hung. The other artists donated their works

to the Collection in the 1990s and early 2000s. One of these women has been consulted about her work appearing in this exhibition, one is now deceased and I have been unable to trace the other woman.

I would like to acknowledge the women in this exhibition for their compelling works that stare at us and challenge us to reflect upon their resilience and creative responses to the circumstances in which they live/d. I hope this exhibition inspires viewers to consider their own relationship to creativity and wellbeing and to continue to question what art is or does, as these works have provoked me to do.

‘That is the most important thing I have said: Art is a guarantee of sanity. Louise Bourgeois, 2001.’¹³

ENDNOTES

1. Deepwell, K. (2002). Art and Feminism, papers from session at ARCO '02 Madrid, February 2002. *N.Paradoxa*: No. 16.
2. See: Australian Women's Health Network. (2007). *Women's Health: The New National Agenda*. Canberra: Australian Women's Health Network.
3. Astbury, J., & Cabral, M. (2000). *Women's Mental Health: An Evidence Based Review*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
4. Department of Human Services. (2006). *Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Stage Two: 2006–2010*. Melbourne: Department of Human Services.
5. Astbury, J. (1996). *Crazy for You: The Making of Women's Madness*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
6. See: Victorian Health Information Surveillance System. (2005). *Your health: A report on the health of Victorians*. Melbourne: Department of Human Services.
7. VicHealth. (2004). *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence*. Carlton: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
8. Krug, E. G., et al., (Eds.). (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
9. Office for Women. (2007). *Women in Australia 2007*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
10. See: Cubb, J. (1994). The romantic artist outsider: The artist as outsider. In M. D. Hall, & E. W. Metcalf. Eds. *The artist outsider: Creativity and the boundaries of culture*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
11. Witzling, M., R. (Ed.). (1991). *Voicing our visions: Writings by women artists*. London: The Women's Press.
12. Parker, R. & Pollock, G. (1989). *Old mistresses: women, art and ideology*. London: Pandora Press.
13. Mora, M. (2002). *Wicked but virtuous: My life*. Melbourne: Penguin Books.
14. Burke, J. (1995). *Dear Sun: the letters of Joy Hester and Sunday Reed*. Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia.
15. Robson, B. (2006). *Recovering Art: a history of the Cunningham Dax Collection*. Melbourne: The Cunningham Dax Collection
16. Parker, R. (1996). *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: The Women's Press.
17. Wallach, A. (2001). Louise Bourgeois At 90, Weaving Complexities. *The New York Times*, Dec 25, 2001.

WOMEN AND MADNESS: AN ELUSIVE CONJUNCTION

BY PROFESSOR JILL ASTBURY

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION CONSULTANT: GENDER AND MENTAL HEALTH
RESEARCH PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

In the 50 years covered by this remarkable exhibition, the social position of women has been transformed and with it striking changes have occurred in how we think about gender, creativity and mental disorder.

Psychological theories and the evidence produced by them have served as handmaidens for both conservative and radical social platforms across the last half-century. During this time, the borders between the public and private spheres, between the world of work and that of home, between masculinities and femininities, sanity and disorder have all been breached and passionately contested. Notions of normality of all kinds, sexual, psychological and familial have been realigned in the process. Women, fortunately, are no longer literally cut down to size; that is tall girls are no longer subjected to what Jo-Anne Rayner calls 'cosmetic endocrinology'.¹ The long term treatment of tall, healthy girls, typically with synthetic oestrogens, went on in Australia between 1956 and 1993 on the grounds that tallness would limit their choice of marriage partners, close off such 'professional' roles as being a ballerina or an air hostess and cause them to suffer depression and other forms of psychological distress.

The world, and women's rights and place within it, is now a radically different place, materially, socially, psychologically and ideologically. The level of women's participation in the workforce has changed, if not beyond recognition, then at least beyond the limits of tolerance for some. The strict Kinder, Kirche und Küche gender boundaries of 1950s Australia when fewer than 1 in 3 Australian women were in paid work - a situation held in place psychologically by the spectre of 'maternal deprivation' and consequent 'juvenile delinquency' - has given way to the current situation where nearly 70% of Australian women between 15-64 years are engaged in paid work and the Deputy Leaders of the Federal Government and the Liberal Opposition are both women.

Inevitably, material changes in social arrangements have been accompanied by discursive changes. Not least of these have been changes to the psychological and psychiatric discourses that bear down so powerfully on the lives, liberties and identities of women seen to be in need of psychiatric treatment. In the 1950s, the reassuring belief existed that madness was a real entity, an illness, not a socially permeable label. As an illness or group of illnesses, its causes were thought to be biological and it was largely accepted that the

diagnosis of mental illness was an impartial, scientific exercise. This ensured that only those people who were certified as being 'mad' or mentally ill would be subjected to treatment within mental hospitals. The possibility that diagnosis or treatment might be suffused, let alone constructed by, social forces or gender stereotypes was almost literally unthinkable. Yet the notion of discrete, biologically caused types of psychological disorder that transcend any social or 'man made' influence or bias has become more and more difficult to sustain. Not only have categories of mental disorder changed over the last half century, the sets of symptoms necessary to diagnose specific disorders have changed, treatments have changed, theoretical accounts of causation have changed and even the idea of there being causes of psychological disorder has fallen into a certain amount of disrepute, being largely replaced by reference to multifactorial risk factors. The social origin of many disorders is now widely accepted.

Diagnoses have come and gone from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)* of the American Psychiatric Association since the 1950s. Hysteria, for example, which was a trusty repository for women's mental disorder from the time of the ancient Greeks, no longer exists in the DSM. From the 1950s onwards it was replaced by a litter of offspring such as Briquet's Syndrome, Conversion Disorder and Somatisation Disorder. By the mid 1980s, Borderline Personality Disorder had emerged and little attention was paid to hysteria. The hysterical woman whose symptoms read like a caricature of feminine qualities of an earlier social order was no longer serviceable and a more contemporary set of behaviours obligingly appeared to label difficult women. In the era of second wave feminism, these unwelcome behaviours or symptoms that defined women with Borderline Personality Disorder were being demanding, aggressive and angry!

Perhaps one of the most significant changes in psychological thinking over the period covered by this exhibition has been the belated awareness of the critical importance of violence and trauma to psychological functioning. As I have argued elsewhere,² Freud's belief that childhood sexual abuse had little or no bearing on psychological difficulties in adult life was still considered to be a fact in the 1950s and 1960s.* Since then, mounting evidence has underscored just how damaging such experiences can be. It is now firmly established that girls who experience protracted, severe abuse

from someone close to them run a very high risk of being diagnosed with one or more psychological disorders and for being admitted as an inpatient to a psychiatric hospital.³ Violence, sexual, emotional and physical at the hands of an intimate partner also produces a heavy psychological burden, and women who experience violence in both childhood and adult life have extremely high rates of all the disorders in which women predominate including depression, post traumatic stress disorder, certain phobias, panic disorder and suicide attempts.⁴

We do not know the diagnoses of the women whose art is shown in this exhibition, nor whether they experienced sexual or other forms of violence. What we do know is that a large percentage of women who have received inpatient treatment have experienced significant trauma in their lives. Reducing the art shown to a reflection of certain predefined psychiatric conditions and symptomologies denies its diversity, poignancy, beauty and humanity. Reducing the art to a reflection of trauma and loss would be similarly narrowing, although it is difficult to evade the impression that some of the art does speak of intensely female forms of suffering. Most striking for me are the powerful affective qualities of much of this art. It is these qualities that beckon us to make the effort to connect empathically with what the artists have chosen to communicate, to represent, to

remember, to make sense of and to memorialise, even when and perhaps especially when, the subjects are not within our own lived experience.

ENDNOTES

1. Rayner, J. *Cosmetic Endocrinology: (Re) producing femininity in tall girls*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, La Trobe University.
2. Astbury, J. (1996). *Crazy for You: The Making of Women's Madness*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press: 65-158.
3. Mullen, P., Martin, J., Anderson, J., Romans, S. & Herbison, G. (1993). Childhood sexual abuse and mental health in adult life. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 163: 721-732.
4. Vos, T., Astbury, J., Piers, L., Magnus, A., Heenan, M., Stanley, L., Walker, L. & Webster, K. (2006). Measuring the impact of intimate partner violence on the health of women in Victoria, Australia. *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*, 84: 739-744.

*Rejoinder: (Eugen Koh, Director, Cunningham Dax Collection)

Freud was among the first to postulate the importance of considering the possibility of childhood sexual abuse in causing psychological difficulties in adult life. However, he was forced to retract this view as he did not have sufficient evidence for it. In his later life, he expressed regret for giving in to the pressure of his peers.

Freud, S. (1925). *An autobiographical study*. Standard Edition, 20, 3-70, (J. Strachey, Trans.). London: Hogarth Press



Artist's Statement

"Please find enclosed two pastels that I completed a couple of years after the birth of my first and only child. As you can see they are not pleasant pictures, but they helped me to express my outrage at the hospital environment, and the institutionalised authoritative power of the staff. I found the whole experience to be deeply humiliating – which I believe contributed to a feeling of depression and eventual separation from my partner. I don't want these images back; you are free to dispose of them. The process of making the pictures was very therapeutic."

Artist's name withheld by request. No title, undated (donated 1996), pastel and gouache on paper, 40 x 32 cm.

SOMETIMES MADNESS IS WISDOM*

BY DR. JULIETTE PEERS
ART DESIGN AND CULTURAL HISTORIAN

The Cunningham Dax Collection is an extraordinary resource amongst Australian galleries and museums. It is undoubtedly a significant cultural resource and this significance registers at an international as well as a national level. Concurrently the Collection is highly problematical for many reasons but remains no less valuable as a cultural artifact on account of these problems and even gains a further depth of meaning through these problems. The collecting policy is significantly different to those of other Australian art collections and the Collection generally consists of works by individuals who have not been collected elsewhere, with most of the early artists being anonymous. The Cunningham Dax Collection raises many disturbing questions for those who view it: what is normal, what is sickness, what is aberrant, what is creative, who is an artist, what role does art play in society, what is the relation between artist and audience? The questions go ricocheting backwards and forwards like the swinging silver balls on a 1970's desk toy, each question setting others in motion - how do these questions impact on each other, how have they changed over different periods of history, what is our own investment in these questions? Then if one is considering the issue of women in relation to both culture and mental illness, one increases the ramifications of these questions a thousand-fold.

Women in nineteenth and/or early twentieth century western cultures, when not strictly conforming to societal expectations and accepting male guidance, were liable to be seen as either diseased or heading for a state of unwellness, both physical and mental. Women with creative and intellectual ambitions were often assumed to be suffering symptoms of madness, or in danger of straining body and mind to such a degree that insanity would be the inevitable outcome. This tight nexus of woman, madness and creativity persisted beyond the Victorian era. The language and concepts driving clinical treatment of the mentally ill were also highly influential as a cultural vocabulary throughout the modernist era. The new theories of Psychoanalysis themselves became a sign of the modern, and Freud was hailed as a herald of the new ethos liberating people from superstition and prudery. The Surrealist movement foregrounded the irrational and the sexual against the repressive norms of the bourgeoisie, and women were both a core problem and fixation. Modernist creativity of the early to mid twentieth century seemed to be framed by silenced and censored women. Zelda Fitzgerald, Lucia Joyce, Vivienne Eliot, Olga Khoklova, Dora Maar, Jean Rhys, even to a degree Vivien Leigh and Sylvia Plath have been subsequently labelled as "mad".

For an art historian the Cunningham Dax Collection offers works that are both enriching and frustrating, as the terms of ownership and display of the older works currently make it difficult to contextualise. Thus, the diagnostic and medical origins of the Collection create issues for art professionals looking at and discussing the older works in terms of their heritage and aesthetic content. As traditionally the

Collection's rationale was not about "art" or creativity and talent per se, but about developing a more detailed knowledge of various conditions as well as the state of the individual, the artists themselves were always treated in public usage of the Collection as anonymous. For all but the more recent works, self nominated and donated by artists who see a place for their work in the context of the Collection, it is therefore impossible, or not permitted, to talk about the artists as individuals. This difficulty is not only about protocol. Later generations cannot be certain of how artists regarded the "harvesting" of their work for the Collection. Were they happy, proud or distraught? Nor can we be certain of what the artists' intentions were, unless they occasionally provided written notations or very clear visual symbolism. The word "NO" states an unambiguous narrative in one work, as does the title of a work from 1962, *Escape from Morality*. Were these artworks the undiluted creativity so desired by the romantics and advocates of *art brut*, or were they a survival strategy to placate/please the authorities, or were they a personal coping mechanism? Does a scholarly and theoretical interpretation of these older works compound the violation of those publicly nameless individuals who lost their rights over half a century ago?

At the same time the works in the Collection display the skills and sensibilities of pungently distinct individualities that deserve attention and offer much to the viewer at an individual level and in terms of broader cultural narratives. To deny the opportunity of public validation to creative visions that offer such coherent and consistent points of both communication and self-reference, enacts surely yet another violation and belittling of these individuals. For some artists, these often-extraordinary artworks are the only tokens left of a life that was totally overshadowed by what was, half a century ago, a deep stigma. Often these anonymous artists were rejected by their families and peers and consciously "disappeared" in the public memory of those around them. Yet despite the near obliteration of the known individual, the artworks that they have left have much to say to a wider audience. The best of the works in the Cunningham Dax Collection can speak on aesthetic and art historical terms without any clinical justification.

Precise production dates as well as artists' names are often impossible to gauge, although many works show far more of the taste and culture of the outside world from which the artists were (often forcibly) removed. To simply explain away the works as evidence in a narrative of welfare and social justice neglects their aesthetic power. Many of the artworks were made by individuals who were confident and effective in their use of paint and pencil. The single brushstroke outlining a profile in *Woman*, 1963 (and other works by the same artist) is a case in point. With one sure, flowing gesture, the whole subject is effectively laid in and a plausible character appears before our eyes.

The exceptional qualities of the embroidered garments from the 1950s with their rich surfaces have been rightly recognised in a previously curated exhibition. Alongside this compelling work, the curator adds two other memorable individual creative sensibilities, which also offer sharp comments upon female experience of the 1950s. The titles of the works *Modern Art* 1955 and *Enchanted*, c 1950s, offer some clues as to what this artist was thinking, backed up by stylistic elements. They capture the idea of woman as outsider, as mystic, as witch, as sexual – the artist's notation that she painted *Modern Art* in lipstick was surely intended to carry a charge other than indicating a lack of art materials. The inscription "Clairvoyant – medium" also indicates the visionary starting point of this oeuvre, and the image has a relationship to the streams of ectoplasm, associated with seances and the strange beings that celebrated mediums claimed to manifest for their audience. Her other notation on the wood panel work *Enchanted* also refers to the visionary quality of art. The tight, ordered line and the crisp delineation of faces reference the formality and order of female self-presentation in the 1950s. There is a crossover into an alternative art history of mystical fantasy, stretching from Aubrey Beardsley, to Norman Lindsay to Rosaleen Norton. There are also elements of Meredith Frampton and Tamara de Lempicka's hard-edged deco figures in this image.

The set of gouache drawings from the 1950s impress through their unique reflection upon life in that era. They are both otherworldly, and yet deeply tangible, in their images of current affairs such as the Cold War rendered domestic with *Mrs. Kruschev and Her Daughters* 1958, or the observation of the sharp glance of the working class or petty bourgeois man from under his fedora at the breastfeeding mother in *The Railway Carriage*, 1957. This image both reveals an unspoken reality of everyday working class or lower middle class life and updates the medieval art traditions in which miraculous occurrences – surely here a vision of the Virgin Mary – happen in everyday settings. Her clothes, especially her veil and loose robes, which are distinct from the accurate renderings of fashions in other examples of the same oeuvre, uphold the reading of the figure as the Virgin Mary. Additionally the deployment of haloes and crucifixes in other images and the conscious quotation of gestures from the repertoire of Christian art suggest an artist from a Catholic or High Anglican background – both of these religions brought a strongly Eurocentric visual culture to ordinary Australians. The title *An Old Parasite*, 1957, suggests ambiguity about motherhood as well as piety. These gestural wash drawings of strongly female-centric narratives on butchers' paper have strong resonances in art history, especially to the work of Joy Hester and later artists Stella Dilger, Davida Allen and Jenny Watson. The differences in reputation of these artists' works immediately throw up uncomfortable questions about the legitimising of art, all the more so because some of these works from this artist in

the 1950s and others from the 1960s could be mistaken for Hester's if they were viewed outside of the Cunningham Dax Collection.

The "swinging sixties" also makes an unmistakable impact in terms of the more overtly sexual imagery, suggesting the liberated social life of the period. The idiosyncrasies of the visual culture of the period greatly influence the 1960s works particularly in the use of high colours, acid green, orange, shocking pink and deep purple, by artists. Likewise psychedelia is present in the swirling linear rhythmical line work. Popular graphics of the period such as greeting cards, swap cards, posters and big-eyed children prints also inform certain works from another artist selected from the 1960s, as does the high art image of Munch's *Scream*. The artists from the 1960s displayed in this exhibition are mostly younger women than those selected from the 1950s, suggesting the intensity of public and social scrutiny of a challenging and new youth culture. The generally disturbing and volatile nature of a social landscape with rapidly changing parameters of acceptable behaviour had a particular impact upon women.

The catchment of art rapidly declines with the 1970s and the beginning of de-institutionalisation and the greater reliance upon medication rather than removal of individuals from society. The later self-donated artworks, following on from the feminist movement of the 1970s and protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, are often cast as commentaries upon mental health issues and critique the fate of the individual at the hands of the system. However one notes the reoccurrence of implied highly critical visual narratives about the depersonalising experience of medicalised childbirth across both divisions of the Collection. *Maternity*, 1962 shows a circle of staring masked faces and an operating theatre light, an image that is repeated even more graphically in the 1990s.

The later artists in this exhibition also refer to the many feminist academic critiques of the mental health system published since the 1970s. Such deconstructions were not at the disposal of the earlier artists who were firmly held and controlled within that system. Individuals who now donate artworks to the Cunningham Dax Collection, often self-nominate artworks that comment upon and probe issues of wellness/unwellness, daily life and coping, and thus works may no longer reflect the centralising and institutionalising impetus of the mid-twentieth century mental health system. However, together with the earlier works, they provide a provocative mirror to reflect back to the viewer, half a century of artmakers responses to compelling questions around women, art and 'madness' that have proved so culturally tenacious in the modern era.

* A phrase attributed to Zelda Fitzgerald and appearing as the title of her March 1934 exhibition at Cary Ross's gallery in New York - "*Parfois la Folie est la Sagesse*" - "*Sometimes Madness is Wisdom*".

LIST OF WORKS

Little information is available about the lives of many of the women represented in this exhibition. Attempts to trace and contact some of these artists, particularly those who created works in Victorian psychiatric institutions, were unsuccessful. Legally, these works are considered to be part of the person's medical records and are thus governed by the Health Records Act, 2001 (Vic) and the Privacy Act (Cth). Although artists in general usually wish for their works to be attributed, to uphold common law obligations, in this case, these artists names are withheld. These works can be viewed onsite at the Cunningham Dax Collection via the database.

1950s

Artist 1: name withheld (1900–1980)
Textiles, c. 1950s
Acc. No: 2000.013
Acc. No: 2000.014

Artist 2: name withheld (1895–1989)
Modern Art, 1955
Acc. No: 2004.0225
Enchanted, c. 1950s
Acc. No: 2004.1064

Artist 3: name withheld (1916–2001)
No title, 1956
Acc. No: 1999.10
No title, 1956
Acc. No: 1999.11
No title, 1956
Acc. No: 1999.12
The Transformation, 1956
Acc. No: 1999.63
An Old Parasite, 1957
Acc. No: 1999.159
No title, 1957
Acc. No: 1999.171
The Railway Carriage, 1957
Acc. No: 1999.172
Mrs Kruschev and Her Daughters, 1958
Acc. No: 1999.180

1960s

Artist 4: name withheld (c. 1944 - ?)
– attempts to contact unsuccessful
Escape from Morality, 1962
Acc. No: 2003.2204
Maternity, 1962
Acc. No: 2003.2205
No title, 1962
Acc. No: 2003.2208
Past, Present, Future, 1962
Acc. No: 2003.2215

Artist 5: name withheld (c. 1945 - ?)
– attempts to contact unsuccessful

No titles, 1965
Acc. No: 2003.817
Acc. No: 2003.822
Acc. No: 2003.827
Acc. No: 2003.831
Acc. No: 2003.832
Acc. No: 2003.835

Artist 6: name withheld (c. 1946 - ?)
– attempts to contact unsuccessful

No title, 1962
Acc. No: 2003.2146

Artist 7: name withheld (c. 1941 - ?)
– attempts to contact unsuccessful

No titles, 1964
Acc. No: 2003.3116
Acc. No: 2003.3123
Acc. No: 2003.3125
Acc. No: 2004.1043
Acc. No: 2004.1044

Artist 8: name withheld (c. 1940s - ?)
– attempts to contact unsuccessful

Jealousy, 1963
Acc. No: 2003.2503
No, 1963
Acc. No: 2003.2515
No title, 1963
Acc. No: 2003.2521
Woman, 1963
Acc. No: 2003.2529
No title, 1967
Acc. No: 2003.2544
No title, 1967
Acc. No: 2003.2545

1990s and 2000s

Artist 9: name withheld by request (? -)
No titles, Donated 1996

Acc. No: 2003.1874
Acc. No: 2003.1875

Artist 10: name withheld (1927 - ?)
– attempts to contact unsuccessful

Woman in Shock, Donated 1997
Acc. No: 2004.1003

Artist 11: Carla Krijt (1945 – 2005)
No title, 1995

Acc. No: 2003.3813
No title, 1996

Acc. No: 2003.3845
No title, 1998

Acc. no: 2003.3892
Going Through the Mill, 2001

Acc. No: 2003.3950

Artist 12: Donna Lawrence (1973 -)
Untitled, 2006

2007.0277 a-b
See Beyond This, 2006

Collection of the artist.
Empower Me (2), 2006

Collection of the artist.
Feelings, 2007

Collection of the artist.

Artist 13: Sara Wilson (1979 -)
The Blue Lady, 1998.

Collection of the artist.
Time for Your Nap, 2005

Collection of the artist.
The Smiling Blue Lady, 2005

Collection of the artist.
Mona Lisa, 2006

Collection of the artist.

Appendix H

Exhibition Postcards



CANVASSING THE EMOTIONS

WOMEN, CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH IN CONTEXT

Dates: 11 - 29 February 2008
Venue: Queen Victorian Women's Centre, 210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne
Open: Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm
Entry: Free

Canvassing the Emotions is an innovative exhibition of artworks by women who have experienced mental ill health or trauma and coincides with the celebration of 100 years of women's suffrage in Victoria in 2008. The exhibition opens on the 11 February 2008 leading up to International Women's Day in March 2008. The works in the exhibition are drawn from the Cunningham Dax Collection.

From the 1950's to now, the exhibition explores the intersection of women, creativity and mental health within cultural, socio-economic and political contexts. It illuminates the complexities of being a woman experiencing mental ill health and producing art in Australian society.

Sara Wilson, *Mona Lisa*, 2006, Acrylic on canvas, 70cm x 50cm. Artist's own collection

Contact: Sally Northfield
 Guest curator
 The Cunningham Dax Collection
 35 Poplar Road
 Parkville VIC 3052

T 61 3 9342 2394
 F 61 3 9381 2008
 info@daxcollection.org.au
 www.daxcollection.org.au

The Cunningham Dax Collection
 art, creativity and education in mental health

MENTAL HEALTH
 RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Victoria
 The Place To Be

Mallee Women's Health
 Living the Arts



CANVASSING THE EMOTIONS

WOMEN, CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH IN CONTEXT

Dates: 1 - 14 October 2008
Venue: Dudley House, 60 View Street, Bendigo
Open: 10am - 4pm, Monday - Sunday
Entry: Free

Canvassing the Emotions is an exhibition of artworks by women who have experienced mental ill health or trauma and coincides with the celebration of 100 years of women's suffrage in Victoria in 2008. The works in the exhibition are drawn from the Cunningham Dax Collection.

The exhibition explores the intersection of women, creativity and mental health within cultural, socio-economic and political contexts from the 1950's to now. *Canvassing the Emotions* illuminates the complexities of being a woman experiencing mental ill health and producing art in Australian society.

Public Program: 11am, 7 October, Visual Arts Centre,
 La Trobe University, 121 View Street, Bendigo
 A free talk about women, creativity and mental health featuring guest Curator Sally Northfield (Victoria University) and artist Donna Lawrence with support from Loddon Mallee Women's Health.

Guest curator: Sally Northfield
 The Cunningham Dax Collection
 35 Poplar Road
 Parkville VIC 3052

T 61 3 9342 2394
 F 61 3 9381 2008
 info@daxcollection.org.au
 www.daxcollection.org.au

The Cunningham Dax Collection
 art, creativity and education in mental health

MENTAL HEALTH
 RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Victoria
 The Place To Be

Sara Wilson, *Mona Lisa*, 2006, Acrylic on canvas, 70cm x 50cm. Artist's own collection

Appendix I

Extract from the public talk by Sandy Jeffs accompanying the Exhibition: *Canvassing the emotions* (2008)

Jeffs, S. (2000) *Madness, Creativity and Poetry: A Personal View: The Madwoman in the Attic* (for Sue)

I am the madwoman in the attic.
A psychic cancer dwells deep in me
and I am unable to control its preying tentacles
which creep and crawl through my mind's dark passages.
I have been in the attic for sometime now
with my fantasies to keep me company,
and as I sit in my lonely corner
I contemplate the visions before me
of madwomen of all ages and times
who have sat in attics before I came into being.
I see these madwomen struggling for their minds
in a world of oppressive institutions controlled
by the sinister hands of the medical masters.
Shall I recite the litany and bring to mind the women
who stand as symbols for every madwoman there ever was?
Virginia listened to the birds singing in Greek
and chose to drown her madness.
Bertha Mason, animal-like and violent,
was hidden from the world and met her death
springing from Thornfield Hall's battlements
to lie smashed on the pavement.
Zelda was a victim of a jealous husband and died
in the flames that engulfed her in the Swiss asylum.
John's wife tore at the yellow wallpaper in despair
while Sylvia inhaled the gas of death.
Ophelia, a 'document in madness',
with the 'fantastic garlands' in her hair,
sang wistful ballads then lay dead in the water.
Crazy Jane wandered the places she had spent
with her lost lover and sang plaintive airs while
she dressed her head with willow straw and wildflowers.

Lucia di Lammermoor, with glazed eyes and bloodstained dress,
huddled in the bridal chamber and gazed at
the bridegroom she had just slain.

The litany could go on,
but we all know of a madwoman or two -
a relative, a friend or perhaps a lover,
we all know that somewhere in time
a madwoman burned at the stake or drowned in a stream,
died in an attic or succumbed to a surgeon's knife.

O madwomen, my mentors,
my visions of you bring so much sorrow and anger
as I hear your lulling solicitations from afar.

But madwoman that I am,
who scorns our history of abuse and misunderstanding,
I wish to declare us the curators of our own psyches

Appendix J

Portraits

Portrait 1: Jazmina Cininas: Artistic Identity: Giving myself permission

Melbourne-based printmaker, Jazmina Cininas (1965-) with artist Kate Barber (Barber, 2008, p. 5) is asked, *For you was 'becoming' an artist a conscious decision. If so, what led to this decision?*

"I don't know that it was a 'conscious decision' so much as a 'giving myself permission' to become an artist. While I've been a prolific drawer and 'art maker' since childhood, being an artist was never promoted as a valid occupation at the schools I attended, and I actually studied maths and sciences in high school, with the view to getting a 'proper' job and pursuing art in my spare time. Of course, that never happens. After finishing high school, I decided to defer for a year rather than go straight into a science degree, and in the meanwhile got a job with the merchandising sector of travelling blockbuster exhibitions, working in major state galleries around Australia, and having privileged access, and exposure, to some exceptional works of art. I decided to travel internationally in my twenties (based predominantly in the UK) and just seemed to end up, once again, among creative people, not scientists! Seeing others pursue their dreams gave me the courage to acknowledge that what I really wanted to do was practice art full time, and the conviction that this was indeed a valid occupation."

Portrait 2: Margaret Olley: Artistic pathway: A bit wild –

As well as writing about her artist mother Margaret Coen, Meg Stewart (2005) also wrote a book called *Far from a still life* about Margaret Olley (1923-2011)

“Although Margaret’s artistic ability was clearly evident to her teachers in high school, when leaving high school it was not clear what she would do. It had not entered her head to be an artist, nor anyone else in her family even though Margaret had loved drawing since starting school... “I knew what I wanted to do – which was to participate more in art classes. I was not however, at all filled with a great aspiration to be an artist. I just liked drawing and painting” (p. 61).

“My mother was hell-bent on making me a nurse as she had been. I would have killed people if I had been a nurse. Mercifully it didn’t happen” (p. 69). So Margaret went to the Brisbane Central Technical College instead and thought she would be blissfully drawing and painting away her days, but she hated it as “we were made to use very sharp pencils and do tight little drawings on Watmans paper” (p. 70) “as an act of rebellion I took myself off to Ball’s, a large paper wholesaler, and bought reams of butcher’s paper. I also purchased a big bag of burnt sienna or raw umber. I used to pin the paper up, dip my hand into the bag of colour and do big loose drawings, with my hand. This was the only way I could buck the system. In their eyes I was being absolutely rebellious and they hated it.”

Margaret Olley went to the East Sydney Tech in 1942 and graduated in 1945. “I know a lot of my relatives used to think I was a bit wild looking at nude models was considered to be a bit risqué, to say the least. In those days, being an artist was something nice people didn’t do. But my mother was always supportive of me” (p. 78). “I’ll always be grateful to my mother for all the encouragement she gave me” (p. 275).

Portrait 3: Patti Smith A contemporary non-linear pathway to becoming an artist

The pinup girl of punk, Patti Smith (1946-) published a book in 2010 called *Just Kids* – a raw and beautiful portrayal of the becoming of an artist, with Patti leaving her country home for something more – a life of art – and rapidly stumbling into a life with a young Robert Mapplethorpe. For all of us who sat on our beds as budding teenagers with our girlfriends, listening to the *Easter* album over and over again, particularly the song *Because the night belongs to lovers*, which gave us an aching feeling that when we came to feel love it would be better if it was bitter sweet but rapturous. None of us then wanted to have mere girlfriends or boyfriends but we wanted lovers.

This is a poignant glimpse of New York City in the late 60s and early 70s and a portrait of the ascent of two young artists despite and perhaps because of abject poverty, shared passions and intense consuming artistic processes. Homelessness and hunger characterise her first years in New York as do her consistent practice of drawing and making poems. In describing her life in places like the infamous Chelsea Hotel, Patti offers an impression of what inner city habitats were like to live an artistic existence. At the time, artists gathered in the inner realms of all cities like, Berlin, London, Melbourne, with cheap rent, access to the seedier side of life and a community. Inner city metropolises now have no spaces for artists to congregate, exchange ideas, or drugs or partners (Tomkins, 2008). In Melbourne the music and art communities centred around St. Kilda or before this, the Eltham Monsalvat and Heidi environments. Now the artistic community has been divided and in Melbourne this is evident in the cavernous North Melbourne Meat market. Once a thriving craft and artist community, the building was closed in 1999 and the artistic community in Melbourne became increasingly fragmented.

Patti's drive to be an artist and live as an artist is extraordinary considering the time and her circumstances. Patti describes how her mother told her she had to wear a shirt when she was eleven as she was about to become a young lady. She protested saying she would "never going to become anything but myself..." (p. 10). When she was twelve she describes a family trip to the Museum of Art in Philadelphia as the first time she had come "face to face with art" (p. 11). So goes on to say, "I had no proof that I had the stuff to be an artist, though I hungered to be one. I imagined that I had the calling and prayed that it be so" (p. 12).

"I am certain as we filed down the great staircase, that I appeared the same as ever, a moping twelve year old, all arms and legs. But secretly I knew I had been transformed, moved by the revelation that human beings create art, that to be an artist was to see what others could not." (p. 12). She describes herself at fourteen, "I drew, I danced, and I wrote poems. I was not gifted but I was imaginative and my teachers

encouraged me. When I won a competition...I had enough money to buy a wooden art box and a set of oils. I raided libraries and church bazaars for art books." At sixteen "I'd brag that I was going to be an artist's mistress one day. Nothing seemed more romantic to my young mind. I imagined myself as Frida to Diego, both muse and maker" (p. 12).

However, for Patti, the path to becoming an artist was never linear and one that was forged with great determination. After leaving school, Patti worked summers in the factory and the rest of the year attended State Teachers college "my father was concerned that I was not attractive enough to find a husband and thought the teaching profession would afford me security" (p. 17). Patti became pregnant at nineteen and although she felt panic telling her parents, she also felt a sense of calm. "An overwhelming sense of mission eclipsed my fears...I felt in full possession of myself. I would do my duty and stay strong. I would never look back. I would not return to the factory or to teachers college. I would be an artist" (p. 18).

Patti recounts how she was sent away from her home to have her baby because of the judgemental neighbourhood and only returned after the child was adopted. In 1967, she still held the hope of being an artist but rural south Jersey was not pro-artist and she knew she would never be able to afford art school. All of her artistic friends had moved to New York to write poetry and study art. Like Joy Hester, she found solace in Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and saved enough money for a one way ticket to New York, where she would eventually arrive and quickly immerse herself in the artistic community.

Patti, throughout her long and varied career has continued to make drawings, write poems and write, sing and play music – an artist who has used her creativity in many ways but an artist who has also always worried if what she was doing was frivolous. She describes feeling guilty. "I wanted to be an artist but I wanted my work to matter" (p. 153).

Cindy Sherman also reports feeling uneasy about her success. "I was feeling guilty about being accepted as an artist, especially since some of my friends weren't getting the attention I was" (Tomkins, 2000, p. 36). Thus, even well-known artists such as Patti and Cindy continue to question their right to claim *this is what I see* and the subsequent acclaim for sharing their vision of the world.

Portrait 4: Georgia O'Keeffe: such odd things have been done to me with words

The American artist Georgia O'Keeffe's (1887-1986) work is characterised by many flowers and Mexican desert paintings. "The meaning of a word – to me – is not as exact as the meaning of color. Colors and shapes make a more definite statement than words. I write this because such odd things have been done to me with words. I have often been told what to paint. I am often amazed at the spoken and written word telling me what I have painted. I make this effort because no one else can know how my paintings happen...Where I was born and where and how I have lived is unimportant. It is what I have done with where I have been that should be of interest" (O'Keeffe, 1976, Preface).

"Still - in a way – nobody sees a flower – really – it is so small – we haven't time – and to see takes time...So I said to myself – I'll paint what I see – what the flower is to me but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it –...(p. 23).

O'Keeffe (1975) had recognised that she faced impediments as a women artist "I can't live where I want to – I can't go where I want to – I can't even say what I want to (p. 13). I found I could say things with colour and shapes that I couldn't say in any other way – things I had no words for." She read Kandinsky's 'On the spiritual in Art' and was interested in the "idea that music could be translated into something for the eye" (p. 14).

Talking about painting flowers and alligator pears "It was the time when the men didn't think much of what I was doing. They were all discussing Cezanne with long involved remarks about the 'plastic quality of his form and color. I was an outsider. My color and form were not acceptable. It had nothing to do with Cezanne or anyone else. I didn't understand what they were talking about – why one color was better than another. I never did understand what they meant by plastic. Years later when I finally got to Cezanne's Mont Sainte-Victoire in the south of France, I remember sitting there thinking, 'How could they attach all those analytical remarks to anything he did with that mountain?' All those words piled on top of that poor little mountain seemed too much" (p. 31).

"It is surprising to me to see how many people separate the objective from the abstract. Objective painting is not good painting unless it is good in the abstract sense. A hill or a tree cannot make a good painting just because it is a hill or a tree. It is lines and colors put together so they say something. For me that is the basis of painting. The abstraction is often the most definite form for the intangible thing in myself that I can only clarify in paint" (p. 88).

“A young potter came to the ranch and as I watched him work with the clay I saw that he could make it speak...I hadn't thought too much about pottery but now I thought maybe ... it could become still another language for me. ... He helped me with this and that and I finally have several pots that are not too bad, but I cannot yet make the clay speak – so I must keep on” (p. 11).

O'Keeffe (1976) discussing her formative years training to be an artist “I said to myself, ‘I have things in my head that are not like what anyone has taught me – shapes and ideas so near to me – so natural to my way of being and thinking that it hasn't occurred to me to put them down.’ I decided to start anew – to strip away what I had been taught – to accept as true my own thinking” (p. 1).

Portrait 5: Joy Hester: Artistic Interpretation: Not just a dairy

Janine Burke (2001) discusses how Nolan and Tucker increasingly used the expressive power of the eyes in their work from 1942, and to a lesser extent as did Perceval and Boyd. "Haptic art was aiming to project the inner world onto the picture. The haptic artist tends to emphasis particular details such as the eyes. Hester also began to accentuate the eyes increasingly from 1945-46" (p. 147). Like the emergence of the Art Brut movement in Europe at this time, in the Heide circle the primitive, untutored creative response, without the need to conform to convention or art school training was prized. However while the men of the Heide colony were exploring these ideas, Joy's exploration risked being labelled merely a mirror of her emotional state.

Not Just a diary or therapy

In 1947 and 48 Joy completed the Faces Series during a time of treatment for Hodgkin's disease. The faces series had a theme concentrating on the eyes. She wrote to Sunday Reed (cited in Burke, 1983/2001) "...all I know is they're frightening things to hang on the wall. I had to take them down as they nearly sent me nuts – I'm sure a psychologist wouldn't approve of them. My 'eyes' really seem to be running away with my drawings and somehow when I put brush to paper I start with an eye, do the eye and the rest is dictated by that" (p. 187).

Hester's imagery was drawn from states of mind that reveal disturbing thoughts, a frightened women, a night dream, observes Burke and "reveals the shaky structure of identity when identity is assaulted by extremes of feeling" (p. 153).

Burke explains that Hester was aware of Freudian theories of symbols and dreams and of the eye but she felt that clinical psychoanalysis had limited therapeutic effect (p. 191), and it is uncertain whether she was deliberately employing Freudian symbolism. However, according to Burke, Joy Hester, like Patti Smith, was influenced by Rimbaud's (1854-1891) work and like Patti also wrote poetry. Rimbaud was and continues to be a seminal influence on many artists, writing all of his major works before the age of 20. "I became an adept at simple hallucination: in place of a factory I really saw a mosque, a school of drummers led by angels, carriages on the highways of the sky, a drawing room at the bottom of a lake; monsters, mysteries; the tide of melodrama would raise horrors before me. Then I would explain my magic sophism with the hallucination of words! Finally I came to regard the disorder of my mind as sacred" (Rimbaud, 1872/1961).

Burke maintains that Hester read Rimbaud's *Illuminations* about a system of the sophistry and logic of madness, where the reader is thrown into chaos to liberate the mind from the usual patterns of thought. Burke says the system for deranging the senses was a simple form of hallucination and the use of drugs was one method to

achieve this (Burke, p. 152). Joy may have been influenced by this as Unica Zürn was in the mid-1960s in France. But for Zürn, the consequences of experimenting with this and taking hallucinatory drugs were serious.

Burke argues that although Joy's own mortality was confronting her, the Faces drawings were "...not just a therapeutic outlet nor were they a diary of sensations of physical and psychological distress. Her art was more complex." Although referencing fear and distress they are not mirrors of despair or celebratory of extreme states of emotion to the point of being freakish or maudlin. "They are powerful and disquieting images." As an artist, Joy could transform experience: she was not so consumed by her anxieties that she used art only as a therapeutic means of release from them. But she certainly used her experience in making art, "The heads I do are the heads that pass me in the streets..." (p. 188). Thus Burke argues that Joy Hester's works, such as her series of faces, are much more than therapy or a diary of distress. "Art is an act of self-criticism on the part of the artist, a rigorous and willed performance where whatever is weakest in the artist's creative vocabulary is banished and whatever is strongest is pushed to the limit. Good art's first challenge is always to its creator" (p. 18).

In a letter to Sunday Reed, Joy wrote, "...it's really a tightrope sort of business, living – for anyone" (Burke, 1995, p. 127).

Portrait 6: Vali Myers: The tightrope walker

Vali Myers (1930-2003) was born in Sydney and moved to Melbourne when she was 11, “my Mum couldn’t keep me down, I was a nut, I was always putting on lipstick, not going to school, drawing” (Karidis, 2012). According to Spinks (2005), Vali continued to spend her lifetime evading conventions and flaunting her disregard for conformity “her rambunctious adventurer spirit that had stepped outside of conventions and flourished” (Cullen, 2012, p. 68). She called her drawings ‘spirit drawings’ (McCormick, 2010). Self-taught, Vali did not like to talk about her drawings but she took her work “very, very seriously” (Cullens, 2012, p.68).

At the age of 19, perhaps like Yayoi Kusama leaving Japan for the vibrant art scene in New York, Vali, perhaps sensing her art would not find a receptive audience in Australia, sailed to France to spend years dancing, drawing and living as a vagrant in Paris and mixing with an eclectic group of writers and artists, such as Jean Cocteau, Jean Genet and Django Reinhardt. Unlike Kusama, who would return to Japan to a psychiatric hospital after her time in the art scene in New York in the 1960s, Vali, in the late 50s, seeking to retreat from an opium addiction, found an ancient and overgrown pavilion in a valley in Postino, Italy, and established her art practice and her residence there, where she had many animals and time seemed irrelevant. Vali worked amid the rhythms of nature, using a white goose feather, attached to a fine-point nib (Spinks, 2005). Vali kept many diaries which until now have never been published. Of her art making process she writes, “Do like to put on my war paint before beginning to draw. It’s almost like making love, sweet and ecstatic, or like a battle sometimes in the Mongolian style – sham retreat while fiercely shooting with bow and arrow from the back of a brumbie or just in good old Viking style – sword in each hand” (Myers, 1977, in McIntosh and Jones, 2012).

In the 1970s, Vali began to travel to New York regularly to sell her drawings and kept a room in the Chelsea Hotel where many of the artist community resided including those who would later become her admirers, Patti Smith and Deborah Harry. Vali Myers returned to live in Melbourne in 1993, and believed that “if it weren’t for the drawing I would have died years ago” (Spinks, 2005).

It is also interesting to consider how Vali’s artistic path may have differed had she remained in Australia, where her flamboyant lifestyle may have been less accepted and therefore her paradoxically delicate and detailed art may have been similarly rejected or equally interpreted as the markings of a woman in need of psychiatric intervention.

Portrait 7: Kim Mahood: Meeting the universe halfway in an art practice

Kim Mahood is a visual artist and winner of 2012 Peter Blazey Fellowship for writing. Kim lives part time in a remote aboriginal community.

“There was a time when, if asked what I did, I could reply without hesitation that I was an artist. In recent years, writing has taken up a greater proportion of my creative energy, but visual art is still the activity that gives me the deepest pleasure, and in which I find the simplest and most direct engagement with the world around me. When I draw, paint or make sculpture I enter a pre-literate, sensory part of the brain. The noisy conscious mind that wants explanations and answers is diverted into the job of solving problems – how do I make this object stand up? How do I join one material to another? How do I get raw ochres to bond with the paper? How do I stop the moisture-deprived bush flies crawling into the paint before it dries? - leaving the inarticulate perceiving mind to its own devices.

Making art is an exercise in trust, risk, fortuitous surprise, a willingness to spend a lot of time doing something that may not work and a peculiar faith in your own vision that may not be shared by anyone else. This applies to writing too, but with visual art the conduit to intuition doesn't have to pass through the barrier of language. Art takes me to places I can't reach via the conscious process of writing. It's the place where meanings are transparent and multiple, where contradiction transforms into ambiguity, where the inchoate becomes visible.

Every couple of years I commit to an exhibition as a means of keeping a space in my life dedicated to making art, and every couple of years I find myself with an exhibition looming, wondering what hubris possessed me to think I could produce a body of work in the time and under the circumstances available.

I'm excited about the work, inspired by the recent archaeological dig on one of the ancient lake shorelines, an eroded rim of impacted soils and gravels that has been regurgitating artefacts from the belly of deep time. The contradiction between the dirty, windy, back-breaking process of excavation and the precision and detail of the material recorded on the tidy grids of graph paper intrigues me. It's another kind of representation at the interface of science and landscape, another kind of storytelling that creates as many mysteries as it unveils. It parallels my own preoccupation with the grid, that Western means of imposing structure on the imaginal realm, of bringing the inaccessible under control. The failures and inconsistencies attract me as much as the pattern and order; there is something reassuring in the way the country continues to evade our best efforts to interpret it.

I've been making colour grids, small squares of saturated colour on which I plan to superimpose the eroded profiles of the archaeological site, or aerial perspectives of

the watercourses and brumby pads that trace the lines of least resistance through the sand dunes and ancient lake gravels. The discovery of some partially exposed bones near the creek has sent a frisson of excitement through the community, triggering recollections of an ancient revenge killing. On closer examination they turn out to be the remains of a horse skull. It's one of those anecdotal fragments I can't resist, that will find its way into the work somewhere. The gorgeous transparency and unpredictability of the watercolour (somebody once described painting in watercolour as a series of controlled accidents) turns the colour grids wobbly and asymmetric. I'm absorbed in the sheer pleasure of the process, slipping into the anxiety-free domain of experiment and play...

Prints of satellite imagery pinned to the wall show the delicate weave and play of dots that indicate changing vegetation patterns. Micro or macro, the country is mantled with dots.

The art I make is part of a dialogue the language of which is only half-understood by all of us who participate in it. Part of this process involves being in the thick of it, which has its moments of epiphany, but is also a test of physical and psychological resilience. You can't think or write your way through it, you live it and you use whatever resources you have to survive and make sense of it. For the moment I accept that this is the best I can do. I would like to spend more time making the work but it may be that if I had more time I would have less to say.

The paintings come directly from the ground in which I work, across the bottom of one of the paintings, a bleached grid that locks together a scatter of burnt turpentine wattle and termite mounds, I scribble the words: 'In the space between two ways of seeing the risk is that you see nothing clearly'" (extracts from Mahood, 2009).