

The University of Surrey

**POIESIS AND OBSTRUCTION IN ART  
PRACTICE**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

by

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## **Abstract**

This PhD thesis examines the concept of poiesis, that is 'calling into existence that which was not there before', in the context of obstruction in studio practice. It poses the question 'Is there a methodology that engages with obstruction which in turn calls new work'? In this thesis, the concept of poiesis emerging from the late Dr. Murray Cox's 'Aeolian Mode', is analyzed alongside a concept of praxis, (a philosophical companion to poiesis), familiar to artistic practice. This thesis describes the orientation of the original idea, The Aeolian Mode, clinically developed by Dr. Murray Cox in Broadmoor Psychiatric Hospital. This PhD seeks to identify if there are similar 'tenets of approach' held within the methodology of 'The Aeolian Mode', that would be useful or are identifiable in artistic studio practice. This thesis draws on the work of the philosopher, Professor Richard Kearney, specifically Kearney's ideas on the necessity of 'the other' for 'radical possibility' to occur. It maps a context of both Freudian and Jungian interpretations of art practice, identifying how these ideas have shaped the way art is seen today. Furthermore, it challenges the Freudian idea of 'pathography' and favours a Jungian approach of 'individuation' in the understanding of creative processes. It develops a 'methodology of the conversation', interviewing students, established artists, tutors about their approaches to obstruction/poiesis in art practice. Additionally, it examines my own obstruction to painting and identifies the methodology that released me from this obstruction. Conducting these interviews on art practice has enabled me to confirm my initial concerns

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about Freudian 'pathography' whilst validating the possibility of the Jungian concept of 'individuation' being of use to art practice. Finally, this PhD discusses the implications for further study and research, which have emerged during the 'methodology of the conversation' and the task of dissolving my obstruction to painting.

## **Dedication**

*To my son, Oliver Mackwood, for his continual support*

## **Acknowledgements**

This research would not have been possible without the unfailing commitment of my supervisors Dr. Malcolm Quinn and Tamiko O'Brien. I owe each of them a debt of gratitude for their constant support over the previous five years, for sharing their time and wisdom with me so generously and for the opportunities, conversations, and the subsequent realizations, that affected this PhD research project to its benefit.

## **Declaration**

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images, matrixes or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in a whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Aims and who this PhD is for**

This thesis is concerned with poiesis in the context of art practice. The research was conducted through a 'methodology of the conversation' and the self-analysis of my own obstruction to painting. Poiesis means 'calling into existence that which was not there before', which comes from the Latin word 'poesis' and from the Greek 'poiesis', meaning poetic art/creativity, from poiein to make. The application of this concept in this body of research shapes the outcome of the enquiry; namely that 'if' there is a methodology that we can see in art practice that engages with obstruction to call poiesis, could this methodology be taught to the benefit of students in art colleges or art departments in universities today? To this end it has to answer, or address, the larger question of whether art can be taught at all. My analysis of creative processes in art practice aims to be a resource for students in art colleges, tutors, psychotherapists working with artists and those interested in art process from other academic disciplines.

In this thesis, the concept of poiesis emerging from psychotherapy (specifically the Aeolian mode developed by Dr. Murray Cox at Broadmoor) is analyzed alongside a concept of praxis that is more familiar in artistic contexts. This practice-based PhD asks whether poiesis can be

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seen to be 'alive', 'visible' or 'lived' in everyday studio practice. In other words, it investigates what artists 'do' in studio practice, what 'tenets of approach' they adopt to deal with obstructions and how this correlates to what is found in Cox's Aeolian Mode. It responds to what I perceive as a gap in knowledge around the concept of poiesis in art practice. This gap could be approached using art history or cultural history, but becomes more complex when we turn our attention to the influence psychoanalysis has had on art practice today. Therefore, this PhD also engages with a specific criticism of early Freudian psychoanalysis that has looked to its own interpretations of what is taking place in art practice through what is known as 'pathography' or psycho-biographical approaches to art. I will also address the criticism taken from the French philosopher, Alain Badiou, 'that psychoanalysis has only used art for its services' in the last 100 years'.<sup>1</sup> Without dispensing with present day understandings of psychoanalysis or analytical psychology, I hypothesize in this thesis that the understanding of 'art practice' calls for a necessary elimination of pathography or psycho-biographic explanations of art practice, i.e. those explanations that seek to explain the artist and the art object in terms of deficiencies in psychological development.<sup>2</sup> I do not in any way seek to set up a competitive research aim into 'domains of knowledge' between psychoanalysis and art, but instead this PhD seeks to open a conversation within psychological disciplines to adopt a broader conceptual framework psychologically when thinking about art practice. This thesis is an examination of the productive imagination (the configuration of the art

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<sup>1</sup> Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (Stamford University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>2</sup> See glossary.

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object) and the libidinal imagination (the calling of the art object). This thesis, whilst not an enquiry or body of research into artistic identity, does hypothesize that the concept of 'individuation'<sup>3</sup> is at play in artistic processes, as is evident in the analysis of artist's interviews via the 'methodology of the conversation'. The concept of individuation was also a useful tool in my engagement with my own obstruction to painting. This thesis also claims that the Jungian concept of 'individuation' can be used in art practice without reductive consequences or the accusation of 'applied theory' by the very nature of the concept and its syntax. It is not a 'given' that the concept of 'individuation' in a Jungian approach has to be viewed therapeutically.

Artists today have very clear ideas about their own work and practices; this PhD aims to amplify the voice of the artist. I will introduce analyses of the studio practice of John Virtue (painter) and Cornelia Parker (sculptor) to ground the research within studio practice and will set out my aims and objectives that define this enquiry into artistic practice. This will be done through a 'methodology of the conversation', which gives evidence and insight into the inner journey of the artist and amplification to an emerging idea of creativity 'entre nous'; by that I mean, the creativity that is called into being within or found in conversation between two. The following statement from the philosopher, Richard Kearney, sets the tone for my research:

"After the disappearance of the self-sufficient imagination another kind must now reappear - an imagination schooled in the post-modern truth that the self cannot be 'centred' on its

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<sup>3</sup> See glossary.

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own self; an imagination fully aware that meaning does not originate within the narrow chambers of its own subjectivity but emerges as response to the other as radical interdependence."<sup>4</sup>

For me, this statement by Kearney holds the essence of creativity held within the methodology of the conversation; it is here in the conversation that we may find 'radical possibilities' in our understanding of art practice. The fact that Kearney chooses the word 'response' indicates that the conversation between two contains a 'call'. Poiesis is about call and the creative act in itself can be interpreted as 'call and response', no art work finished but containing within it another call.<sup>5</sup> In this way, I believe this PhD aims to 'call' new understandings into the body of knowledge around art practice, which is on-going. Emmanuel Levinas<sup>6</sup> is quoted as saying: 'only the other is unique'; by that statement I take him to mean that it is through the other that we find new ideas. I believe a 'methodology of the conversation' has, at its central aim, an ability to 'call' radical possibility out of the unknown through the encounter of 'the other'. I think artists are already fully engaged in this methodology in studio practice.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in this PhD, I seek to give evidence to this claim and I put forward a case of why I think Freudian 'pathography' cannot be a valid interpretative tool for art practice.

Plato explored the idea of poiesis when he set up The Symposium, a forum for rhetoric and dialogue to call new ideas into being; Plato believed

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Kearney is the Charles Seelig Professor of Philosophy at Boston College. *The Wake of the Imagination* (Routledge 2008), 387.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Wright, "Deep calling unto Deep, Artistic Creativity and the Maternal Object", *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 14, no.4. (1998): 453-467.

<sup>6</sup> Emanuel Levinas, *'Entre Nous' Thinking of the Other* translated by Smith, B. & Harshaw, B. (Athlone, 1989), 185.

<sup>7</sup> A good example of this can be found in the interview with Anthony Caro and Mark Lawson in 'The Methodology of the Conversation.'

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that nothing new came from reading.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle examined the very nature of 'change' (poiesis and the call to the new) in his first book of the *Physics* where he argued, "there is a state from which the change proceeds, the state to which the change proceeds and the object which persists through change."<sup>9</sup> In Book V, Aristotle embellishes his point, which hints at the area that I am analyzing within this PhD project:

"There is something, which initiates the change, and something, which is changing, and again something in which the change takes place (time) and apart from these, something from which to which, for all change is from something to something."<sup>10</sup>

In present day philosophy, Giorgio Agamben<sup>11</sup> links poiesis to praxis (act), which, in this PhD thesis, I am stating is the more common experience for artists; however, Levinas links poiesis to ethics in *Entre Nous* and his theory around the 'epiphany of the face'.<sup>12</sup>

At the outset of this enquiry, it is useful first of all to be specific about how I employ poiesis, differentiating the concept from familiar conceptual tools such as 'metamorphosis'<sup>13</sup> and 'transformation'.<sup>14</sup> How do these two concepts differ from poiesis? Poiesis, in its nature, is also about change; however, intrinsic to the nature of poiesis, is the notion of call. Poiesis is not about narrative but about 'moment,' so in a moment of poiesis, a subject would experience 'the call', an affirmation of depth and 'the new'. The 'new', evoked in poiesis, differs from metamorphosis and transformation in one important way - poiesis is not intrinsic to something

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<sup>8</sup> Plato, *The Symposium* (Penguin 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Johnathan Barnes, "Aristotle, *A Very Short Introduction*" (Oxford University Press), 77.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>11</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 69.

<sup>12</sup> Emanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous* (Athlone 1988), 185.

<sup>13</sup> See glossary.

<sup>14</sup> See glossary.

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being there before - be it a material object or a qualitative character trait. It means calling into existence that which was not there before and, for research purposes, poiesis is a useful concept when questioning ideas about 'repetition' and 'originality' in art. To choose one example from this thesis, I claim that Cornelia Parker's exploding shed (*Cold Dark Matter, An exploded view*, 1991), is a good 'parable' of poiesis in the realm of the visible and tangible, (Appendix B).

### **1.2. The Initial Idea and the Encounter with Dr. Cox**

In the context of this body of research into art practice and for my purposes, poiesis allows for particular alignment of creative action with the opposite trope of creative block, impossibility or obstacle. I first encountered this idea with the work of Dr. Murray Cox at Broadmoor Psychiatric Hospital and his methodology of *The Aeolian Mode*.<sup>15</sup> In all my research over the last five years, I have not found any other research outputs that have taken the work developed by Cox at Broadmoor and examined whether the methodology of *The Aeolian Mode* used within Broadmoor could be of use to art practice. The nearest example of this sort of enquiry is Simon O'Sullivan's work with 'Deleuze and Art practice' and his ideas on what creates an encounter and what causes repetition;

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<sup>15</sup> Dr. Murray Cox worked in Broadmoor high security hospital from 1970-1997 (his death). He helped transform the treatment of patients as well as staff training and support. During the time at Broadmoor he became a leading authority of Forensic Psychotherapy and wrote widely influential books on forensic psychology, which helped shape the sub discipline. With the theatre director Mark Rylance he initiated RSC productions performed in Broadmoor. He edited '*Shakespeare Comes to Broadmoor*' describing the effects on patients, staff and actors. Murray Cox, *Shakespeare Comes to Broadmoor* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1992).

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his ideas on 'rupture', 'moment', and 'encounter' are philosophically orientated and his hypothesis is that only 'the encounter calls' the new.<sup>16</sup>

The initial idea for this research project came about in 1993 through a chance encounter and conversation with Dr. Murray Cox at a conference on 'Art and Psychology' run by The Archetypal Convivium in Windsor Great Park. Here, the conversation between us began both around psychoanalytical practice, Cox's Aeolian Mode and art practice, phenomenology and existentialism.<sup>17</sup> I believe it is this initial conversation that formulated the 'call', which gave rise to this body of research. This project developed out of my collaborative work around the conceptual matrix (Appendix A) that I developed on The Aeolian Mode. Dr. Cox treated severely disturbed individuals in Broadmoor who could, in his own words, 'go no further' as they had met an obstruction within their own nature and had to call something new. This PhD creates a number of opportunities to develop some of these therapeutic models in the analysis of studio practice and the complex, often overlooked, relationships between creative obstacles and creative possibilities.<sup>18</sup> The formulation of the PhD question, 'Is there a methodology that challenges obstruction which in turn enables the artist to call new work', has a personal formulation/narrative developing from questions/obstacles in my own art practice and analytical clinical practice. From the beginning of this study,

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<sup>16</sup> Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters/Deleuze and Guattari/ thought beyond representation* (Palgrave Macmillan 2006), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Noel Cobb in 1987, co-founded with Eva Loewe, The London Convivium for Archetypal Studies, (where I met Cox in 1993). In 1988 they started publishing SPHINX: A journal for Archetypal Psychology and the arts. His publications include several journal, articles books and volumes of poetry, *Glimpses of Gods in Life and Art*, (Lindisfarne, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard, *Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy, The Aeolian Mode* (Tavistock 1987).

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there have been six major influences on the formulation of my PhD question: two theoreticians from psychoanalysis, Dr. Murray Cox, the late consultant forensic psychotherapist and the psychiatrist and theoretician, Dr. W.R.D. Fairbairn;<sup>19</sup> one analytical psychologist, Carl Jung;<sup>20</sup> one modern day philosopher, Professor Richard Kearney and two living established artists, John Virtue (painter) and Cornelia Parker (sculptor).

### **1.3. The Aeolian Mode**

In the early 1990's, encountering my dissatisfaction with a classical psychoanalytical approach, which as a clinician I found too reductive, I began searching for something new, a different approach to the production of creative change. I had read some references to Dr. Murray Cox; he was a Forensic Psychotherapist and a fellow of the Shakespearean Society, who was doing something 'new' in the therapeutic setting of Broadmoor, a psychiatric prison that holds some of the most disturbed people in Britain. At a conference on 'Art and Psychology', we discovered that we had a common approach to psychotherapy through the arts, poetry, as well as a shared a mutual interest in phenomenology when thinking about clinical practice. Dr. Cox, who was setting up a study group around the effects of 'The Aeolian Mode' in clinical practice, asked me to join his study group because, as he said, [I am paraphrasing], 'your other job is an artist and artists know about poiesis'. Dr. Cox thought

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<sup>19</sup> W.R.D. Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (Brunner Routledge, 1952), Fairbairn re-orientated psychoanalysis by centring human development on the infant's innate need for relationships, describing the process of splitting and internal dynamic between ego and object. His elegant theory developed in 1952 is still a vital framework of psychoanalytical theory and practice, infant research, group relations and family therapy.

<sup>20</sup> Carl Jung created a school that differed from Jung in theory called Analytical Psychology. For Jung libido meant a composite of all creative instincts and impulses and that the unconscious is composed of two parts, personal and collective.

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that artists have access to a different kind of 'knowing' and it was the artist in society who would be most familiar with the need for poiesis when meeting an obstacle in the creative process. The group ran for a number of years and, after the group finished, we continued meeting to discuss his methodology and the idea that there were grounds in the concept of poiesis for further research; we decided it would be interesting and informative to take this research into another field of enquiry. In the following quote you get good insight into the essence of Cox's methodology. The aim of Cox's Aeolian Mode is to release creative energy by freeing an individual from the restrictive (obstruction) legacy of the past:

"The Aeolian Mode of psychotherapy takes its name from the Aeolian harp. It depends upon the therapist's capacity to pick up the 'music in the wind' and 'The Aeolian' was originally an early musical mode. It is, in itself, a metaphor, which conveys customary clinical concerns. But it does more than this. The Aeolian Mode also facilitates response to the numerous nuances, and the hints of 'other things', which so often people space.<sup>21</sup>

A close examination of the foundation of Cox's methodology shows that the aim is to adhere to strict clinical, physiological, neurological and psychological understandings of patient pathology, holding very much to clinical principles and material while creating a place of encounter through 'poetic induction'<sup>22</sup> and 'mutative metaphor'<sup>23</sup> that can deal with deep

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<sup>21</sup> Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard, *Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy, The Aeolian Mode* (Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1987), xxvi.

<sup>22</sup> See glossary.

<sup>23</sup> See glossary. There is also very interesting new work being done by George Lakoff, linguist and Mark Johnson, philosopher, on the argument that 'metaphor' is pervasive in everyday life and takes the work on from Dr. Murray Cox around the importance of metaphor, and an alternative not just in language but also in thought and action. <http://the-literarylink.com/metaphors.html>, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (The University of Chicago Press Ltd., London) 1980.

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emotional trauma, as well as existential anxieties. Dr. Cox's method emerged with an intention to be able to work with patients who were thought to be too fragile for traditional psychoanalytical methods (that is the psychoanalytical approach of starting at the surface and working deep). Cox's method, was at variance with traditional psychoanalytic procedure, because its aim was to start deep and then bring the image or feeling to the surface (Bachelard's Paradox).<sup>24</sup>

According to Cox:

"It means that therapeutic initiatives do not primarily attempt to overcome resistance, or try to gain access through an inadequate defensive protection to a fragile precarious core. On the contrary, 'The Aeolian Mode' engenders movement, which originates in the depths of experience."<sup>25</sup>

He felt his work was about the impact that the 'greater poetry' (I took this to mean 'the greater poetry' that informs our lives held within a 'poetic' imagination) and other aspects of the creative imagination has on everyday clinical practice. Dr. Cox found that "an image could safely hold experience which was too painful, too brittle, or too broken to be firm enough to tolerate analysis."<sup>26</sup>

Such patients enabled him to see that the image, activated by metaphor, could be the location of exploration or the fabric of support.

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<sup>24</sup> See glossary. Dr. Cox thought that 'Aeolian' initiatives reach the depths precisely because they adopt a non-invasive approach. Although to be more accurate, they do not reach the depths, they start there.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 18. Cox discusses his insight into the benefits of image and metaphor in clinical practice. 'We suggest that deep affective material in the patients inner world can be contained, changed, or consolidated but the appropriate use of poesis in which new resources are called into being. These resources fulfill the criteria of poesis because, as far as the patients concerned, something has been called into existence, in the shape of new capacities, enhanced resilience, which were not there before.'

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.,18.

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In the assessment of Dr. Cox's approach, I first developed a matrix which analyzed his conceptual framework (Appendix A). I, too, began to formulate my own conceptual ideas for this body of research. I realized the method employed at Broadmoor focused very centrally on two ideas that had been part of my own experience in studio practice. Firstly, I could see the principle of Bachelard's Paradox, in which 'the image must touch the depths before it stirs the surface', as I had found myself working on images in studio practice that came from the depths of past experience or emerged from the 'unknown'. Secondly, having had a long-term personal obstacle to painting, I wondered whether, if I found a 'new' approach to obstruction formulated from artistic experience (looking at Virtue/Parker) and my personal research, I could overcome my obstacle and create my own methodology to deal with my obstruction to paint. Despite having two relatively successful analyses, whilst my creative ability thrived in sculpture, my long-term obstruction to painting did not diminish. Dr. Cox had developed a 'new' methodology to overcome some of the obstacles that he was finding with inpatients at Broadmoor who could 'go no further' psychologically, which inspired me to think about the concept of poiesis in greater depth. From this point, I began to wonder how artists, students, teachers and established artists, dealt with obstruction and poiesis and if there was a dialogue between two different schools of thought – the method found in *The Aeolian Mode* and the approaches that artists took in their day-to-day lives in studio practice. It was evident that there were interesting and creative insights that I had witnessed within Dr. Cox's methodology that could be used as a

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framework with which to differentiate artists from psychoanalytical and 'Aeolian' practices. At this stage, which was the early 1990's, I was both familiar with Dr. Cox's method, a traditional Freudian school of thought, Jungian theory and extensive analysis. When thinking of formulating this research project, for a number of reasons, I very much favoured Cox and Jung as being more theoretically useful to my research than Freud. The analysis of Freud and Jung's influence on art today will be examined extensively in the literary survey but, at this point, it is important to note that there are some core concepts that made me favour Jung and Cox for this body of research. First of all, Dr. Cox had four principal ideas that seem to show an artistic mind at work, his ideas around: 'poetic induction', 'Bachelard's paradox', 'phenomenology' and the 'mutative metaphor'. I also favoured Jung's ideas around 'individuation', because the application of this concept enables the artist to speak through their own journey and perceptions. I would claim that Freud is the more rigid thinker since his approach to art from my area of research seems to indicate that, while he became ambivalent about the ability psychoanalysis had to illuminate artistic process,<sup>27</sup> he appears, as Nicola Glover informs us in Freud's 'Theory on Art and Creativity', not to be able to grasp artistic processes.<sup>28</sup>

Taking a look at Dr. Cox's clinical work to examine any similarities in approach to artistic practice, he was once asked if he could give a 'thumb

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<sup>27</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XI Five Lectures on psycho-analysis Leonardo Da Vinci and other works*, (The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1957),134.

<sup>28</sup> Nicola Glover, "*Freud's Theory of Art and Creativity*", <http://www.psychomedia.it/pm/culture/visart/glover.html>

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nail' approach to the essential process. This is his assessment on the encounter with a patient:

"Attend. Witness. Wait. Discern, formulate, potentiate, and reflect mutative metaphoric material. Attend. Witness. Wait."<sup>29</sup>

At first glance this shows us a 'negative capability'<sup>30</sup> that is the ability to 'not know', which is also said to be intrinsic to artistic practice.<sup>31</sup>

### **1.4 The Influences on the Formulation of the Research Project**

At the same time as attending the study group with Dr. Cox, I began to use the work of W.R.D. Fairbairn in my clinical practice as a point of reference. Fairbairn answered the academic and clinical struggle that I was having with some of Freud's ideas. Fairbairn, who was part of the Freudian 'Middle Group Object Relations Theorists', argued with Freud about his 'pleasure principle' and stated that the object is not purely 'pleasure seeking' but is in fact 'object seeking'.<sup>32</sup> When formulating ideas for this research project, Fairbairn's statement allows us the idea of conceiving poiesis (the call) as a question of libidinal investment, objects in the process of becoming objects, seeking a relationship.<sup>33</sup> Fairbairn's critical reorientation of psychoanalysis helps us in the intrinsic importance

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<sup>29</sup> Murray Cox & Alice Theilgaard, *Mutative metaphors in psychotherapy*, (Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1987), xxix.

<sup>30</sup> See glossary. The philosopher, Dr. Rachel Jones, has done extensive research into the area of 'not knowing,'

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/philosophy/staff/racheljones>

<sup>31</sup> Symposium, "On not knowing: how artist's think", last modified 20 June, 2009, <http://www.kettlesyard.co.uk/exhibitions.symposiu.html>

<sup>32</sup> See glossary.

<sup>33</sup> See glossary.

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of the methodology of the conversation, in the same way he puts the infant's and child's needs for a relationship at the centre of development.<sup>34</sup>

Taking this idea that 'we seek the object' and, taking it further through the work of the Irish philosopher Richard Kearney (Appendix A) who argues that it is only through the surrender of a solipsistic imagination and the reinstatement of 'the Other' within the imagination that 'radical possibility' can occur, I began to see the academic, theoretical links between different schools of thought. For example, philosophy and psychology were ostensibly talking about similar areas of enquiry into the importance of 'the Other' in creative processes. This, in turn, was pushing me forward towards the formulation of the idea that I would need a 'methodology of the conversation' to enable a new body of work in artistic enquiry.

As Kearney states:

"The imagination is forever in crisis and that this very crisis of conscience is a revelatory symptom of its inability to reduce others to the representational form of any given image – be it mimetic, productive or parodic. That is why we feel compelled to continue the search for a postmodern imagination, one willing to accept that whatever particular narrative it chooses or whatever image it constructs there is always some 'otherness' which transcends it, and needless to say this other will always entail radical possibility."<sup>35</sup>

Finally, there were a number of factors that made me adopt a general Jungian approach in my enquiry. Jung sets out his departure from Freud

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<sup>34</sup> W.R.D. Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytical studies of the Personality* (Bruner Routledge, 1952), xi.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination* (Routledge, 2004), 396.

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very clearly, magnifying their differences. These are the differences of approach in his understanding of the psyche:

- (a) Repression and sublimation cannot explain all conditions.
- (b) That unconscious images, the process of individuation and teleology are significant processes in psychological development and change (this is a profound link to Cox and his stipulation of the importance of the image in his theory of the Aeolian Mode).
- (c) Libido, which Jung called psychic energy is not exclusively sexual.<sup>36</sup>

This links strongly to the psychoanalyst's, Fairbairn, disagreement with Freud and is part of my argument against the use of pathography in art interpretation.

Jung, Kearney and Cox believe that it is the 'imagination' that can play a liberating role in modern culture; for Cox and Kearney it is particularly the 'poetic imagination' that has a greater impact.

Here, too, we have the central compelling ideas: Fairbairn's idea about 'seeking the object'; Kearney's idea about 'radical possibility' and Cox's idea about 'call'. The final link, which is important to this enquiry, connects a phenomenological and existential approach into understanding how we look at studio practice. My understanding of a phenomenological approach was gathered through the work of Hans Cohn, an existential

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<sup>36</sup> See Literature Review for in-depth analysis of Freud and Jung's differences. See glossary.

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psychotherapist.<sup>37</sup> Cohn talks about the aim of phenomenology where practice moves between phenomenology and existentialism. This was useful for my understanding of how the methodology of this PhD research could be understood using an existential approach which would enable us to think about the significance of the methodology of the conversation as well as the creative possibilities inherent and contained in the moment of exchange. There are four methodological principles that determine this research project:

- The first is that we need 'encounter' to stop repetition and create the 'new', found within the 'methodology of the conversation'.<sup>38</sup>
- The second is that this is intrinsic to another, which we creatively seek.
- The third states that we 'call' when we meet an obstruction.
- The fourth phenomenological attitude is that we are looking at the place where **being** discloses itself (my emphasis) in the 'methodology of the conversation' – that is, the **being** (my emphasis) of an artist at work in the creative process.

When Hans Cohn is talking of his own psychotherapeutic approach to practice in the phenomenology of existence he helps my approach to this research enormously by saying:

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<sup>37</sup> Hans W. Cohn, *Existential Thought and Therapeutic Practice* (Sage Publications, 1997). Hans Cohn is an existential psychotherapist in private practice, he lectures at the School of Psychotherapy and Counselling in Regents College, London. He demonstrates how the existential approach opens up access to issues that other therapeutic orientations have neglected, such as the difficulty of choice, the burden of responsibility and the inevitability of death.

<sup>38</sup> Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze/and Guattari/thought beyond representation* (Anthony Rowe Ltd, 2006), 1.

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"Phenomenology and the existential view have in common a focus on immediate experience. But the existentialist is predominantly concerned with the experience of existence, while the phenomenologist tends to explore the process of experience as such, without being interested in whether what is experienced actually exists or not. Robert. C. Solomon puts it somewhat differently by saying that in the existential approach it is not those experiences relating to knowing and reasoning that are the paradigm to be examined but rather the experiences of doing, participating and choosing. If human existence is 'being-in the world' it means that there is a constant involvement with all that is there is – interaction is inevitable and detachment impossible.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, through these four approaches I mean to explore the necessity of encounter and obstruction in calling poiesis. In conversation with the late John O'Donohue, I discussed in depth the 'Poetics of the Possible' at both the outset of my application to do this PhD research through Wimbledon School of Art and during the first three years of this research, before his sudden death. O' Donohue acted as an external sounding board to the formulation of the philosophical approach of 'possibility'<sup>40</sup>. Our conversations were set around the development of Kearney's work, my experience as an artist and psychotherapist and O'Donohue's own work on 'possibility'. The following quotes are from an unpublished paper:

"Reality dwelt in being as possibility. From the beginning, then, possibility was not merely an imagined theoretical construct to ground the source of emergence and arrival, it was also seen as a matrix of living force which urged things into existence then infused existence with relentless invitations to actualize what was 'not yet'. "<sup>41</sup>

The idea of O'Donohue's that is centrally important here, is that 'reality dwelt in **being** [my emphasis] as 'possibility'; this very much helped me

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<sup>39</sup> Hans W. Cohn, *Existential Thought and Therapeutic Practice* (Sage Publications 1997), 33.

<sup>40</sup> John O'Donohue had a PhD from Tübingen University in Germany on Hegel and was a Master of Eckhartian thought, poet and writer, (1956-2009).

<sup>41</sup> John O'Donohue, 'Poetics of the Possible', (unpublished 2009), 2.

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think into the idea of 'possibility' and '**being**' in studio practice and how this becomes a 'living force' that attends work that is 'not yet' born. Parker gives a good example of this in her own personal methodology in bringing forth new work.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, when thinking about possibility, my aims were consolidated from conversations with John O'Donohue and developing thoughts around poiesis. While this thesis does adhere to both a productive imagination and an imagination that is 'endlessly becoming', I was not wanting to convey an idea of 'action' and 'arrival' and wanted to be careful not to hypostasize 'possibility' into some kind of adjacent and self-completed singular guest who simply enters with a pre-arranged gift. What I hope to show through the methodology of the conversation is the openness of the encounter and the diversity of call within the concept of poiesis. Poiesis is not beginning again, it is calling the new; it is from nothing to possibility, from nothing to a moment of change.

### **1.5. The Artists who influenced the Trajectory of Enquiry – John Virtue (painter) and Cornelia Parker (sculptor)**

Just prior to my submitting an application to undertake this PhD Research Project in 2005, I came across the work of John Virtue at an exhibition of his 'London Paintings' where he was artist in residence at The National Gallery. It was watching the video produced by Jake Auerbach on Virtue that brought the world I had encountered with Dr. Cox and the idea that this PhD could be worth pursuing, to the forefront of my mind, tethering

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<sup>42</sup> Cornelia Parker. Interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

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poiesis conceptually to obstruction.<sup>43</sup> Gifford Dixon gives a very good example of Virtue's approach to painting, Virtue's own encounter with obstruction and his courage to enter what is known as the 'via negativa'. To begin a new body of work, or 'new stage' in his creative life, Virtue destroys all his previous work and begins anew, welcoming the fight as he struggles to bring forth form:

"But the paintings fought against their creator and kept falling apart despite his best efforts. Brave enough to recognize that this was happening (perhaps also welcoming the development) he decided to participate in the process rather than resist it. There would be no more assemblages. The grid had become the ground and in doing so had declared its obsolescence. He decided to abandon it. He found himself on new territory, in art as in life. So he bought several large canvases and began to paint to abandon something, may be to find it again by a different way. To find it again by a different way and to see it anew. The artist had altered his way of working, but his preoccupations remained the same."<sup>44</sup>

In Virtue's own words, this was a process of metamorphosis, each brushstroke a call.<sup>45</sup> John Virtue shows an approach to obstruction that very much calls the obstruction to the foreground of the actions taking place in studio practice.

Interestingly in my conversation with Cornelia Parker, she very much contends that the whole of her oeuvre is about 'avoiding' the object.<sup>46</sup> Parker's approach to obstruction provided the final link that brought my work as a psychotherapist and its investigative enquiry together with a credible artistic enquiry into art practice, because I noted a similarity in

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<sup>43</sup> John Virtue, directed by Jake Auerbach (Jake Auerbach Films Ltd DVD 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Graham Dixon, "A leap in the Dark", in John Virtue (Arnolfini/Bristol Whitechapel Art Gallery/The Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1995),2,3.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with John Virtue, London Paintings directed by Jake Auerbach, (Jake Auerbach Films, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Cornelia Parker, interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

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approach between Parker's work and The Aeolian Mode. It was when I realized that she had avoided her obstruction; this resonated with me, as I had witnessed this approach in the methodology that I had seen at play in Dr. Cox's Aeolian Mode. To put it simply, they both did not confront obstructions head on. Parker wanted to move from being a painter to being a sculptor and missed out on the formative years of studying how to construct a sculpture. She was also put off sculpture, "When you are at Art College you think sculpture is all about bronze and lumps of stone, about the mass." Parker saw sculpture as too dogmatic, too fixed, too solid and she could not absorb it; so she encounters an obstruction and then seems to leap over it: "I started making sculpture when I realized it could be an ephemeral thing."<sup>47</sup>

Parker changes direction in her studio work from painting to sculpture. With Parker's exploding shed (Cold Dark Matter, An exploded view, 1991), (Appendix B), you can see, the way she has avoided her obstruction. Missing out on the first year as a sculptor created an obstruction, which seems to have energized Parker into creating a canon; leaping over her obstruction of 'not knowing' how to build a sculpture, she literally blows things up. The Lacanian analyst Darian Leader says, "Change of state is even clearer in Parker's celebrated suspension pieces, like the exploding shed ('Cold Dark Matter, An exploded View', 1991) or chalk fall from Beachy Head, ('Aside of England', 1999.) Here, the moment of change is arrested, literally suspended. In some of these works, we see neither a

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<sup>47</sup> Cornelia Parker, interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

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before nor an after; but the moment of change itself," (poiesis).<sup>48</sup> Finally, in my own creative experience of being a sculptor, I also met an obstruction, which had been entrenched for many years of not being able to paint. When I began my artistic studies, I had been able to move quite easily between the two mediums of painting and sculpture but through an encounter with a restrictive teaching model in formative years had lost the ability. I had approached my problem through traditional analytical models of analysis to remove my emotional block to no avail. I was well analyzed but the obstacle was firmly entrenched. The analytical framework did indeed enable my capacity as a sculptor to develop tenfold, but as far as the original obstruction to painting was concerned, no real in-roads were made. On leaving analysis, I began to think, as poiesis was normally seen with praxis, that maybe I needed to 'do' and to adopt a more alchemical approach to my practice by doing what artists do, which is 'think' in substances; that is paint, rather than 'think' psychoanalytically about the obstruction I had. I decided to look at the way other artists were dealing with their obstructions. It seemed, also theoretically to me, that for 'radical possibility' to occur in the area of obstruction, I needed to explore Kearney's idea about 'another outside one's own imagination' and find a new conversation, so that the solipsism within my own approach could be challenged in a different way in my studio practice. It was also important for me to discover if this 'concept' of poiesis, which I had seen successfully employed within The Aeolian Mode/Broadmoor, was of 'use' or 'experienced' in artistic practice.

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<sup>48</sup> Darian Leader, "*The double life of objects*" in *Perpetual Canon* (Kerber 2004), 72.

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At that time too, I was struck by E.H. Gombrich's comments around art history and mystery:

"It has become the standard accusation against art history that it concentrates on a search of influences and thereby misses the 'mystery' of creativity, but this is not necessarily the case. The more we become aware of the enormous pull in man to repeat what he has learned; the greater, then, is our admiration for those special beings that can break the spell, challenge the canon and make significant advance upon which others can build."<sup>49</sup>

If we hold in mind that artists have access to something 'other', and, as Kearney says, the other holds 'radical possibility', then "to think is no longer to contemplate but to be engaged, merged with what we think, launched, the dramatic event of being in the world," to quote Levinas,<sup>50</sup> however, I would add the dramatic event of being at work in the studio in the very tension in which the condition of tension is assumed, the imagination in crisis, the call to the other made, an alchemical process engaging with obstruction or avoiding obstruction in which the artist sets to work and brings forth form.

The psychoanalysts, theoreticians, philosophers I have consulted have given this PhD a certain 'set of glasses'; this perspective is 'new' when it is set within artistic enquiry that does not seek to impose received ideas on top of artistic practice, but instead seeks to analyze where there is a commonality of approach and where there are differences. At the same time, it will be the unfolding of the artist's conversations that will enable

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<sup>49</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *Art and illusion* (Phaidon 1959), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Emanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous* (The Athlone Press Ltd, 1998), 3.

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this research project to approach areas of creativity with insights that challenge received interpretations from other schools of thought.

This introduction has mapped out the trajectory of enquiry, the very different schools of thought influencing this research, from Cox's theory, The Aeolian Mode, psychoanalytic and analytical theoreticians, to the philosophers, and artists in practice. The introduction has also outlined the aims and objectives of this body of research.

The chapter outlines are as follows

Literature Review – This chapter will examine the intellectual contexts for my enquiry, as well as some of the concerns and challenges that have arisen in my research. It analyses my background research and it sources the information that is necessary to build a context of research; it shows how my investigation relates to previous research, siting the methodology of the conversation, obstructions and the concept of poiesis in both art practice and psychoanalytic and analytical psychology.

The Methodology of the Conversation – This chapter describes the formulation of the research methodology, how this idea arose and argues for this methodology as a tool of research. It gives evidence of an artist already employing this method through an interview with Anthony Caro/Mark Lawson for the BBC and confirms theoretical links to philosophy and psychoanalysis.

The Analysis of Established Artists, Tutors and Students – This chapter is divided into three sections, which show the analysis of the findings from

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the interviews with the artists, a matrix of studio practice and a chart of key findings.

Self-Analysis – This chapter begins with laying out the difference between a well-known psychoanalytical approach to 'On not being able to paint', by Marion Milner, with my own developing methodology taken from my research into The Aeolian Mode, Jung and my understanding of influences found in the work of John Virtue. Drawing on all these understandings, together with the work of Professor Richard Kearney, I go on to describe the 'tenets of approach' that were used to overcome my 'obstruction to paint' and the stages of progression I went through.

Conclusions and Reflections - This chapter re-examines the initial aims of this PhD and the core question 'Is there a methodology that engages with obstruction which in turn calls new work?' It does this through assessment and analysis of all the interviews with artists, together with an analysis of my own difficulty in studio practice. I examine where there can be seen to be an opportunity for transfer of knowledge; that is, where it has been found there are some similarities between Art Practice and the Methodology employed at Broadmoor through The Aeolian Mode and where the concept of poiesis has not been of 'use' in studio practice. It focuses on future implications and areas of research that have been identified through the findings within the interviews, which have important implications for art practice. It ends with a simple assessment of key findings.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This literary review chapter is linked to the research question “Is there a methodology that engages with obstruction which, in turn, calls new work?” I will establish the core concepts that have been applied in this PhD in art practice, psychoanalytical practice and theory and Jungian practice and theory.

The central concepts of this PhD are Poiesis, Obstruction and ‘the methodology of the conversation’. After outlining the need in art practice and psychoanalytical and analytical psychology for this body of research and its relevance to art practice today, I will then examine and elucidate an understanding of the methodology of the conversation within an account of the nature of the artists’ interviews. I will then examine the development of the ‘talking cure’ which is known as the analytical conversation. At the same time, I will differentiate how my research both develops from the artists’ interviews and the psychoanalytic conversation and offers a new perspective on the artist’s interview. I will then examine the concepts of Poiesis and Obstruction in the past in both art practice and analytical practice settings.

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I will also look at the way art has come to be seen today from a psychoanalytical viewpoint by examining the historical influences of Freud Jung and Adler. It is from within the context of psychoanalysis that this thesis originates and, together with my own study of the subsequent obstructions/failures I encountered in clinical practice, made me seek a more philosophical and poetic approach, which led me to Dr. Murray Cox's door. This thesis postulates that, whilst many artists are aware of psychoanalytical interpretations and modes of understanding, even those who are highly in favour of psychoanalytical approaches, do not generally view their art as purely a form of 'sublimation' of neurotic processes.

However, this thesis does not wish to throw the baby (psychoanalysis) out with the bath water (reductive psychoanalytical interpretations around art practice); in fact, psychoanalysis has, for its part, always been interested in how artists do what they do. Therefore, in this chapter my aim is to show where psychoanalysis has been insufficient in the past in its understandings of art; for example, Freud's interpretation of Leonardo Da Vinci, is discussed in depth in this thesis. The psychoanalyst, Nicola Glover, shows us one of the main pitfalls that psychoanalysis fell into in the past when she says: "One of the paradoxes of applied psychoanalysis is that, in the absence of clinical data, the pathographer must use the external as a pathway to the internal".<sup>51</sup> Glover's idea around Freudian theory gave support to my use of Jung in my general theoretical approach

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<sup>51</sup> Glover, Nicola. "*Freud's Theory of Creativity*", last modified August 23, 2009, <http://psychomedia.it/pm/culture/visarts/glover.html>

in this thesis. Jung's teleological,<sup>52</sup> future-focused approach allows art practice a dynamic role, which positions the artistic journey as a movement towards 'individuation' of the artistic self. The 'methodology of the conversation' developed in this thesis refers to the 'individuating journey'; however, it also moves the focus of enquiry away from an external applied approach that psychoanalysis can fall prey to when there is a lack of direct dialogue (leading to pathographic approaches). Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that through a 'methodology of the conversation' we can have access to some aspects of the 'internal world' of artistic concerns, as opposed to the internal world of psychoanalytic interpretation, no matter how relevant. Thus, it is possible to open up a conversation on what artists feel about what they do, instead of what other disciplines think or feel that they are doing in art practice. Following this I will look at the role obstruction and engagement has with the concept of poesis in art practice by considering the past and examining the same concepts in the context of psychoanalytic and analytical psychology in the early work of Freud and Jung. I will show how the encounter with Dr. Murray Cox called the PhD question into being and, again, how a comparative study between the works encountered within The Aeolian Mode and the experience of studio practice warrants research. Finally, in this chapter, I briefly examine James Elkin's theory on 'Why Art cannot be taught'. I see James Elkins as undervaluing the creative importance of the 'methodology of the conversation' and the philosophical idea that the call to the other can, as Kearney informs us, hold 'radical possibility'.

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<sup>52</sup> See glossary.

## **2.1 Answering a need in studio practice**

In June 2009, a symposium entitled 'On Not Knowing: how artists think' was held at Cambridge University through Kettle's Yard. In the online information pack following the symposium it was stated:

"This one-day symposium looked at the role of 'not knowing' within the creative process. The day examined how artists formulate strategies of not knowing and use the states of ignorance, doubt, block and failure within their decision making process. The state of 'not knowing' is also clearly acknowledged as an important aspect of all research, and speakers from across disciplines joined visual artists to debate these issues from a number of perspectives."

During the general questions at the end of the 'Not Knowing' conference, many questions were concerned with 'What do artists do around obstruction?' Whilst the symposium covered areas of practice such as 'Not knowing' in full with detailed papers, it was evident at 'question time' that there were numerous enquiries regarding obstruction, from artists, art teachers and psychotherapists. For example: 'What do artists do when they meet obstruction?'; 'How is work called?'; 'What are others doing?' For example, I remember one artist saying that he 'had never in his life been unblocked'. Therefore, it seems that the questions held in this thesis are, in themselves, surfacing into consciousness to become literal enquiries relevant to artists in studio practice today. As can be seen by the interest of the artists who have participated in the interviews within this research, as well as highlighted at the recent conferences on

'Not Knowing' and "Making Space" (held at UCLA/Slade),<sup>53</sup> the tensions between 'not knowing' and 'obstruction' and the ensuing methodologies, if any, that can be engaged with or taught, are compelling areas of research. These are important areas of research that many artists are engaged with today. Therefore, I see this thesis as answering a need in both art practice and psychotherapeutic practice, as well as being useful to psychotherapists engaged with 'artists' for patients or, indeed, anyone interested in areas of creative process. As I am both an artist and a psychotherapist, I see myself as well equipped to engage with the subjects outlined in this thesis.

## **2.2 The Artist's Interview, Talking Cure and Core Concepts**

When looking at the development of the Artist's Interview, it can be seen that over the previous century conversations about art have become more intimate and direct. The artist's interview and conversations between artists give testament to the importance and the transformative and creative qualities held within the conversation:

"Understanding, trying to comprehend others, seeking communication with others – all these are processes of the life world. One should be able to take on tasks of communication where understanding is the issue, as it interacts with art and science. However, when human beings speak with one another and inhabit the communicative world, this complex interaction can't be fully captured by scientific method alone. It is a fatal error to assume that the incomplete nature of our world experience can ever be negotiated through the so called

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<sup>53</sup> "Making Space" The Psychoanalysis Unit, UCL, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychoanalysis>

## 2. Literature Review

empirical sciences when we seek communication with others, we ourselves are no mere 'objects of science'."<sup>54</sup>

This creative endeavour of the need to understand has moved the analytical encounter into our everyday lives. We only have to look to the success of the Sunday Times Best Seller 'The Examined Life' by Stephen Grosz where it says on the sleeve of the book cover:

"This book is about our desire to talk, to understand and be understood. It's also about listening to each other, not just the words but the gaps in between. What I am describing here isn't a magical process. It's something that is part of our everyday lives – we tap, we listen."<sup>55</sup>

In our daily lives we give value to the importance and quality of our conversations and we have teachers and exponents of the necessity of dialogue and conversation in both Freud and Jung. Freud<sup>56</sup> and Jung<sup>57</sup> both examine the different attributes of transformative change (in Jung's case) or the elevation of neurosis (in Freud's case) in the 'talking cure'. The type of approach to the conversation favoured by Jung can be seen in this chapter and gives testament to the similarity of the Jungian creative conversation and the experience of artists in studio practice. A good example of the way the psychoanalytical encounter is regarded today can be seen in Chapter 3, The Methodology of the Conversation, where the

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Kearney, *Debates in Continental Philosophy* (Fordham University Press, 2004), 175.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Grosz, *The Examined Life*, (Chatto & Windus, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> In Freud, his original work 'The Interpretation of Dreams' gives a good insight into Freud's intentions in his 'talking cure'. The psychoanalytic outline of a conversation between therapist and patient in The Methodology of the conversation is 'a modern' example of the psychoanalytical encounter established by Freud.

<sup>57</sup> In Jung's collected works 16, titled 'The Practice of Psychotherapy', you get a good in-depth view of how Jung himself thought the conversation of psychotherapy should be conducted. I have quoted further on in this chapter Jung talking to a patient, to see the flow of the actual analytical conversation in practice.

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psychoanalyst Neville Symington shows us how a conversation is interpreted within clinical practice. C.G. Jung also spoke of the importance of the conversation outside the analytical encounter. In a series of lectures from The Tavistock,<sup>58</sup> Jung shows the way that obstructions and disagreements encountered in conversations work in providing understanding between different schools of thought. In the quote that follows, Jung discusses the unconscious process being accessed through the 'word association test';<sup>59</sup> however, what can also be seen here is that the transitional line is crossed between the conversation and the interview in providing greater understanding. Jung gives a salute to Hans Georg Gadamer against empiricism<sup>60</sup>:

"Dr. Howe: This audience would like you to be provocative. I am going to say a rash thing. You and I do not regard the shape of the ego as a straight line. We would be prepared to regard the sphere as a true shape of the self in four dimensions, of which one is the three-dimensional outline. If so, will you answer a question? "What is the scope of that self which, in four dimensions, is a moving sphere? I suggest the answer is the universe itself, which includes your concept of the collective unconscious"?

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<sup>58</sup> The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) applies social science to contemporary issues and problems. It was established as a non-profit organization with charitable purpose in 1947. [www.tavistock.org/](http://www.tavistock.org/)

<sup>59</sup> See glossary.

<sup>60</sup> The reference 54 is from a conversation between two philosophers Hans Georg Gadamer and Richard Kearney in dialogue about what takes place between two in conversation. Jung goes onto challenge empiricism in the conversation between himself and other psycho-analysts in the quoted Tavistock Lecture.

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Professor Jung: I should be much obliged if you would repeat that question.

Dr. Howe: How big is this sphere, which is the four-dimensional self? I could not help giving the answer and saying that it is the same bigness as the universe.

Professor Jung: This is really a philosophical question and to answer it requires a great deal of theory of cognition. The world is our picture. Only childish people imagine that the world is what we think it is. The image of the world is a projection of the world of the self, as the latter is an introjection of the world. But only the special mind of a philosopher will step beyond the ordinary picture of the world in which there are static and isolated things. If you stepped beyond that picture you would cause an earthquake in the ordinary mind, the whole cosmos would be shaken, the most sacred convictions and hopes would be upset, and I do not see why one should wish to disquiet things. It is not good for patients, nor for doctors, it is perhaps good for philosophers.

Dr. Ian Suttie: I should like to go back to Dr. Strauss's question. I can understand what Dr. Strauss means and I think I can understand what Professor Jung means. As far as I can see, Professor Jung fails to make any link between his statement and that of Dr. Strauss. Dr. Strauss wanted to know how the word association test can show the Freudian unconscious, the material that is actually pushed out of mind. As far as I understand

Professor Jung, he means what Freud means by the 'Id'. It seems to me that we should define our ideas well enough to compare them and not merely use them, each in our own school.

Professor Jung: I must repeat again that my methods do not discover theories, they discover facts, and I tell you what facts I discover with these methods. I cannot discover a castration complex or a repressed incest or something like that – I find psychological facts not theories. I am afraid you mix up too much theory with fact and you are perhaps disappointed that the experiments do not reveal a castration complex and such things, but a castration complex is a theory. What you find in the association method are definite facts which we did not know before and which the test person also did not know in this particular light. I do not say he did not know it under another light. You know many things when you are in your business that you do not know at home, and at home you know many things that you do not know in your official position. Things are known in one place and somewhere else they are not known. That is what we call unconscious. I must repeat that we cannot penetrate the unconscious *empirically* and then discover, for instance, the Freudian theory of the castration complex."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> C.G. Jung. *Analytical Psychology Tavistock Lectures*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1968), 66, 67.

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So for the Freudian psychoanalyst, the Jungian analyst and their respective patients and analysts, the aim of the conversation is one of encounter, witnessing and change. Analysts are trained to listen to what is said and what is not said; the intention always is to let the patient speak. Yet, for the artist as such, we only have to turn the clock back some ninety years to see how they were 'spoken for'. This is the art critic Roger Fry writing in 1920:

"I stated that artists always lead the way in awakening a new admiration for forgotten and despised styles and that in doing so they anticipate both the archaeologist and the collector. I also suggested that they were, of all people, the least fitted to report upon the aesthetic value of the objects they pressed upon us."<sup>62</sup>

The creative milieu for the artist has changed since Fry wrote those words. Over the preceding years, the artist can be seen to claim his authority; this thesis is stating that if anyone should be talking about his 'art' or, indeed, another artist, then who better to turn to than the artist himself. Established artists such as Claes Oldenburg, Andy Warhol and Robert Morris are placed in positions of authority due to the nature of their creative processes and the reception of historical avant-gardes;<sup>63</sup> but always with an eye to the creative possibilities of the encounter as evidenced in this extract of Robert Morris talking to Benjamin Buchloh:

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<sup>62</sup> Roger Fry. *Vision and Design*, (Chatto & Windus, 1920), 47. The interview with Stephen Furlonger (tutor) in *The Artist's Interviews* in the index gives a dramatically different view of the importance of the artist speaking today.

<sup>63</sup> M Buskirk and M. Nixon. *The Duchamp Effect* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology and October Magazine Ltd, 1996), 33.

Buchloh: The question of influence is not really of primary interest to me. Rather, I would like to clarify your awareness of historical parallels and historical repetitions. When it comes to your relationship to Duchamp, that parallels seems in many instances more explicit.

Morris: Right.

Buchloh: Did you ever meet him?

Morris: Yes. I did know him and his work. I didn't know him very well. I met him a few times.

Buchloh: He talks about you and Yvonne Rainer as "terrific people". Would our work at that time have directly related to Duchamp, or would Jasper Johns have been an important mediating figure?

Morris: Johns, yes, to some extent, but I think it was Duchamp who was a freeing influence for me to be able to explore the different ways of letting process come in. The first lead relief I made was a small object which had keys on it, and each key had stamped on it one of the words from the litanies. So at that time my work had very definite references to him. In those works it is to be seen, but in the large works it would be much more mediated and I don't quite know how you would get at that.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 47,48.

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Between 1962 and 1974 David Sylvester interviewed Francis Bacon countless times, talking to him on a diversity of subjects concerning Bacon's obsessive effort to record the human form. Sylvester would take upon himself a creative licence on how the artist's interview was presented to the world and he would freely and radically rearrange these interviews to construct something he, David Sylvester, thought was more concise or coherent; fabrication was employed if thought necessary.<sup>65</sup> Today interviews with artists are, for the most part, a transcript of what took place in conversation, often supported by archived recordings.<sup>66</sup> For example, in the 1990s, audio recordings of 'artist's lives' were developed from National Life Stories based at the British Library. 'Artist's Lives' is run in association with the Tate and, some twenty-three years on, it now consists of almost three hundred artist's life stories. The aim of the project is to make in-depth recordings, some spanning a decade, to develop an oral history that sets art practice within a broader autobiographical framework. The methodology used within this huge body of work is based on narrative, which at times focuses on a general theme, such as artists talking about drawing.<sup>67</sup> Here, one can draw a distinction between 'The Methodology of the Conversation' and the artist's

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<sup>65</sup> David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-1979* (Thames and Hudson, 1975), 7.

<sup>66</sup> The NLS life story recordings are unedited but when making a CD or using extracts from an article they can be edited but always it is made clear that there has been an edit, either by means of using punctuation (such as to indicate that a section has been omitted rather than making it appear that the sentences ran together uninterrupted) or by stating that they have been edited. The key aim is to keep to the spirit of what was said, distort as little as possible and be true to the person. Depending on the speech patterns, there tends to be a balance between keeping true to the spirit versus making it bearable for the reader, i.e. if someone is always starting sentences and not really finishing them or veering off into many sub clauses or half repeating sentences before getting to the nub most readers will tune out. E-mail correspondence with Cathy Courtney, 31 July, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> *Connecting Lines - Artists Talk About Drawing* (Artists Lives, National Life Stories CD, 2010).

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interview. My differentiation of the 'methodology of the conversation' from the artist's interview and the psychoanalytic session depends on my interpretation of the attributes brought by the actual conversation. The core of this body of research is different to the work of the 'historical narrative', which unfolds an artist's life over long periods.

In this thesis 'a methodology of conversation' is being used in the service of an exploration into the concept of poiesis, obstruction, psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. I make a distinction in this thesis between the manner in which a 'methodology of the conversation' develops the concepts of obstruction and poiesis in a way that is distinct from both interviews with artists by critics and art historians and the exchanges of the psychoanalytic clinic. The distinction that I am making is that within 'the methodology of the conversation' there is a 'call' to the other and to the art object, that is 'calling' into existence, bringing forth form. As this PhD engages very directly with poiesis and poiesis is to do with 'moment', it is important to keep this idea in mind throughout the study into various concepts. The 'methodology of the conversation' used in service of poiesis can then be contrasted with, for example, interviews on 'artist's life stories' where the 'narrative itself' is the methodology.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The social and oral historian Paul Thompson is credited and completely underpins the work on all the projects of National Life Stories. Cathy Courtney (see interviewee biographies) works extensively on Artists Lives, which was started in 1990 and currently numbers 340 recordings, most of which are life stories. It is run by National Life Stories in association with Tate. NLS is based at the British Library where its recordings are housed. Copies of open recordings are available at Tate Britain and copies of some recordings with sculptors at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds. A typical Artists' Lives recording is 15 – 30 hours; however, many are much longer.

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It is important, however, to ask whether we see 'the methodology of the conversation' already at work in interviews with artists. To this end, I will investigate interviews with Cabanne, Bacon, Duchamp, Tapies and Giacometti and, a more recent one, with the living artist, Gerhard Richter.

The transcribed interviews between Francis Bacon and David Sylvester emerged over many years and the palpable intimacy between the two gives you a feeling that Sylvester has the trust of Bacon since there is a feeling of vulnerability as he expresses his longing for a conversation and voices his envy of other artists in different situations. The following is a conversation between Francis Bacon and David Sylvester:

S: "Talking about the situation in the way you do points, of course, to the very isolated position in which you're working. The isolation is obviously a great challenge? Would you rather be one of a number of artists working in a similar direction?"

B: "I have always hoped to find another painter I could really talk to – somebody whose qualities and sensibility I'd believe in. I envy very much. For instance, going to another artist, I envy very much the situation where Eliot, Pound and Yeats were all working together."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> David Sylvester, 'Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-79' (Thames and Hudson 1975), 67.

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This conversation suggests precisely that the 'methodology of the conversation' holds 'creative treasures' only obtained through the importance of 'another' outside one's own imagination.<sup>70</sup> What is often seen in earlier interviews with artists is a process of investigation into the artist's studio practice, as opposed to the dynamic benefits of the 'methodology of the conversation', which this PhD clearly identifies in the interview with Caro and Lawson.<sup>71</sup> Looking at the following conversation between Duchamp and Cabanne, one can see an example of an 'investigative approach', which, in turn, not only seeks to unfold and explore Duchamp's methodology of practice but also aims to grasp Duchamp's innate character and perception of the world. This is Cabanne and Duchamp in conversation:

C: "How do you explain your evolution toward the system of measurements in 'The Bride' and 'The Large Glass'?"

D: "I explain it with 'The Coffee Grinder': it was there I began to think I could avoid all contact with traditional pictorial painting, which is found even in cubism and in my own 'Nude descending a staircase'. I was able to get rid of tradition by this linear method, which finally detached me from elementary parallelism. That was finished. Fundamentally, I had a mania for change, like Picabia.

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<sup>70</sup> This, in turn, 'that is the other is needed for radical possibility' references the main theme in the opus of Richard Kearney's work in his book *The Wake of the Imagination* (Routledge, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 3 on 'The Methodology of the Conversation' – Interview between Anthony Caro and Mark Lawson dated February 2010.

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One does something for six months, a year and one goes onto something else."<sup>72</sup>

An understanding of Duchamp's methodology of studio practice also allows us insight into his character with statements from Duchamp like the following:

D: "because I consider, in effect, that if someone, any genius, were living in the heart of Africa doing extraordinary paintings every day, without anyone seeing them he wouldn't exist."<sup>73</sup>

David Sylvester gives us an in-depth and beautiful insight into studio practice through conversations and time spent with Giacometti, analyzing his methodology of art practice:

"The practice of beginning over and over again from scratch, always working at speed yet through a lengthy period of time, cannot be explained away by any technical exigencies of using plaster or clay<sup>74</sup> it is entirely a matter of inner need. Giacometti has to go on and on with the thing endlessly trying to get the thing he wants, but not tinkering, he evidently cannot bear to change the thing from the outside, he needs to do it each time from the inside out, reliving the process of growth. He has to go on and on and on for months or years, yet bring the work to realization as near instantaneously as humanly possible. The figure as it stands has to come into being as if it had risen suddenly out of nothing as an unalterable whole."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Pierre Cabanne, *The Documents of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art. Dialogue with Marcel Duchamp*, (Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1971), 37.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*; 49.

<sup>74</sup> If you read Stephen Furlonger's interview you will see a different view taken around the artist's relationship to his materials and what is creatively possible through the materials' inherent qualities.

<sup>75</sup> David Sylvester. '*Looking at Giacometti*', (Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1994), 17.

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What Sylvester makes us think about in his books is the diversity of the artist's conversation and the link between the conversation and philosophical discourse since he hints at the philosophical dialogue taking place between two, the call and the artists desire to be 'in' the conversation. In this regard, it is important to refer to Richard Kearney's work on viewing the 'other' held or encountered in the methodology of the conversation:

"If the poetics of imagination is what keeps desire alive as an interminable play of possibility, it is an ethics of imagination, which distinguishes between the desire, which remains imprisoned in my subjective projects, and the desire, which responds to the otherness of the other's face (i.e. not the other that I envisage but the other that envisages me)."<sup>76</sup>

Narrating itself to the other, the imagination realizes that it is forever in crisis; and that this very crisis of conscience is a revelatory symptom of its inability to reduce others to the representational form of any given image."<sup>77</sup>

In his writings, books and interviews,<sup>78</sup> I think Sylvester is highlighting ideas that are coming into consciousness, but are not completely taken up in his time; his mode of enquiry hints at the themes I engage with in my research. As stated earlier, when Caro and Lawson bear witness to a change in conscious attitude<sup>79</sup> with a full realization of what the 'other' brings, it moves from Francis Bacon's wish or longing to a situation where

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<sup>76</sup> Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination*, (Century Hutchinson Ltd., 1988), 370.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 396. Within this PhD the two conversations held with my supervisors are examples of the 'otherness' of others having a transformational effect on the creative process of this thesis. Initially, through the 'idea' of using a methodology of the conversation in this research project which developed in conversation with my academic supervisor, and secondly, the 'fragmentation of paintings' which came into being through the perception of my supervisor overseeing studio practice.

<sup>78</sup> See bibliography – David Sylvester.

<sup>79</sup> This area of research is open to the need of a greater 'in-depth' study and research into the emergence into consciousness of the attributes of the conversation in studio practice.

the conversation itself contributes to the nature of the art object, 'as if' the conversation itself is 'calling' the object into being. To put it succinctly there is a 'consciousness' about the attributes the conversation brings.

### **Obstruction and Poiesis**

Looking first at Francis Bacon on obstruction, David Sylvester closely examines Bacon's approach to difficulties encountered in his studio practice and the manner in which his painting gives reverence to paradoxical 'tenets of approach':

S: "It seems to me that in your painting you've confronted an immense and extraordinary difficulty which possibly related to your desire that the form should be at once very precise and very ambiguous.

S: You have told me that half of your painting activity is disrupting what you can easily do. What is it you can do easily and want to disrupt?

B: I can sit down quite easily and make what is called a literal portrait of you. So what I am disrupting all the time is this literalness because I find it uninteresting".<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> David Sylvester. *Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-79* (Thames and Hudson, 1975), 121

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In this, you could say that Bacon creates an obstruction to 'call' new work. Today, if you look at the more recent past, you will see that Gerhard Richter in his interview with Rolf Gunther Dienst in 1970 adopts an approach akin to that of Cornelia Parker<sup>81</sup> regarding the 'avoidance' of obstructions.

R: "Perhaps the choice is a negative one in that I was trying to avoid everything that touched on well-known issues – or any issues at all, whether painterly, social or aesthetic. I tried to find nothing too explicit, hence all the banal subjects; again, I tried to avoid letting the banal turn into my issue or trademark. So it's all evasive action."<sup>82</sup>

Richter also dramatically says:

R: "I pursue no objectives, no system, no tendency, I have no program, no style, no direction. I have no time for specialized concerns, working themes or variations that lead to mastery. I steer clear of definitions; I don't know what I want. I am inconsistent, no committal, passive; I like the indefinite, the boundless; I like uncertainty. Other qualities may be conducive to achievement, publicity, success, but they are all outworn – as outworn as ideologies, opinions, concepts and names for things"<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See interview with artists – Cornelia Parker

<sup>82</sup> Gerhard Richter, *The Daily Practice of Painting*, (Thames and Hudson, Anthony D'offay Gallery London, 1995), 58 (notes, 1966).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*; 58 (notes 1966).

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As can be seen in the following quote, the artist can say two seemingly contradictory things quite easily. We could say that he both avoids his obstruction but also lets the paintings teach him how to deal with difficulties or obstructions. This is Richter being interviewed by Peter Sagar:

G: "When I first painted a number of canvases grey all over (about eight years ago) I did so because I did not know how to paint. So wretched a start could lead to nothing meaningful. As time went on, however, I observed differences of quality among grey surfaces – and also that these betrayed nothing of the destructive motivation that lay behind them. The pictures began to teach me. By generalizing a personal dilemma they resolved. Destitution became a constructive statement, it became relative perfection, beauty and, therefore, painting."

Through his interview with Giacometti, David Sylvester gives us examples of how Giacometti's 'tenet of approach' to studio work is a personal query concerning his inner preoccupations and perception and his striving for individuation:

G: "Once when I was about eighteen or nineteen, I was in (my father's studio) drawing some pears that were on a table, at the normal distance for a still life. And the pears kept getting tiny, I'd begin again, and they'd always go back to exactly the same size."

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My father got irritated and said 'But just do them as they are, as you see them!' And he corrected them. I tried to do them as he wanted but I couldn't stop myself rubbing out. I kept rubbing out, and half an hour later they were exactly the same size to the millimetre as the first ones".<sup>84</sup>

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the concept of poiesis is not directly alluded to in the past in art practice other than under the umbrella of 'the new'. However, if you look at Cabanne in conversation with Duchamp, we see Duchamp's view of 'creation';

D: "Perhaps I shy away from the word 'creation' in the ordinary social meaning of the word 'creation', well, it's very nice but fundamentally I don't believe in the creative function of the artist. He's a man like any other. It is his job to do certain things, but the businessman does certain things also, you understand? On the other hand, art interests me very much. If it comes from the Sanskrit as I have heard, it signifies "making"; now everyone makes something and those who make things on a canvas with a frame they're called an artist. Formerly, they were called craftsman, a term I prefer."<sup>85</sup>

The link to poiesis here is subtle. The genesis of the word poiesis originates from the word 'poiein' – to make. The difference within this

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<sup>84</sup> David Sylvester, *Looking at Giacometti*, (Chatto and Windus Ltd 1994), 20.

<sup>85</sup> Pierre Cabanne, *The Documents of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art, Dialogue with Marcel Duchamp*, (Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1971), 9.

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PhD is that the understanding of the creative act around poiesis/poiein orientates itself within the concept of 'call', which is calling into existence that which was not there before. It is within this context that Dr. Cox was using the concept of Poiesis in *Broadmoor*, i.e. to 'call' new work, new insights and understandings within his patients. Therefore, whilst there is a common route to what Duchamp is talking about, this PhD steps away from Duchamp's ideas around creative intelligence where he equates himself and Breton with an ability to penetrate deep into the meaning of a word that an ordinary man finds incomprehensible<sup>86</sup> and stays with the idea that 'poiesis' is a creative act available to everybody.

The artist, Antoni Tapies, whilst not directly naming 'poiesis', shows that he 'calls' on many of the determinants that are intrinsic to poiesis such as negative capability and transitional space. As demonstrated in this PhD, the concepts chosen and more commonly used by artists are transformation and metamorphosis:

"For Antoni Tapies, art is life and life is transformation, the supreme goal of the traveller being to remain in ignorance of his destiny. The zenith of his body of work is, therefore, composed of leaps into the unknown of constant metamorphoses. New content necessarily demands new materials, other techniques and other forms."<sup>87</sup>

For Tapies, reality is also a "project", an intervention in reality. He therefore believes there is always '**a call**' [my emphasis] to action even in his calmest and most silent works and writings, '**a call**' "not to only

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.,16.

<sup>87</sup> Youssef Ishaghpour, *Antoni Tapies Works, writings, interview* (Ediciones Poligrafa, 2006), 16.

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understand reality but to improve it, to act on things and events, all driven by the wind of hope for a better humanity and the ideal of building a yet more beautiful world."<sup>88</sup>

"They confuse the dead and sterile void of nihilistic mystics and the alienated passivity that leads to 'nothingness' with the void that transforms something that is fundamental and decisive to our comportment."<sup>89</sup>

I will now examine the concepts of 'obstruction, poiesis and 'the methodology of the conversation' with psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. Psychoanalysis is 'known' for being a 'talking cure' attributed to Freud but not actually originating with Freud:

"If it is a merit to have brought psycho-analysis into being, that merit is not mine. I had no share in its earliest beginnings. I was a student working for my final examinations at the time when another Viennese physician, Dr. Josef Breuer, first (in 1880-82) made use of this procedure on a girl who was suffering from hysteria."<sup>90</sup>

Freud applied Breuer's 'talking cure' to other women;

"A British governess, Miss Lucy R., suffered from a depression made worse by a continual smell of burnt pudding. Freud traced this olfactory illusion back to an occasion when, as she was cooking pudding with her charges, a letter arrived from her mother and was seized by her children; during this tussle the pudding got burnt. Not satisfied with this explanation, Freud probed further and elicited from Miss R. the admission that she was in love with her employer and distressed by a scene in which he reprimanded

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid;102

<sup>89</sup> Ibid;131

<sup>90</sup> The complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Volume X1, 'Five lectures on psychoanalysis' Leonardo Da Vinci and other works, (The Hogarth Press Limited,1910), 9.

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her. Having got this off her chest, she regained her good cheer and her sense of smell."<sup>91</sup>

The most famous 'conversations' in the development of the 'talking cure' and the origin of the development of two different 'applications and methods' within the 'talking cure' originated in the meeting between Freud and Jung which took place in 1897. It is purported that they spoke for thirteen hours, from lunchtime until about two in the morning<sup>92</sup> with Freud taking the more paternal role:

"To Jung's astonishment Freud proceeded to group the contents of the harangue under several precise headings that enabled them to spend the further hours in a more profitable give and take."<sup>93</sup>

The obstructions and insights held within their conversation are well documented in both Freud's 'Interpretation of Dreams' and Jung's 'Memories, Dreams and Reflections'; however, it is suffice to say the obstruction, or what could be called Jung's oneiric<sup>94</sup> hostility towards Freud, could be considered the foundation of a wealth of creative differences which would benefit these different schools of thought. The conscious attitude developed by Freud and Jung to the 'jewels' held within the talking cure was set within a framework of a very particular 'methodology of conversation'. The 'talking cure' was conducted and to this day is, with certain boundaries and strictures imposed on its structure, for the benefit of the patient. For example, the therapist sits out of view of the psychoanalyst in some clinical practices to allow the

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<sup>91</sup> Sigmund Freud, *'The Interpretation of Dreams'*, A new translation by Joyce Crick, (Oxford University Press, 1999), ix-x.

<sup>92</sup> Ronald Hayman, *'A Life of Jung'*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999), 88.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>94</sup> See glossary.

patient more freedom of association; this is more common with Freudian than Jungian analysts.<sup>95</sup> The following is Jung, in his early days of practice, speaking about the use of the 'talking cure', which also gives us an insight into the way Jung routes his analysis through the interplay of his own associations:

"I remember a very simple case. There was a student of philosophy, a very intelligent woman. That was quite at the beginning of my career. I was a young doctor then, and I did not know anything beyond Freud. It was not a very important case of neurosis and I was absolutely certain that it could be cured. The girl had developed a terrific father transference to me – projected the image of the father on me. I said, "But you see, I'm not your father!" "I know," she said, "that you're not my father, but it always seems as if you were." She behaved accordingly and fell in love with me, and I was her father, brother, son, lover, husband – and, of course, also her hero and saviour – every thinkable thing! "But", I said, "you see, that is absolute nonsense!" "But I can't live without it," she answered. What could I do with that? No depreciatory explanation would help. She said, "You can say what you like: it is so." She was in the grip of an unconscious image. Then I had an idea: "Now, if anybody knows anything about it, it must be the unconscious that has produced such an awkward situation." So I began to watch the dreams seriously, not just in order to catch certain fantasies, but because I really wanted to understand how her psychic system reacted to such an abnormal situation – or to such a very normal situation, if you like to say so, because that situation is usual. She produced dreams in which I appeared as the father. That we dealt with. Then I appeared as the lover, and I appeared as the husband – all in the same vein. Then I began to change my size; I was much bigger than an ordinary human being; sometimes I had even divine attributes. I thought 'Oh well, that is the old saviour idea.' And then I took on the most amazing forms. I appeared, for instance, the size of a god, standing in the fields and holding her in my arms as if she were a baby, and the wind was blowing over the corn and the fields were waving like waves of water, and in the same way I rocked her in my arms. And then, when I saw that picture, I thought, "Now I see what the unconscious is really after: the unconscious wants to make a god of me: that girl needs a god – at least, her unconscious needs a god. Her unconscious wants to find a god, it says 'Dr. Jung is a god.'" And so I said to her what I thought: "I am surely not a god, but your unconscious needs a

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<sup>95</sup> A good example of a psychoanalyst at work today is held within the chapter 'The Methodology of the Conversation' where Neville Symington, psychoanalyst, philosophically based, gives an example of the 'talking cure' at work.

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god. That is a serious and a genuine need. No time before us has fulfilled that need; you are just an intellectual fool, just as much as I am, but we don't know it." That changed the situation completely; it made all the difference in the world. I cured that case, because I fulfilled the need of the unconscious".<sup>96</sup>

Whilst engaging with the concept of 'obstruction' and in order to place this enquiry into this particular strand of research, I have traced 'the concept of 'obstruction', when looking at Freud, to his study of Leonardo Da Vinci and, with Jung, to his study into the concept of individuation. One cannot examine Jung's relationship with 'obstructions' without first understanding his 'tenets of approach' to the obstacles encountered on the path of individuation. For Jung, everything is moving towards an individuating process and, to that end, you could see the whole of Jung's lifetime work as the objectivation of his own experience of the individuation process:

"There is no light without shadow and no psychic wholeness without imperfection. To round itself out life calls not for perfection but for completeness and for this the 'thorn in the flesh' is needed, and suffering of defects without which there is no progress and no ascent."<sup>97</sup>

"When one follows the path of individuation, when one lives one's own life, one must make mistakes into the bargain; life would not be complete without them. There is no guarantee, not for a single moment – that we will not fall into error or stumble in deadly peril. We may think there is a safe road but that would be the road of death. Then nothing happens any longer – at any rate, not the right things. Anyone who takes the safe road is as good as dead."<sup>98</sup>

Jung then goes on to hold two co-existing contrasting ideas around how to deal with obstructions on the path towards individuation: "The meaning

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<sup>96</sup> C.G. Jung, *Collected Works 18, The Symbolic Life* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 278.

<sup>97</sup> C.G. Jung, *Collected Works 12, 'Psychology and Alchemy', The symbolism of the Mandala*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 159.

<sup>98</sup> C.G. Jung, edited Aniela Jaffe, *Memories Dreams and Reflections* (Vintage Books, 1989), 297.

and purpose of a problem seems to lie not in its solution but in our working at it incessantly."<sup>99</sup>

"I have always worked with the temperamental conviction that at bottom there are no insoluble problems, and experience justified me in so far as I have often seen patients outgrow a problem that had destroyed others. This "outgrowing" as I formerly called it, proved on further investigation a new level of consciousness. Some higher or wider interest appeared on the patient's horizon and through his broadening of his outlook the insoluble problem lost its urgency, it was not solved logically in its own terms, but faded out when confronted with a new and stronger life urge. It was not repressed and made unconscious but merely appeared in a different light and so really did become different. What on a lower level to the wildest conflicts and to panicky outbursts of emotion from the higher level of personality now looked like a storm in the valley seen from the mountain top. This does not mean that the storm is robbed of its reality but instead of being in it one is above it. But since, in a psychic sense we are both valley and mountain, it might seem a vain illusion to deem oneself beyond what is human. One certainly does feel the affect and is shaken and tormented by it, yet at the same time one is aware of a higher consciousness looking on which prevents one from becoming identical with the affect, a consciousness with regards the affect as an object and can say "I know that I suffer". What our text says of indolence, 'Indolence of which a man is conscious, and indolence of which he is unconscious are a thousand miles apart' holds true to the highest degree of affect."<sup>100</sup>

At this juncture, it is interesting to turn immediately to Freud and look at how he dealt with an emotional obstruction and crisis in his life and how he too, in his particular approach, was able to transform this 'obstruction' into creative possibility:

"While gradually abandoning his theory<sup>101</sup> Freud was also reacting to his father's death on 23 October, 1896. Grief, overwork, and worry brought on what has plausibly been called a creative illness. It was a painful spell of inner isolation, following his intense preoccupation with his ideas, and resulting in the exhilarating

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<sup>99</sup> C.G. Jung. *Collected Works 8, The structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, (Pantheon, 1960), 394.

<sup>100</sup> C. G. Jung. *Psychology and the East, Commentary on the secret of the Golden Flower*, (Princeton University Press, 1978), 14

<sup>101</sup> This is the theory that all hysteria derives from sexual abuse in childhood.

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conviction that he had discovered a great new truth. Freud worked through his illness probing his own past. He recollected his sexual arousal in infancy by his nurse, he remembered seeing his mother naked during a train journey when he was two and a half, and he acknowledged hostility towards his father."<sup>102</sup>

Out of this difficult period, Freud laid the groundwork for his notorious work on the Oedipus complex<sup>103</sup> and 'The Interpretation of Dreams'. To simplify, for Jung, it is the emphasis on the patient's own approach to his problems; whereas for Freud, the emphasis was on the 'obstruction' held in neurosis that is what the neurosis 'made the patient do'. So for Freud, the key guiding principle was 'to know thyself', so that the pressures and conflicts arising from the unconscious would not make you do detrimental things to yourself or others.

Here we have an example of Freud looking at what Leonardo Da Vinci's relationship to his unconscious was and what his neurosis drove him do:

"What is known of Leonardo in this respect is little: but that little is full of significance. In an age which saw a struggle between sensuality without restraint and gloomy asceticism, Leonardo represented the cool repudiation of sexuality a thing that would scarcely be expected of an artist and a portrayer of feminine beauty."<sup>104</sup>

Then, when he, (Leonardo), made the attempt to return from investigation to his starting point, the exercise of his art, he found himself disturbed by the 'new' direction of his interest and the changed nature of his mental activity. What interested him in a picture was, above all, a problem and behind the first one he saw countless other problems arising, just as he used to in his endless and exhaustible investigation of nature. He was no longer able to limit his demands, to see the work of art in isolation, to tear it from a wider context to which he knew it belonged. After the most exhausting efforts to bring expression into it, everything which was

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<sup>102</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a new translation by Joyce Crick, (Oxford University Press, 1999), x.

<sup>103</sup> See glossary.

<sup>104</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XI, Five lectures on psycho-analysis, Leonardo Da Vinci and other works* (1910), 69.

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connected with it in his thoughts he was forced to abandon it in an unfinished state or to declare that it was incomplete.<sup>105</sup>

Thus a person of this sort would, for example, pursue research with the same devotion that another person would give to his love, and he would be able to investigate instead of loving."<sup>106</sup>

Finally, to differentiate between Jung and Freud's views of obstruction and psychological results, it is helpful to consider this last quote against Jung's quote about his 'temperamental conviction', referred to earlier in this chapter, where Jung says 'the problem merely appeared in a different light and so really did become different'. To understand in depth this whole area of debate about whether we can or cannot change the past cannot be entered into here;<sup>107</sup> suffice to say that it appears from their approaches they had very different sensibilities about what you could and could not do with the vicissitudes of the past. Here are Freud's thoughts that need contrasting to Jung's views already cited:

"There is no doubt that the creative artist feels towards his works like a father. The effect which Leonardo's identification with his father had on his paintings was a fateful one. He created them and then cared no more about them, just as his father had not cared about him. His father's later concern could change nothing in this compulsion; for the compulsion derived from the impressions of the first years of childhood, and what has been repressed and has remained unconscious cannot be corrected by later experiences."<sup>108</sup>

As regards the 'citing' of the concept of poiesis in Jungian and Freudian theory in the past, there are no 'citings' of the actual concept as such in

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.,77.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.,77.

<sup>107</sup> See T.S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets*, 'Burnt Norton', (Faber and Faber, 1969), 171 and the work of Maurice Nicoll on Time, Living Time 'The integration of the life' (Vincent Stuart Publishers Ltd, 1952).

<sup>108</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XI, Five lectures on Psycho-analysis Leonardo Da Vinci and other works* (The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1964), 121.

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either schools of thought other than, of course, in a general sense that the aim of both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology is a progression to a 'new' psychic development. In Freudian analysis, the elevation of neurotic symptoms is the *sine qua non* of the psychological process. In Jung, individuation is a natural organic process; the aims of analysis are to accelerate that process and remove any obstacles that are encountered to bring forth the 'new' man. "The conscious realization of unconscious contents and their retention in consciousness is the *sine qua non* of Jungian psychic development."<sup>109</sup>

I will end this section with a quote from Aniela Jaffe who has been one of the main translators of Jung's work. Her quote strongly links with The Aeolian Mode and gives confirmation to why I have chosen a Jungian approach to form the accompaniment to The Work on Poiesis held within The Aeolian Mode:

"Out of the unconscious rise contents and images and they show themselves to the conscious mind as though secretly asking to be grasped and understood so that 'birth' may be accomplished and 'being' created. If consciousness fails, the images sink back again into the dark, into nothingness and everything remains as if unhappened. But if it succeeds in grasping the meaning of the images, a transformation takes place and not merely of consciousness in the expansion or an illumination but, strangely enough, of the unconscious as well there is an activation of the 'nothingness'."<sup>110</sup>

This is akin Dr. Cox's understanding of poiesis – calling, through image and metaphor, into existence that which was not there before.

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<sup>109</sup> Joland Jacobi. *The Way of Individuation*, (Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), 91.

<sup>110</sup> Aniela Jaffe. "Der Tod des Vergil Studien von Herman Broch" in *studien (zur Analytischen Psychologie, Volume 11, Zurich 1955)*, 298.

## 2.3 Freud, Jung and Adler

Before beginning the analysis of Freud, Jung and Adler and examining the lenses we have inherited from their schools of thought that greatly affect how we see art today, it is useful to look at some of the assumptions about art and the artist that have developed since the birth of psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. These include:

- Art is an emotional reflection of internal emotional landscapes.
- One cannot be an artist and also have healthy relationships – art is always at the ‘expense of’.
- Art can be used in the service of psychoanalysis.
- Art is generated from a psychological wound.
- The making of art contains within it ‘the activation’ of ‘healing properties’ and these are in the service of the artist’s emotional well-being.
- ‘Pathography’ is a valid means to develop an analysis of the emotional creative development of an artist’s neuroses.<sup>111</sup>
- The concepts such as ‘sublimation’ and ‘compensation theory’ have become part of our understanding when we interpret the internal ‘drivers’ of an art object.
- Art therapy is a view that can gather the ‘whole of art’ under its umbrella.

In examining these assumptions, I will begin with Freud’s<sup>112</sup> idea of ‘sublimation’<sup>113</sup> and ‘pathography’ and their relevance to art practice. I

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<sup>111</sup> Whilst this thesis locates ‘pathography’ in the past, it is also very active in today: <http://williamtoddschultz.wordpress.com/shultz-interview-on-psychobiography>

<sup>112</sup> Sigmund Freud is the founder of Psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is the name given to a specific method of investigating unconscious mental process and to a form of

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will then look at Jung's influence on art, through the transformative attributes laid at the artist's door, in analytical psychology. I will then make reference to Alfred Adler's effect on the art world, through his ideas on 'compensation theory' and his development of the idea of the 'inferiority complex' and its implications to art practice.<sup>114</sup>

The impact of Freud's psychoanalytical thought on society has infiltrated every sphere of human existence. In 1912, when Freud turned his attention to the artist Leonardo Da Vinci and began his application of the methods of clinical psychoanalysis on the historical developmental and creative life of Leonardo, one could say our understanding of art changed at the moment the artist was 'taken onto the couch'. Before Freud we had art history or art influences; after Freud we had motivations, drives, the unconscious and, of course, sublimation. Over the next 100 years, we would see a world divided into those artists, critics and researchers who immersed themselves in psychoanalytical understandings who found enormous interest and stimulation in Freud's ideas and those who did not. The artist, Max Ernst (2 April 1891–1 April 1976), would be a good example. Max Ernst was inspired by Freud's ideas and his theory of the unconscious.

"The work of the insane was crucial in his development as an artist, for in manic states, one is supposed to have an assortment of ideas. He also took many ideas incorporated in Freud's works

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psychotherapy. The term also refers to the systematic structure of psychoanalytic theory, which is based on the relation of conscious and unconscious psychological processes.

<sup>113</sup> See glossary

<sup>114</sup> Alfred Adler was an Austrian Medical Doctor, Psychologist and Founder of the School of Individual Psychology. In collaboration with Freud, to begin with, he was one of the co-founders of the psychoanalysis movement. Dr. A. Adler *Neurotic Constitution* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1918).

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and used them to try to identify himself and, like other surrealists, used it as a basis of surrealist works."<sup>115</sup>

This is worth comparing with those that reacted against Freudian theory stating that it was reductive, myopic and an applied theory that dragged the artist unwillingly into reductive theoretical boxes; an example of this is given by Erich Neumann on Leonardo Da Vinci within this literature review. Around the same period as Freud was promoting his idea about 'pathography' versus 'biography' and heralding the insights of sublimation and neurosis (the developmental view that weaknesses and trauma cannot only be transformed into personal strengths but into products of art and culture), Carl Jung was following his own particular preoccupation with analyzing the art of the insane and enthusiastically encouraging his patients to paint as an active form of emotional healing as well as undertaking the process himself by drawing or carving the images that emerged from his own unconscious.<sup>116</sup>

Freud has given us ideas about art as 'sublimation' and 'pathography' whilst Jung has given us his ideas around the 'collective unconscious' and the idea that art can be used as an act of transformation. Jung, with his interest in the art work of the clinically insane, coupled with his feelings about the healing and transformative part of art, also has a substantial part to play in the way we see art today and how it can represent all that is 'psychological in us'. Alfred Adler, the third member of the therapeutic

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<sup>115</sup> Ricki Laird. "The Creative Mind and Life of Max Ernst", last modified May 28, 2008, <http://gallagherseniorhonours.blogspot.co.uk/2008/05/creative-mind-and-life-of-max-ernst.html>

<sup>116</sup> Ronald Hayman, *A life of Jung*, (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1999), 234-235. (photographic image of Trickster).

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triumvirate of Freud, Jung and Adler, studied gifted personalities, offering the law of compensation into a basic law of human nature. His evidence, gathered in art schools at the beginning of the century, claimed to show that 70 per cent of art students had optical anomalies and there were degenerative traces in the ears of composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Bruckner. Adler's 'compensation' theory is that nature compensates weaknesses and builds them into strengths.<sup>117</sup> At the beginning of Freud's developmental theories and, for our purposes of looking at the effect on the 'art world', it is his approach of 'Pathography' and the development of his theories around 'sublimation' that have influenced the interpretations given to artistic motivations.

In 'Freud's Theory of Creativity', Nicola Glover also brings to our attention the pitfalls of applied psychoanalysis:

"Although psychoanalysis is more concerned with inner realities than with external events, and though the purpose of reconstruction is to gain a clearer picture of the artist's psyche – not to find out what 'really happened' – one of the paradoxes in applied psychoanalysis is that, in the absence of clinical data, the pathographer must use the external as a pathway to the internal."

She goes onto say

"In pathography, the external world as depicted in visual art, or described in poetry, is seen firstly as a *projection of the artist's*

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<sup>117</sup> Adler emphasized the importance of equality in preventing various forms of psychopathology. His most famous concept is the inferiority complex, which speaks to the problem of self-esteem and the negative effects on health (e.g. sometimes producing a paradoxical superiority striving). His emphasis on power dynamics is rooted in the philosophy of Nietzsche. Adler argued for holism, viewing the individual holistically rather than reductively. Alfred Adler, *The Neurotic Condition* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1918).

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*state of mind* – an assumption that the artwork is essentially an externalization of the artist's inner state."<sup>118</sup>

Again, Glover argues against psychohistory:

"But this is a rather limited model because it assumes that works of art by nature are the outcome of conflict. It has little contribution to make to the notion of aesthetic value or the origin of the creative impulse itself, and it does not give a full account of the nature of aesthetic experience either. Its significance mainly lies in what it may tell us about the psycho-history of the artist and its reflection in his work. As a model or an aesthetic theory, however, it is inadequate."<sup>119</sup>

It is also useful to consider the opinion of early critics of some aspects of Freudian analysis, for example the psychiatrist W.R.D. Fairbairn, if we are to understand the genesis of concepts like sublimation:

"Freud's view of human nature had assumed a mind/body dualism which originated in platonic thought and which was enshrined in western thought by Christianity. In this view, human forces are in an unending process of conflict between mind and body, sex and aggression, id and ego, individual and society."<sup>120</sup>

Repression, substitution and sublimation are all branches stemming from this tree. To put it succinctly, in Freud's view we repress what is unacceptable; we substitute the repressed idea by developing a symptom and we sublimate in a movement towards a higher or less objectionable aim. Freud thought that through the process of sublimation, artists had access to being able to bypass more clinically distressing symptoms with the framework of neurosis. In his research, Freud was focused on the

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<sup>118</sup> Nicola Glover. "Freud's Theory of Art and Creativity", last modified August 23,2009, <http://www.psychomedia.it/pm/culture/visarts/glover.html>

<sup>119</sup> Nicola Glover. "*Freud's Theory of Art and Creativity*", last modified August 23, 2009, <http://www.psychomedia.it/pm/culture/visarts/glover.html>

<sup>120</sup> W.R.E. Fairbairn, *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality* (Bruner Routledge, 1952), xi. Fairbairn put the infant and child's need for relationship at the centre of development and looked also to the relational aspect of creativity and interpersonal communication.

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return to the dynamic event by the artist “where art is viewed as essentially a ‘therapy’ for those instinctual renunciations demanded by civilization”; hence, according to Glover, sublimation.<sup>121</sup>

Freud focused much of his work on the psychoanalysis of neurosis and Jung invested in the ‘healing’ and transformative processes of the creative act working with the more psychotic spectrum of mental processes. Alfred Adler, whose beliefs were closer to those of Nietzsche than Freud and who, along with Jung, also broke with Freud, focused on the ‘holistic integrity’ of the human being in a social context.

“The distinctive feature of Adler’s approach to the problem of the neurotic character traits is that it approaches from the organic rather than from the functional side and, in this way, I think, affords a very valuable viewpoint because it tends to bring together the organicist and the functionalist, who have been too long separated by the misconception of irreconcilable differences between mind and body.

For Adler, the neurosis or the psychosis is comparable to the work of art, but has been built up in response to a fictitious goal which collects and unites in a group those psychic elements of which it can make use, collecting only those which promise results in the effort at the attainment of security. The attempt to attain to the maximation of his ego fails because it is directed along a false path. The neurosis or psychosis is therefore a constructive creation, a compensation product, which, however, fails because of its false direction.<sup>122</sup>

Art for Adler was immersed in his ‘own’ compensation theory. Looking at Freud today, whilst we cannot deny the experience of ‘sublimation’ in our daily lives, we now think differently on the interpretation of concepts and work from a much broader spectrum of psychoanalytical, philosophical

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<sup>121</sup> Nicola Glover. ‘Freud’s Theory of Art and Creativity’, last modified August 23, 2009, <http://psychomedia.it/pm/culture/visarts/glover.html>

<sup>122</sup> Alfred Adler, *A Neurotic Constitution*, (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1918) xx, xxi.

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and artistic experience. Some of Freud's interpretations of Leonardo Da Vinci show us the way Freud orientated his understandings back to his own theory of sexuality; a good example of this is shown in this literary survey when Freud is trying to understand Leonardo Da Vinci. Many of Freud's concerns about Leonardo's development centred on Leonardo's sexuality and his lack of parenting.<sup>123</sup> According to Glover, Freud, would also argue that 'pathography' was much better than 'biography' because the analyst would not idealize his patient. However, Glover's interpretation of Freud, considers that the biographer was viewed as someone less psychologically developed and prone to idealizations of his chosen 'hero' "the pathographer has outgrown omnipotent, infantile wish to idealize his subject and so can get down to the real business of unearthing the truth."<sup>124</sup>

"Nothing is further from the wishes of Leonardo's biographers than to try to solve the problems in their hero's mental life by starting from his small weaknesses and peculiarities; and the usual comment that they make on these singular accounts is one which lays stress on the artist's kindness and consideration for his pupils. They forget that what calls for explanation is not Leonardo's behaviour, but the fact that he left these pieces of evidence of it behind him."<sup>125</sup>

Yet, Freud failed in his analysis to omit his own counter transference<sup>126</sup> feelings when developing his theoretical aim, which, with some difficulty, could be summarized as fitting Leonardo into his doctrine of infantile sexuality. For example, Freud was very drawn to Leonardo's statement:

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<sup>123</sup> Erich Neumann, *Art and the Collective Unconscious*, (Princeton/Bollingen, 1959), 5.

<sup>124</sup> Nicola Glover. "Freud's Theory of Art and Creativity", last modified August 23, 2009, <http://psychomedia.it/pm/culture/visarts/glover.html>

<sup>125</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume X1, Five lectures on Psycho-analysis, Leonardo Da Vinci and other works*, (The Hogarth Press and The institute of Psycho-analysis, 1957), 103.

<sup>126</sup> See glossary.

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"That one has no right to love or hate anything if one has not acquired a thorough knowledge of its nature".<sup>127</sup>

This is Freud interpreting Leonardo's thought about painting and love according to his own theory and I think the following assessment gives a very clear view of Freud's difficulty with understanding art processes:

"The value of these remarks of Leonardo's is not to be looked for in their conveying an important psychological fact; for what they assert is obviously false, and Leonardo must have known this as well as we do. It is not true that human beings delay loving or hating until they have studied or become familiar with the nature of the object to which these affects apply. On the contrary, they love impulsively, from emotional motives, which have nothing to do with knowledge and whose operation is at most weakened by election and consideration."<sup>128</sup>

The culmination of this is Freud's solution to this problem, which is this:

"Leonardo then could only have meant that the love practiced by human beings was not of the proper and unobjectionable kind: one should love in such a way as to hold back the affect, subject it to the process of reflection and only let it take its course when it has as stood up to the test of thought."<sup>129</sup>

The aim of the psychoanalyst is to seek the hidden neurosis behind Leonardo's statement and, with his usual elegance and faithfulness to his own theory, this confirms a maturational developmental failure and neurosis. However, what I would argue is that Freud misses the point and misinterprets Leonardo's sentiment in his analysis and misunderstanding

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<sup>127</sup> Sigmund Freud. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume X1 Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis Leonardo da Vinci and Other Works*, (The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1957), 73.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

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of 'love out of knowledge'. It must be remembered that Leonardo was talking about painting when he said:

"For painting is the way to learn to know the maker of all marvellous things and this is the way to love so great an inventor. For in truth, love springs from the full knowledge of the thing that one loves and, if you do not know, you can love it but a little or not at all."<sup>130</sup>

Erich Neumann, in his book<sup>131</sup> that challenges Freud's interpretations of Leonardo, gives us a much more informative and expansive understanding through placing Leonardo Da Vinci in the context of his time and spiritual concerns:

"This kind of knowledge results from a direct revelation of the object itself to the understanding. And, if the object itself is glorious and good, then the soul becomes necessarily united with it. Hence it follows that this is the knowledge that evokes love. This is a "Gnostic" attitude of love through knowledge."<sup>132</sup>

Most artists would understand Leonardo's statement primarily in relation to the task of painting and their medium of choice. The artist's desire is to immerse himself within his subject. The mythological example of this would be Turner strapping himself to the mast of a ship to understand the storm before undertaking the painting. When discussing his work on the London Paintings in 2005 at The National Gallery, the painter, John Virtue, said, "First of all you have to fall in love". Here Virtue is talking about

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<sup>130</sup> Traktat Von der Malerei Trattato Della Pittura Di Lionardo Da Vinci (Dagli Originali Del Codice Vaticano, Roma, Roma MDCCXV11), 217.

<sup>131</sup> Erich Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious* (Bollingen Series LX1, Princeton University Press, 1959).

<sup>132</sup> Abraham Wolf, *Spinoza's Short Treatises on God, Man and his Wellbeing* (Cambridge University Press, 1905), 133.

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'falling in love' with the London landscape, before he started a new body of work.<sup>133</sup>

When looking at Virtue's statement, at first glance you might well think that Virtue was agreeing with Freud, but what Virtue and Leonardo are talking about is the 'task' of painting which makes love and knowledge interchangeable, that is you have to know something to love it/or love something to know it, that is the task of painting; whereas Freud is talking about the impulse of erotic love and desire and the genesis of sublimation.

Such assessments of Freud's have prompted Alain Badiou to claim, "Psychoanalysis, in the last 100 years, has used art for its services."<sup>134</sup> At the conclusion of this thesis, I will return to this statement to see if it is relevant today; however, in relation to how art was viewed in the past, Badiou did have grounds for complaint. As stated earlier, Glover informs us:

"One of the paradoxes of applied psychoanalysis is that, in the absence of clinical data, the pathographer must use the external as a pathway to the internal. Such a method is fraught with dangers, the most common of which are incomplete or inaccurate external data and intrusive counter transference."<sup>135</sup>

This danger has been well documented in Freud's misinterpretation of Leonardo's dream, the vulture fantasy,<sup>136</sup> and his subsequent interpretation and conclusions; however, you can see how, even fifty

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<sup>133</sup> John Virtue directed by Jake Auerbach (Jake Auerbach Films Ltd, DVD, 2005).

<sup>134</sup> Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, (Stamford University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>135</sup> Nicola Glover, "Freud's Theory of Creativity", last modified August 23, 2009, <http://psychomedia.it/pm/culture/visarts/glover.html>

<sup>136</sup> Erich Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious* (Princeton/Bollingen, 1959), 7, 8.

years ago, the impact of Freud's sublimation theory on art practice was immense. An example of this kind of interpretation was offered by the late James Hillman, an analyst, who was ambivalent about many psychoanalytic and analytical processes and practices.<sup>137</sup> The following quote from Hillman is his response against psychologists who presume to 'know' about art practice when the painter, in this case Jackson Pollock, has stated that he 'does not know' what he is doing.

"The Freudian theory holds that early weaknesses are transformed not simply into strengths, but into products of art and culture – at the bottom of which, nonetheless, are the dregs of early childhood wrongs that can be detected in the product as its true originating seed. This pernicious mode of interpretation can be readily put to use: Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) who "invented" the drip calligraphy of abstract expressionist action painting is said to have said, "When I am painting, I am not aware of what I am doing". But the wise psychologies, of course, can trace Pollock's traces on white canvas back to signal inferiority in childhood. The youngest of five brothers on a Wyoming farm, little Jackson was referred by his brothers "as baby" up into his teenage years and he hated it."<sup>138</sup>

Hillman, using Steven Naifeh and Gregory Smith's biography on Jackson Pollock, shows us how the psycho biographer works:

"Like most farmhands, the Pollock boys shunned the outhouse whenever possible, preferring to make evanescent designs on the nearest patch of dry, dusty ground (and white winter snow). Young Jackson often saw his brothers urinating, competing to see who could reach farthest. Too young to compete, he would retreat to the outhouse even to urinate – a habit that persisted for the rest of his life, even after he was old enough to make the same long yellow arcs his brothers made."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> If you turn to the glossary and look up 'anima mundi' you will see what James Hillman was concerned with in wanting to create a revised psychology.

<sup>138</sup> James Hillman, *The Soul's Code* (Bantam 1997), 25.

<sup>139</sup> Steven Naifeh and Gregory W. Smith, *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1989), 62, 50-51.

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The psycho-biographer takes this information and imposes the idea of 'sublimation' on Jackson Pollock's 'drip' paintings; that is, he would not have painted these paintings if he had not suffered this signal humiliation with his brothers.

Again, in a similar fashion to Freud's interpretations of Leonardo, this is a reductive approach. What infuriates Hillman is that the analyst or the pathographer professes to know the artist better than the artist knows himself – Jackson Pollock's art is purely about sublimation - the fold of 'unknowing' held within most art in art practice and verbalized by Jackson is dismissed, the unconscious dismissed. Hillman, who calls for a re-visioned psychology for today's world, what he names as *anima mundi*<sup>140</sup> (the world-soul of the Neo-Platonists), cannot bear pathographical interpretations. Pathography is anathema to Hillman, degenerating the complexity of artistic processes and reducing the mystery of inspiration.

For Freud, neurosis looks for a cause whereas for Jung neurosis is teleological. How do these schools of thought affect the general theoretical approach to Art? In the Freudian school, the neurosis is something to be faced, in that the idea is there is something disagreeable in the unconscious, a complex or a repression causing the patient to be neurotic and, this in turn, can be uncovered and changed. Jung's view was that neurosis is teleological, that the neurosis points to a conclusion trying to main homeostasis in the psyche:

"My patient and perhaps our whole age, is in this situation. Anxiously he asks me, "What can I do?" And I must answer, "I

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<sup>140</sup> See glossary.

don't know either." "Then there's nothing to be done?" I reply that mankind has got into these blind alleys countless times during the course of evolution, and no one knew what to do because everybody was busy hatching out clever plans to meet the situation. No one had the courage to admit that they had all taken the wrong turning. And then, suddenly, things somehow began to move again, so that the same old humanity still exists, though somewhat different from before."<sup>141</sup>

An example of a teleological approach is this:

"A fantasy of 'jumping into a river' is the psyche's image for an impending regression whose quality is 'watery'. The question asked as libido regresses and such potent symbols emerge are 'what is this for' and 'where is it going'? This approach is called the synthetic and progressive method of interpretation, to differentiate it from reductive, retrospective, and personalistic approach which considers only past history and personal experience."<sup>142</sup>

When thinking about the basic orientations of these two thinkers, I have, perhaps simplistically, used the difference between a world postulated by desire (Freud) and a world postulated by image (Jung). I have chosen this quote because it shows strong links to the way Cox operated, in his use of images, when working with patients; here Jung is talking about working with symbolic images with patients:

"Psychologically speaking, it makes a vast difference whether a man has an interesting conversation with his doctor two or three times a week, the results of which are left hanging in mid-air, or whether he has to struggle for hours with refractory brush and colours, only to produce in the end something which, taken at its face value, is perfectly senseless. If it were really senseless to him, the effort to paint it would be so repugnant that he could scarcely be brought to perform this exercise a second time. But, because his fantasy does not strike him as entirely senseless, his busying himself with it only increases its effect upon him. Moreover, the concrete shaping of the image enforces a continuous study of it in all its parts, so that it can

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<sup>141</sup> C.G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 10, Civilisation in Transition*, (Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1964), 148.

<sup>142</sup> Polly Young-Eisendrath and Terence Dawson, *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*, (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69.

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develop its effects to the full. This invests the bare fantasy with an element of reality, which lends it greater weight and greater driving power. And these rough-and-ready pictures do indeed produce effects, which I must admit, are rather difficult to describe. For instance, a patient needs only to have seen once or twice how much he is freed from a wretched state of mind by working at a symbolical picture, and he will always turn to this means of release whenever things go badly with him."<sup>143</sup>

Whilst Freud and Jung disagreed in their approaches to art, they both shared a common myth, which, as we have seen in the case of Freud's interpretation of Leonardo, is it is 'art at the expense of' human relationships.<sup>144</sup> For Freud, art is about sublimation and for Jung, whilst agreeing that art indeed was psychological and may be derived from complexes, he felt this too narrow a viewpoint. For Jung, art could also be visionary element, placing this theory within the collective unconscious.

Jung developed his own school of thought based on what he called 'Archetypal Psychology'.<sup>145</sup> He taught that archetypes of the collective unconscious<sup>146</sup> are intrinsically formless psychic structures that become visible in art. The archetypes are varied but the media through which they pass, in other words their form, changes according to the time, the place and the psychological constellation of the individual in whom they are manifested. For example, the 'Mother Archetype' as a dynamic entity in the psychic substratum always retains its identity but it takes on different styles; for example, the mother-child archetype of the holding

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<sup>143</sup> C.G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 16, The Practice of Psychotherapy*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 48, 49.

<sup>144</sup> This idea of 'art at the expense of' forms the back drop of Freud's analysis of Leonardo Da Vinci in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XI Five lectures on Psycho-analysis Leonardo Da Vinci and other works*, (The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1957).

<sup>145</sup> See glossary.

<sup>146</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology East and West* (Princeton University Press, 1978), 10.

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mother.<sup>147</sup> Jung's approach has been seen to be less reductive than Freud's; however, there have obviously been equal criticisms that have been laid at the door of classical Jungian theory.<sup>148</sup> The emergence of the post-Freudians<sup>149</sup> and the post-Jungians in the last fifty years has gone some way to reset the balance and, whilst there are still clear divisions between different schools and approaches, today there is much more cross-fertilization of ideas and understandings.<sup>150</sup> With Jung, a whole world of art therapy evolved from his approach and his own personal use of sculpture and painting to depict an emerging self.

In order to understand Jung's affiliation to the image, one also needs to understand Jung's belief over the role of the symbolic in the process of transformation. For example, Jung's use of 'mandala'<sup>151</sup> symbols in his own personal journey of individuation as well as the creative work he did with his patients, was the idea that the 'mandala' was a 'containing psychological space', which Jung felt to be psychologically healthy and important for emotional well-being, for the well-being of our souls:

"Now, we have no symbolic life, and we are all badly in need of the symbolic life. Only the symbolic life can express the need of the soul – the daily need of the soul, mind you! And because people have no such thing, they can never step out of this mill – this awful, grinding, banal life in which they are "nothing but".<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>148</sup> For an in depth analysis of the different schools within Jungian analysis I would recommend reading Andrew Samuel's *on Jung and the post Jungians* (Routledge & Kegan Paul plc, 1985).

<sup>149</sup> See glossary.

<sup>150</sup> There are many conferences and meetings with the cross fertilization of ideas between different schools of thought. For example, The Tavistock Institute has both Freudian and Jungians working together.

<sup>151</sup> See glossary.

<sup>152</sup> C.G. Jung, *Collected Works 18, The Symbolic Life*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 274. Jung's thoughts around 'nothing but' are a criticism of Freud, where he viewed

For me this holds links to Cox's work with *The Aeolian Mode*, even though Cox would not have labelled himself as a Jungian. Artists have also actively engaged with the ideas of art and healing. For example, the sculptor, Barbara Hepworth, believed that the very act of carving, what Jung described as tapping into the 'primitive core' within both oneself and the material block, was not only a therapeutic act but also one that held the power to heal the other by invoking a primal state of consciousness and spirit. "Sculpture", she once argued, "presupposed the direct, sensual and primitive in their use of basic instinct – reaction, to form, shape and volume." Whilst much of this faith in the power of art's ability to affect spiritual experience is now viewed with scepticism, in a sense, she was a contemporary artist since she explored 'other' disciplines, like the boundaries of science, when she was thinking about her art.<sup>153</sup>

Therefore, whilst Jung, did not discount the psychological, but heralded the idea of an artist's re-immersion in the state of 'participation mystique',<sup>154</sup> for him this held the secret of artistic creation; at this level it is not the neurosis that is driving the artist nor the importance of the life of the individual but the life of the collective. For Jung, this is the reason why great works of art are objective and impersonal but manage to hold emotions within their structure and forms that move the viewer. The personal life of the artist is eschewed as neither help nor hindrance since

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Freud as reducing patients to a world in which it was for example 'nothing but a mother complex'.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Brown. "The Shape Shifter", Art Review, 2003 view by appointment, Baltic Library, Library Shelf location: AP <http://archive.balticmill.com/index.php?itemid=2072>.

<sup>154</sup> See glossary.

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it is not the essential element of a creative task. The artist may be a philistine or a good citizen, a criminal or a fool and his/her personal career may be interesting and inevitable, but it does not explain his/her art.

The implementation of 'art practice' in a Jungian world has been because of its complimentary attributes in relation to the individuation process<sup>155</sup> and for healing the psyche, transforming the psyche and informing the patient about unconscious processes, which will aid his/her individuation task.

Another major influence on how we view art today is the development of art therapy. A well-documented account of the origins of art therapy can be found in the work of Susan Bach, the scientist, who went to study with Jung after first beginning her psychoanalysis with Freud.<sup>156</sup> Bach systematically studied spontaneous paintings with severely ill children and began work in the area of psychoanalysis as the Nazifying of Germany took hold. Bach went on to work with Jung and was one of the founders of 'art therapy', discovering in 1947 that spontaneous pictures drawn by children in hospital accurately reflected somatic as well as psychological states. Today 'art therapy' is current in most psychiatric hospitals as a form of 'therapy' or 'healing'.

Jung believes that the image mediates between the patient and his problem and, with the production of a painting, the patient transforms the

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<sup>155</sup> See glossary

<sup>156</sup> Ralph Goldstein, Ed., *Images, Meanings and Connections, Essay in Memory of Susan R. Bach*, (Daimon, 1999).

original problem. For Jung, the production of the painting was the beginning of psychological independence and a movement towards individuation, because the conscious psyche has an opportunity to interact with what has erupted unconsciously via the transcendent function.<sup>157</sup> What is interesting about Jung is that he regarded the painting as the patient's own and the primary relationship to be fostered was between the patient and his painting; whilst Jung was a huge driving force behind art therapy, he did lay responsibility at the artist door. Therefore, Jung can be seen to suit artistic purposes very strongly in two arenas. The first is his theory around individuation, which gives us the idea that, through the course of a lifetime, the 'artistic self' emerges into work that genuinely represents who the artist is, which, of course, takes into account who he/she is at any given moment. Secondly, Jung's approach to alchemy suits artistic sensibility because both the alchemist and the artist think in substances and, in addition, because Jung's interest in alchemy also separates him from the reductive approach of early Freudian understandings; putting it simply, the alchemists aim is to transform, to metamorphosize, not to sublimate.

Finally in the following quote we can see how Jung's dialectical understanding of psychic processes taken from alchemy is more suited to artistic processes than a Freudian reductive approach:

"Strictly speaking, projection is never made; it happens, it is simply there. In the darkness of anything external to me I find without recognizing it as such, an interior or psychic life that is my own. It would, therefore, be a mistake in my opinion to

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<sup>157</sup> See glossary.

explain the formula "tam ethice quam physice"<sup>158</sup> by the theory of correspondences, and to say that this is its "cause". On the contrary, this theory is more likely to be a rationalization of the experience of projection. The alchemist did not practise his art because he believed on theoretical grounds in correspondence; the point is that he had a theory of correspondence because he experienced the presence of pre-existing ideas in physical matter. I am, therefore, inclined to assume that the real root of alchemy is to be sought less in philosophical doctrines than in the projections of individual investigators."<sup>159</sup>

What I understand Jung to be saying is that the alchemists could hold the tension of the archetypes, projecting, not identifying, not reducing; in the same way many of the artists interviewed in this thesis do not interpret their work as they make it, whilst it could be seen as a given that the object could contain all that is psychological within them.<sup>160</sup> If we think that 'artists think in substances' and substances have their own syntax, then we again touch on the dynamic of 'possibility' inherent between the dynamic of two, be it an other person, or an artistic object being 'called' into being. This too shows the affinity between the artist as alchemist and the clinical jungian patient setting out on an analytical journey when jungian analysis is entered into. The relationship between the ego and the unconscious is a continual dialogue; the creative aim is that the conversation changes and opens and cannot be reduced.

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<sup>158</sup> 'Ethically as well as physically'.

<sup>159</sup> C.G. Jung, *Collected Works 12, The Psychic Nature of the Alchemical Work*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 245. Both the artist John Virtue (in this section) and Steven Furlonger (in artist's interviews) give testament to Jung's understanding.

<sup>160</sup> See artists' interviews.

## **2.4 Murray Cox**

Dr. Murray Cox was the consultant psychotherapist at Broadmoor for over 25 years. The development of his methodology came very much from his engagement with patients and thinking with his colleague Dr. Alice Theilgaard about 'how to' bring about creative change in therapeutic work. Cox had met an obstruction in clinical practice and, instead of confronting the obstruction, he had creatively 'called' something 'new' using 'Bachelard's Paradox' as a conceptual tool along with 'poetic induction', 'mutative metaphor' and the concept of poiesis to formulate the core of his methodology. In Cox's case, additional ideas were also taken from other disciplines, such as philosophy and poetry, existentialism and phenomenology to formulate his new methodology.

As stated in the introduction, in Cox's Aeolian methodology, obstruction was not directly confronted; he avoided the obstruction (the patient's inability to use traditional psychotherapeutic methods) and through the implementation of his methodology he brought 'new' understandings to the patient's life. In short, he found something that worked. The questions that arose for me were: "What had he done?" and "Why was his methodology effective?" I wondered if some of the principles he had used could be transposed into art practice or, indeed, if artists would deal with obstruction in this way. For example, in the established interviews and referred to in the introduction, the artist Cornelia Parker states that she has spent her whole life avoiding the obstruction. Her sculpture *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, which she created in 1991 was a direct result

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of avoiding an obstruction in studio practice.<sup>161</sup> Another example of a similarity of approach between The Aeolian Mode and art practice centres on Bachelard's Paradox as a core principle. Cox saw the foundation of poiesis in the 'call' and Bachelard's Paradox. Obviously, this can be seen in art practice and a good example is found in my interview with Steven Furlonger.<sup>162</sup> Here, Furlonger talks about how an experience held in young adulthood is only now reaching the surface in a body of work (sculptural) today; therefore, 'the image stirs the depths before it touches the surface.'<sup>163</sup> When translated into art practice, it correlates to Bachelard's Paradox as the image that Steven Furlonger remembered from childhood, touched the depths of his own psyche, before emerging many years later as an image that then encountered an object of his own creativity, which was new.<sup>164</sup> This signified to me a similar territory of creativity and was worth investigating more thoroughly; it raised the question "are there creative links between these two disciplines, art practice and the Aeolian Mode?" Murray Cox also found in his clinical work that the image could contain deep psychic pain and this raised a fairly large question for me as to why artists do not view their creative practice as 'therapy', whilst being aware of psychological benefits.<sup>165</sup> In the interviews with tutors, Daniel Sturgis speaks of the "problematic idea of viewing art making as therapy" whilst acknowledging that we also know of its benefits.<sup>166</sup> In a DVD recording of his conversation with Auerbach,

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<sup>161</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

<sup>162</sup> Steven Furlonger, interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>163</sup> See glossary

<sup>164</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>165</sup> Murray Cox & Alice Theilgaard, *Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy* (Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1987), xiii.

<sup>166</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

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John Virtue remarks that “of course the painting represents all that is psychological in me”,<sup>167</sup> which offers the notion that this was a given, no matter what the struggle was to bring forth new work, (see Appendix E), Virtue seems to be saying that this was not an ‘area’ that he was going to spend much time thinking about. A question then arose, namely: “if the image is doing the work of psychological containment and, therefore, no conscious interpretation is needed, is this why artists are not interested in viewing their art as therapy?”

In a clinical setting, it is possible to perceive ‘change’ (poiesis) and this change is validated when the patient reports a complete change in his or her feelings. An example of poiesis can be seen in clinical practice when a patient reports to the clinician that he/she feels different about something or some emotion that he/she has not previously encountered. For instance, a man who has committed a murder may say “It is snowing in July” and the clinician replies, “Well things can’t stay covered up forever”. Then, this image of frozen life or frozen feeling begins to affect the patient and he slowly becomes aware of all that has been murdered, all that has been killed inside himself, all that he has done, begins to come to the surface and begins to thaw. Then, depending on the methodology, the man, the call, the analytical skill, the conversation, the mutative metaphor and the poetic induction, something ‘new’ may be known. This posed the questions: “could poiesis be seen in art practice” and “are artists consciously aware of poiesis?” In many senses, Broadmoor is, of course, a world away from the artist’s studio; nevertheless, it can also be argued

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<sup>167</sup> John Virtue, directed by Jake Auerbach, (Auerbach, Jake. Films Ltd, DVD 2006).

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that the 'Compromise with Chaos', which was the title of Cox's first book, is something in which artists can be said to be involved. The role of the frozen landscape image here, in this conversation between hypothetical patient and analyst, aids the patient to begin to know things that could not be known.<sup>168</sup>

Looking at the core concept of poiesis, the principal idea of 'call' is intrinsic to difficulty and obstruction, because if we knew in advance what was required, we wouldn't have to call. During an interview to join his study group at The Independent Hospital, which is attached to Broadmoor Psychiatric Prison, Cox said to me that he would like me to be present, as artists know and are preoccupied by poiesis (I am paraphrasing). In truth, I was not preoccupied by this idea of poiesis, conceptually or consciously practically, as I had not come across it in any of my artistic training and had only been aware of it through the work of Richard Kearney in his seminal book 'The Wake of the Imagination'. All I knew was that I wanted something new, a different perspective to help with my obstruction to painting.<sup>169</sup> At that time, I would have articulated my preoccupation with how could I go beyond what I knew to release myself from an entrenched obstruction to painting. That it was a difficult time because I didn't want what I knew and wanted what I didn't know. Cox's response to this obstruction would have been to 'call'/poiesis. Therefore, I was intrigued by this core idea of the 'creative call' when encountering an obstruction. The simple question that emerged from studying Cox's

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<sup>168</sup> Murray Cox, *Structuring the Therapeutic Process, Compromise with Chaos*, (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1978).

<sup>169</sup> Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination*, (Century Hutchinson Ltd, 1988).

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methodology was whether these difficulties, that we all encounter in art practice, could be aided by Cox's methodology. Cox was interested in 'negative capability' and its relationship to poiesis. His adage, adapted from the poet Edwin Muir is "What I shall never know I must make known". Cox adapted this to "What we shall never know we must make known".<sup>170</sup> This philosophical position on the 'unknown' and its relationship to the tension that needs to be held in creative practice has been a concept that is now fully engaged with in our culture, as demonstrated by the high attendance the turn out for the conference on 'Not knowing'.<sup>171</sup> Cox believed that this concept of the 'not known' was every bit as necessary in the creative process as the 'call' that is encountered within poiesis.<sup>172</sup> Another relevant factor in choosing The Aeolian Mode as a fruitful basis of enquiry is that Cox, with the guidance of Mark Rylance, the actor, (it was Rylance's suggestion that Shakespeare be taken to Broadmoor), liked the idea of the effect different disciplines had on creative processes and difficulties.<sup>173</sup> It is just this sort of conversation between two different disciplines that rendered such creative work and greatly changed Cox's own engagement with his understanding of the pathology of violence. In a similar way, I sought to see how the engagement with different schools of thought could render 'useful' knowledge to artists if the emphasis of the enquiry was first placed within the artists own studio practice.

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<sup>170</sup> Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard, *Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy*, (Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1987), xxix.

<sup>171</sup> Symposium "On Not Knowing: How Artists Think", last modified June 29, 2009. [www.kettlesyard.co.uk/exhibitions/symposium.html](http://www.kettlesyard.co.uk/exhibitions/symposium.html).

<sup>172</sup> Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard, *Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy, The Aeolian Mode*, (Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1987), 63.

<sup>173</sup> Ian Mckellen talking about Broadmoor and RSC, "Writings/Broadmoor", last modified 2012, [www.mckellen.com/writings/index.html](http://www.mckellen.com/writings/index.html)

## 2.5 Can Art be Taught?

In addressing this question, I am aware that I have simplified and condensed this argument down to the essential points that James Elkins makes in his book. I have done this so as to hold to the PhD question on Poiesis and Obstruction. I feel it is helpful to this thesis not to lose focus and to concentrate on his two central points which are: "No matter how small a part intentionality plays in teaching, it is the only part we can hope to understand",<sup>174</sup> and this second quote which helped formulate a question around 'Can art be taught'? This is Elkins: "Contemporary art instruction has moved far beyond the Baroque academy model, without even noticing it. At the same time we have moved only baby steps away from Bauhaus."<sup>175</sup>

According to James Elkins:

"There have long been doubts about whether art can be taught. They go back at least to Plato's concept of inspiration, mania and Aristotle's concept of genius and poetic rapture. The argument being that if art is intrinsic to mania then ordinary teaching will have no effect."<sup>176</sup>

"After Plato and Aristotle there have been two main times and places where people claimed inspiration is central and so art cannot be taught. The first was the Romantic art schools and the second was the Bauhaus. The Romantics thought that each

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<sup>174</sup> James Elkins, *Why art cannot be taught*, (Illinois, 1995), 95.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

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artist is an individual, so no kind of group instruction could ever succeed in teaching art. The Bauhaus was founded on the idea that craft is fundamental and that art instruction should be consecrated to teaching whatever is susceptible to basic rules and procedures."<sup>177</sup>

James Elkin's view is that art cannot be taught and he adopts many theories to explain why not.<sup>178</sup> I have labelled these for simplification into 'maieutic theory', 'contradictory theory', 'not knowing theory', 'statistical theory' and 'threshold theory.'

Maieutic Theory – art teachers guide to help bring forth 'the baby' student/object.

Contradictory Theory – teachers can't teach but they teach.

Not Knowing Theory – teachers can't teach but no one knows what is being taught or if it has any influence.

Statistical Theory –if you get enough students going through art schools then you are bound to have some artists that become successful and established.

Threshold theory – teachers can only take students so far to a threshold from where they leap into their own 'journey of activity'.

If we think back to the idea of the 'call' philosophically and creatively and the importance of the 'other' for 'radical' possibility to occur then it seems to me Elkin's is undervaluing the creative role of the conversation and the call that the 'other' can hold in the creative process. As previously stated, Elkin's believes that "no matter how small a role intentionality plays in

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 91-110.

teaching, it is the only part we can hope to understand."<sup>179</sup> Therefore, in the Methodology of the Conversation, I will give evidence to support my theory of the dynamic creative affect the 'methodology of the conversation' has on the creative process and why we cannot confirm the statement that 'art cannot be taught.'

In this literature review , I have looked at the perceptions, interpretations and presumptions taken from psychoanalysis that have interpreted and defined the world of art radically over the last 100 years. In a sense, academically this is what we are analyzing from within a plural psyche; by that I mean this thesis does not set out to dismiss all the findings and interpretations that psychoanalysis has given us nor, indeed, art history but to listen to what artists are saying about their own practices. Is Badiou's own criticism of psychoanalysis already out of date? Is there scope today for a shared language, a joint conversation about art practice? There are many questions that derive from the core question: "Is what is expanded in *The Aeolian Mode* akin to art practice?" "What role, if any, does psychoanalysis have today in studio practice?"

To claim the authority back into art practice, it is through the 'methodology of the conversation' that we will find the experiences of artists themselves and approach greater understandings about art practice; always holding to the tension of 'not knowing', we seek to see what is now visible and verbalized in art practice.

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<sup>179</sup> James Elkins, *Why painting cannot be taught* (Illinois Press, 2001), 95.

### **Chapter 3: The Methodology of the Conversation**

This section describes the formulation of the research methodology, clarifying its aims and objectives together with a discussion of the philosophical approach applied. I will give an example of the efficacy of 'the methodology of the conversation' as a research tool using extracts from a recent BBC interview between the sculptor, Anthony Caro and the journalist, Mark Lawson.<sup>180</sup> In Caro's conversation with Lawson, he gives us a clear method of using a 'methodology of the conversation' to call new work, with the conversations he undertakes with his wife, around his oeuvre. I will then clarify how I see 'the methodology of the conversation' working as a tool of 'radical possibility', using an example taken from present day psychoanalysis that positions itself more akin to Kearney's idea of 'the Other', which is philosophically based and suits the research purposes of this PhD.

I will address the development of this methodology from my clinical practice and how, having worked for the last 25 years as both a

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<sup>180</sup> Anthony Caro interview by Mark Lawson BBC, London, UK, February 2010.

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psychotherapist and an artist, it enables me to undertake this body of research. I will also expand on the type of 'qualitative' interview methodology that is being used and why this method was chosen for 'responsive interviewing'. I will then describe the interviewees that were chosen and the research aim in order to get a cross-section of the artist community by interviewing students, established artists and tutors. I will give an overview of the preliminary obstacles encountered at the initial interview stages and I will give examples of the three sets of interview questions that were given to the three groups of artists, showing where the questions were tailored to the 'everyday' experience of each group.

#### **3.1. The Formulation of the 'Methodology of the Conversation'**

The 'methodology of the conversation' was formulated as a tool of research through a number of conceptual and practical events happening in the first two years of this practice-based PhD. First of all, through my academic research into philosophy and psychoanalysis, it had become evident in my research that 'the Other' in the 'call' to poiesis was intrinsic to thinking about how creativity occurs in studio practice. (I have referred to this in my literary survey with reference to the work of Fairbairn and Kearney). The importance of 'the Other' has already been referred to specifically within Kearney's idea of needing another for 'radical possibility' to occur. However, it is interesting to see how Kearney, through his own interviews with various philosophers, in his book *'Debates in Continental Philosophy'* examines the routes to learning, change and possibility that

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comes into being through dialogue, (so important to Cox and Jung as a vehicle for transformation and an on-going creative process). This is Kearney reflecting on the methodology of the conversation:

“For example, my own self-understanding as a dialogical questioner (conditioned by my particular set of cultural, national, religious, philosophical and affective discourses) has had to submit itself to a metamorphosis in the exchange of question and answer with the thinkers featured here (each with his/her own specific discourses) and it is probable that these thinkers themselves have undergone a certain transformation of their respective self-understanding – even if this entails no more than an alternative reformulation of their previously formulated words and worlds. In short, these texts of dialogue bespeak the transmigration of each author into new horizons of possible meaning, horizons which remain open in turn to the possible reinterpretations of each reader.”<sup>181</sup>

The creative importance of the ‘methodology of the conversation’ and the necessity of ‘the Other’ in the creative process cannot be stressed enough in the context of this research thesis; therefore, I will show the link between Kearney’s philosophical view, that is the importance of ‘the Other’, psychoanalysis’s understanding of the reciprocity of relationship, and the ‘call’ to poesis that took place in conversation between Shelley and Byron.<sup>182</sup> The conversation that took place between Shelley and Byron is a very good example of both Cox’s idea of the ‘call’ held within poesis and Jung’s insistence on the power of the unconscious. This PhD gives evidence to the importance of a ‘methodology of the conversation’ in

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<sup>181</sup> Richard Kearney, *Debates in Continental Philosophy/Conversations with Contemporary thinkers* (Fordham University Press, 2004), 331,332.

<sup>182</sup> Peter Conrad, *Creation Artists, God & Origins* (Thames & Hudson 2007), 11. In this extract Conrad recounts the visit of Shelley to Byron. Prior to sleep, Byron says to Shelley that he wants her to write the most terrifying story that she can imagine. Shelley has ‘no idea’ what to write about and goes to bed. She dreams. In the morning she has dreamt the whole story of Frankenstein. This for me informs of a ‘call’ that takes between one unconscious and another.

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being a major contributing factor in releasing my obstruction to paint. When thinking about areas of creative mystery we can look at alchemy and see that the adept always works 'in relation' to another person, which is an interesting observation when thinking about the importance of 'the Other' in creative and transformative processes.<sup>183</sup> Turning to an understanding of how the 'methodology of the conversation' works, and what is going on at a creative level through the encounter with 'the Other', it is useful to draw the interconnecting threads that run through different disciplines.

These ideas, together with the idea of using a 'methodology of the conversation' gathered more weight as a potential research tool, first of all during a conversation with my Director of Studies in May 2006. During this discussion the necessity of needing to orientate this research into studio practice emerged. I was relating the story of Mary Shelley's visit to Byron to my supervisor and talking with him about the significance of 'the Other' in the creative process. It then occurred to me that if I wanted a 'new' body of research into art processes, which did not fit artists into established psychoanalytical theories or art history, then the best way forward was to speak to the artists themselves about their day-to-day encounters in art practice and process in order to ask them directly how they dealt with obstructions and if they encountered a methodology of practice which called 'new' work. What was at the core of my research was the idea that the artist in the conversation 'calls' to 'the Other' out of

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<sup>183</sup> See glossary.

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both nothing, which is intrinsic to the understanding of the concept of poiesis in this PhD, and also when meeting an obstruction. This obstruction can also be expressed by the encounter of the 'otherness' of the Other.

The philosophically oriented psychoanalyst, Neville Symington,<sup>184</sup> who has done such extraordinary psychoanalytical work on 'narcissism' and has a non-reductive approach to psychoanalytic process, gives a dynamic example of the encounter with the 'otherness' of the other, and also explains the relationship of reciprocity that occurs between two people in the psychoanalytic process. In his understanding he equates this reciprocity to the idea of the necessity of **being** (ontologically), whereas I am saying, the necessity of being also creates a 'call' when it encounters 'an Other' (that gives loyalty to the concept of poiesis). The creative 'call' in this thesis is held within the 'methodology of the conversation'. You can see in the following extract from a psychoanalytical session how Elkin's ideas on the limitations of teaching can be challenged, as this example from Symington shows how creative 'encounter' can be. That is, our creativity depends on the conversations that we are having, who we are having them with, the reciprocity of exchange and the quality of those conversations. From a Jungian stance, our unconscious has an effect on another and, as Iris Murdoch says: "to be an artist you have to be at least 'half in love' with the unconscious mind because it is doing a great deal of the work."<sup>185</sup> Symington gives us a very good example of how things

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<sup>184</sup> Neville Symington, *A Pattern of Madness* (Karnac, 2002), 35.

<sup>185</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Existentialists and The Mystics* (Chatto and Windus, 1997), 7.

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'come into being' in conversation. This is Symington with a patient in brief therapy that was trying to decide whether to marry Anthony or not. Symington is able to show us exactly what the psychoanalyst is able to do for the patient in psychotherapy. She was speaking like this:

"He is very kind." "He does help me to think clearly." "You see I do like looking after him."

I said: "When you say these things about Anthony, I have a strong sense that you are trying to persuade me of them, and I wonder why you feel the need to do this?"

She answered: "I think it's myself I am trying to persuade."

So it seems that I stand as a symbol for her own self. The same patient said in one session that Anthony drank very heavily and I said:

"You had not told me that before."

She answered: "I was not aware of it before."

This is Symington assessing his encounter with the patient.

"So the moment of telling me coincided with her own self-awareness. Her telling me equated with her telling herself. I think that I as 'the Other' for her symbolizing her own self makes sense if we posit that we are both together in the necessity of existence."<sup>186</sup>

Here, I would add that in the ontological necessity of 'being' in existence, is, for this thesis, 'being in studio practice'. Here we are also 'calling' to the other out of the unknown or through obstruction within a methodology of the conversation.

This gives us an idea of what we creatively do in conversation, poetically put, it means 'meeting myself in you, I find myself, in what I do not know, and, from that meeting find new birth' or, less poetically, 'I meet an

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<sup>186</sup> Neville Symington, *A Pattern of Madness* (Karnac, 2002), 35.

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obstruction, you listen to me and, because your imagination is outside my imagination you contain 'radical possibility'.' This exchange between us posits ideas, suggestions or simply an ability to hold tension that may not have been there before. Philosophically, running through like a river in Kearney's book, *'The Wake of the Imagination'*, is the idea that in order for radical possibility to occur then the imagination has to no longer be solipsistic and encounter the other; this in turn equates to Neville Symington's work on narcissism<sup>187</sup>, Jung's idea of the importance of the unconscious and the on-going dialogue we are entered in, Cox's idea that we call and O'Sullivan's idea that we need encounter to stop repetition. How would this philosophical concept be seen in a present day psychoanalytic encounter? The psychoanalyst would say that it is the engagement with 'the Other' that stops the patients being solipsistic and splitting off parts of themselves (narcissism) and, therefore, allows the creative birth of a healthier personality.

Simplistically put:

"The person in the other refuses to be treated as the product of the others' assumptions, which is fashioned from the belief structure of a broken psyche. The individual with a broken psyche believes the other to be structured similarly (solipsistic); someone under the dominance of the 'narcissistic constellation' believes the other is the same as himself. This is according to the principle of reciprocity."<sup>188</sup>

What Symington is saying links strongly to philosophy and creativity from essentially this point:

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<sup>187</sup> Neville Symington, *Narcissism a new theory* (Karnac Book, 1993).

<sup>188</sup> Neville Symington, *A Pattern of Madness* (Karnac, 2002), 35.

### 3. The Methodology of The Conversation

“If it meets resistance in the **unique** construction of the other, then the narcissistic constellation collapses – this collapse favours the dispersed elements to return into connection with each other, making thought and creation possible. This is a brief summary of the process by which the person facilitates personal integration of the other.”<sup>189</sup>

For me, this text of Symington’s also makes sense of one of the statements from the philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, which I saw in an advertisement in Paris for the Philosophers Café; it said ‘Only the other is Unique’ – the work of Emmanuel Levinas – Discuss.’ If you take that statement into the art arena then you can see how important our relations with the other can be for creativity.

Thinking about philosophy, psychoanalysis, artistic ‘call’ and conversation, the ‘methodology of the conversation’ is in the service of poiesis as an intrinsic tool. The conversation ‘calls’, as is shown both in my own self-analysis, the conversations with my supervisors and in the interviews with students, established artists, and tutors. As far as the implications for teaching are concerned, philosophy, psychoanalysis and art find agreement within the encounter of ‘otherness of the other’ when teaching and creativity is enhanced.

In 2005, I was at a conference at IAJS, the Jungian body of academic research, where a Jungian analyst, Joy Schaverien, gave her paper on ‘Art Therapy’ stating that ‘art starts with a blank canvas’.<sup>190</sup> I wondered ‘if artists’, as well as philosophers and analysts, would agree with this

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.,35

<sup>190</sup> Joy Schaverien is a Member of the Society of Analytical (London) and a visiting fellow at Goldsmith College, University of London. Joy Schaverien, *The Revealing Image, Analytical Art Psychotherapy in Theory and Practice* (Jessica Kingsley, 1999).

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statement and decided to find the answer by using it as a subsidiary question in this PhD thesis.

The area that is being explored in this thesis touches on 'how objects come into being' and, in this way, engages with both poiesis and praxis through the 'methodology of the conversation' and its service to the creative process. Below I quote from a paper on poiesis and praxis as a means of understanding how I view the 'methodology of the conversation' as a 'tool' that bridges these two concepts. The statement that 'art starts with a blank canvas' is a good example of what I mean, because this statement is bound in literalism, that is the actual object, the canvas; whereas the 'methodology of the conversation' tells us that creativity is taking place 'entre nous' at a non-concrete level:

"The problem of the destiny of art in our times has led us to posit as inseparable from it the problem of the meaning of productive activity, of man's doing – that of the artist as craftsman as well as that of the workman and the politician. Art is praxis, that is, manifestation of a will that produces a concrete effect. When we say that man has a productive status on earth, we mean, then, that the status of his dwelling on earth is a practical one. We are so accustomed to this unified understanding of all man's doing as praxis that we do not recognize that it could be, and in other eras has been, conceived differently. The Greeks, to whom we owe all the categories through which we judge ourselves and the reality around us, make a clear distinction between poiesis 'poiein "to produce" in the sense of bringing into being and praxis (prattein, 'to do' in the sense of acting). As we shall see, central to praxis was the idea of the will that finds its immediate expression in an act while, by contrast, central to poiesis was the experience of production into presence, the fact that something passed from non-being from concealment into the full light of the work. The essential character of poiesis was not its aspect as a practical and voluntary process but it's being a mode of truth understood as unveiling. It was precisely because of this essential proximity to truth that Aristotle, who

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repeatedly theorizes this distinction within man's doing, tends to assign a higher position to poiesis than to praxis. According to Aristotle, the roots of praxis lay in the very condition of a man as an animal, a living being, these roots were constituted by the very principle of motion (well understood as the basic unit of craving, desire and volition the characteristics of life)."<sup>191</sup>

This PhD Research enquiry is indeed about what artists 'do' – that is praxis - but the idea of praxis enfolds all that the artist does practically and praxis here includes 'the methodology of the conversation', which in turn contains poiesis (that is 'call' and the desire to 'call into existence that which has not been there before').

Nonetheless, poiesis is not solely seen here as a concept of unfolding (delivering the unknown to consciousness, or the 'unveiling' of truth) but goes before praxis when praxis meets an obstruction, because it contains a 'call'. A student refers to this idea in her interview: "I believe in a propensity or a drive towards something, so you have an innate feeling or attachment to something that grows later on."<sup>192</sup>

So, we see here that a 'methodology of the conversation' can be both in service of the art object, in a 'call' or a 'drive' to praxis or, in the call held in poiesis in the 'calling into existence that which was not there before', both in production and in the 'unveiling of truth to consciousness.' As stated in this thesis, poiesis is about 'call' with the understanding of the link to 'not knowing'; that is you would not have to 'call' if you knew. This, in turn accentuates the role of seeking the 'other' that references Fairbairn, Kearney, Jung, Cox, in this thesis. This thesis is investigating

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<sup>191</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 69.

<sup>192</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK November 30, 2011.

### 3. The Methodology of The Conversation

areas of 'doing' in art practice (praxis). In Dr. Cox's clinical experience, he came to the idea of using the concept of poiesis as a 'creative act' when he met an 'obstruction'; that is, he could not take his patients any further with an orthodox psychoanalytical approach to mental disturbances. Kearney's idea is that the other 'calls radical possibility'; this observation shows us the link between poiesis and praxis and the idea that they are complimentary. For example, an artist can 'call' new work and this 'call' can be held within the 'act' or 'the conversation.' According to Agamben, poiesis was thought to be of higher value than Praxis but if we hold to the belief that poiesis is about 'call' and is as much a solution to obstruction as act then, for artistic purposes, both concepts sit well together.

#### **3.2. Interview with Anthony Caro/Mark Lawson, BBC, 10.9.2010**

As an example of the 'methodology of the conversation' in action we can look at an interview for the BBC which took place on 10 September 2010, where the journalist, Mark Lawson, talks with the sculptor, Anthony Caro. In this interview, Caro draws out for us his own preferred methodology, that of the conversation, confirming the necessity of 'the Other' in the creative process. In the extract from the Caro/Lawson interview there is a good overview of all the artist gathers in via a 'methodology of the conversation' into studio practice. Here too, you see Caro's own rationale of 'why' the 'methodology of the conversation' works for him in the influential and creative input of his wife's own creative perspective, 'an

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Other' outside his own imagination. I have put in 'italics' the references to his methodology and that of a developing 'methodology of the conversation'; for example, Caro's avoidance of obstruction at the outset can be seen in his statement, "*When I get into the studio, I don't work on the most difficult thing*". In addition the application of a method of dialogue and conversation can be understood when he refers to his wife in conversation and says: "*We would talk about my art, where we were going and she would give me ideas, I have been lucky like that.*"

In the 'History of Art', Anthony Caro stands as a man of steel; literally so, as it is his choice of material that brought him to prominence in the 1960's when he began to weld together separate elements to make complex interlocking sculptures leading to a series of large pieces in painted or rolled metal called "The Flat". However, he has also been metaphorically 'steely' in his career; departing from the example of his mentor, the great Henry Moore, to sculpt in a variety of materials including paper.

**Mark: "When you look back at that decade of completed pieces do you have a clear sense of where they come from or is there an element of mystery?"**

Caro: "I think you put yourself in a frame of mind to make art. *When I go into the studio I don't work on the most difficult thing* – I start to work on something I have almost got right and somehow it gives me a bit of confidence to the move to the next one and *by the*

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*end of the morning I am beginning to do the difficult things.* Whether there is any mysteriousness I don't know where it comes from but I hesitate to invest the practice of sculpture with more than practical down to earth things. I think I was asked sometime in the early days what do you think sculpture is and I said that sculpture was something that is *outside of what you are* and I went onto make 'The Tower' and then went on to make 'The Halifax Steps' and now I am thinking of it as an 'inside' thing but all these are possibilities because you get trapped by your own assumptions and statements which you have to watch out for as they can 'hold' you like that. Always don't take anything for granted."

**Mark: "Do you feel always in control of what you are doing?"**

Caro: "Oh I hope not, *I think it's a dialogue between the stuff and me. We have to talk to each other and I have to listen to what these pieces of steel, wood, paper, whatever I am working in suggest* – so yes I have a good idea of where I am going but I don't want to be bound by it. I don't plan it ahead of time and say I am going to make this, I have an idea of where things are going, the direction of things, but I let them talk to me. *I let the stuff talk to me.*"

**Mark: "That decision early on to move sculpture off the plinth – that was an instinct you had?"**

Caro: "No I want to make it more *something like two people talking to each other* rather than looking up at something and never having any contact. All those sculptures in Trafalgar Square, those men on horses they are just giving honour to those unknown generals and I wanted sculpture to involve us personally.

**Mark: "It was literally a levelling – but this was taken up politically?"**

Caro: "It happened it was taken up like that a bit, so much so people were saying The Tate Gallery was wrong because it has steps up to it – that's bonkers!"

**Mark: "It is what people call democratizing and more welcoming that way."**

Caro: "I think what you are saying is absolutely right and how I hate that idea of democratizing. How you perceive a sculpture, whether you look up at it or down, whether you walk into it or whether you walk through it. All these are very important decisions but to start to talk about it in a political way is anathema to me."

**Mark: "By 1941 you were married and then shortly afterwards you had your first son? Was it a struggle to be an artist?"**

Caro: "I was very fortunate my wife took a lot of the 'bringing up work' and then at the same time she was tremendously helpful with me and my work – *we would talk about the art I make, talk about where we were going and she would give me ideas. Oh there are many sculptures she influenced. I could show you one sculpture after another she has had an input on. I am very lucky that way.*"

**Mark: "Artist's vary in that way, some don't want any kind of outside help, but have you always found it useful to have that?"**

Caro: "Absolutely and I don't like the idea of being shut-up in your 'inspiration box' – because I think those inspiration boxes don't always work or don't work at all for some people. *I love to have ping-pong and throw ideas out, watch them come back and work with people. It is like T.S. Eliot used to ask Ezra Pound – 'What do you think?' And I have always felt – What do you think?"*

### **3.3 What I bring to this PhD Research Project that enables an Impartial Enquiry**

During the last twenty years I have worked as both a professional sculptor and an analytical psychotherapist. What I mean by this is that I have studied and trained both in psychoanalytical techniques (Freud and the post-Freudians)<sup>113</sup> and analytical psychology (Jung and the post-Jungians)<sup>114</sup> and, as stated, have studied and had supervision of case work with the forensic psychotherapist, Dr. Murray Cox, at Broadmoor psychiatric prison. I am basically a Jungian therapist who has been strongly influenced by the work I encountered with Cox, particularly the use of 'poetic induction' in clinical practice. I have pursued my individual interest and preoccupations around existentialism, phenomenology, poetry, philosophy and literature as part of my clinical and artistic approach. Artistically, I began my degree in sculpture at Central St. Martins and then took up studying in France with the French Sculptor, Jean Touret, who made altar pieces for Notre Dame. I worked with Jean, when I could, over a period of 15 years travelling backwards and forwards to the Loire. All of the above has influenced the 'glasses' that I have been given and my perceptions of life. It has been my good fortune to have realized that it is the conversations that I have been having over the last 25 years with various teachers, mentors, supervisors that have enabled the ideas to gather form and structure in this PhD. These two fields of work and creativity, art and psychotherapy, have given me an advantage as far as the development of the 'methodology of the conversation' is

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concerned, because it has enabled me to think into the received thoughts about psychoanalysis, art therapy and its perception and influence on art practice with an eye that can also appreciate and understand the enormous benefits the world has received from psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. At the same time, 'being' an artist myself, I am also able to discern where it 'fails' to understand artistic processes. The aim of my approach in this PhD research is to anchor the enquiry back within studio practice and to investigate the PhD question as it engages with the similarities and differences held by the methodology of The Aeolian Mode. As stated earlier in this thesis, this body of research does not aim to create false divisions within creative processes between psychoanalysis and art, but looks more to discern 'useful' differences and search for similarities. if any can be shown to exist.

#### **3.4. A Qualitative Interview Methodology**

The methodology of interviewing in this thesis is akin to qualitative interview methodology because it centres around a conversation and is a journey of discovery in learning about practice and teaching. The way we interview is, of course, coloured by what we know and I have attempted to remove myself as much as possible from this possible 'obstruction' by formulating a series of open questions to reduce the risk of a guided enquiry, with structured 'yes' and 'no' answers. I declared at the outset that I am both an artist and a psychotherapist so there is some element

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of transference<sup>193</sup> that will immediately exist, which cannot be avoided if openness is to be adhered to; by that I mean there is bound to be some projections onto me, if the person has certain views around psychoanalysis or psychotherapy, both positively or negatively. Questions around art practice were implemented as a 'tool' to allow the interviewee to 'step off' into their own personal studio experience. To quote Dr. Herbert Rubin in his book 'Qualitative Research and The Art of Hearing Data':

"Learning about the world through qualitative interview has extended our intellectual and emotional reach, and by turns roused and satisfied intellectual curiosity. Qualitative interviews have operated like 'night vision goggles' permitting us to see what is not normally on view and examine that which is often looked at but seldom seen."<sup>194</sup>

The method that he develops is what he calls

"'Responsive interviewing' - choosing interviewees that are knowledgeable about the research problem, listening carefully to what they tell you and sometimes asking additional questions with an aim to fully understand their studio practice or teaching experience."<sup>195</sup>

In thinking about how the questions should be transcribed and edited, I felt that there was a good argument for not editing the artists' interviews. My thinking is influenced by the writer Mario Vargas Llosa, who wrote a book called 'The Feast of the Goat' about the Dominican Republic under the sadistic dictatorship of General Trujillo. In this novel he explores a dictatorship; the goat represents the tyrannical father, the lamb, the

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<sup>193</sup> C. Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Penguin Books Ltd, 1968), 7.

<sup>194</sup> Dr. H. Rubin, *Qualitative Research and The Art of Hearing Data* (Sage publications, 2005), vii.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

### 3. The Methodology of The Conversation

abused daughter, the country.<sup>196</sup> In reality, after the death of the dictator, General Trujillo, Vargas Llosa went to interview the women that had been abused during Trujillo's dictatorship in South America. This is true, he actually went out and did this. Llosa found that the women became 'elective' mutes when asked about their experiences of abuse under the dictator's rule; members of his army had raped them. The theory, Llosa postulated, to the woman's choice of becoming elective mutes, is really plausible when looked at from a psychoanalytical perspective; it is, if you 'speak' then you cannot postpone the psychic reality of 'knowing' what has been done to you. That is, if I do not say, I do not have to know and, of course, as we have all most probably experienced at some time, so often we do not know what we think until we speak. Therefore, my argument for not editing the interviews is that if I stop a person who is in the 'flow' of conversation to get to the essence of his/her point or edit for my own purposes, I would argue you are in danger of limiting the investigation into areas of 'not knowing' that the person is trying to find out about. Through adopting this style of interviewing I will not be over-influencing the material; therefore, with the free flow of thought and word, you often get to what you did not know you knew or thought in conversation. Llosa is stating very clearly that if we speak we begin to know our reality; in the same way, I feel that by giving the artists license to say what they want to say, unedited, you get a good and truthful picture of artistic experience. However, I would like to say at this stage, even though there is an analysis of all the interviews, I would encourage those reading this research project to read 'everything' that the artists

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<sup>196</sup> Mario Varga Llosa, *The Feast of the Goat*, (Picador USA, 2002).

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have said to get a full picture of the artists internal life and their interesting insights into art practice.

#### **Selection and Recruitment**

At the outset of this enquiry the analysis of two groups of interviewees was thought to be sufficient. The first groups chosen were first year art college students and established artists. My initial ideas were to formulate workshops for students. The criteria for participants at the initial stages of formulating this methodology stipulated that students who were first encountering 'obstruction' in their art practice would be a good counterbalance to long-term established artists who were used to encountering 'obstacles' in studio practice. Using my psychoanalytical understandings, I devised a series of interviews and workshops on 'poiesis and obstruction', stating that the aims of these interviews and workshops at student level were two-fold; to investigate more fully the relationship of obstruction and poiesis through interview and to see if a didactic psychoanalytical/analytical approach would help the student both understand and work through obstructions in art practice. It is important to clarify how we are seeing the concept of obstacles; therefore, obstruction/block being seen as both a practical problem of an artist's medium, an emotional problem related to the self and a dialectical obstruction, say, with supervisors or teachers, together, of course, with the student's relationship to the art community at large. It was stated to students that there was no penalty for not taking part in the research project and that those wishing to attend should be self-selective.

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Incentives at this stage were spoken about in terms of weaving this enquiry into their degree portfolios. I planned to run these workshops over a three-month period, beginning with a short talk about the theoretical orientation of my research ideas on the subject of 'Obstruction and Poiesis'. Thinking about what would be psychologically useful to students starting out on degrees, I suggested the reading of Neville Symington's book on 'Narcissism',<sup>197</sup> as this book addresses emotional obstacles and developmental problems. This would have been a useful tool of 'insight' into emotional difficulties in student life. After initial interviews with the students as to what they thought their obstructions were, if any, I then intended to proceed to a series of workshops 'identifying obstruction', 'approaching obstruction', 'the unconscious and obstruction', 'the alchemist's approach to obstruction' and 'a changed relationship to obstruction'. My supervisor would oversee these workshops and, at the end of the three months, I would then interview students again to assess the experience and the understandings found within the process of the workshops. After obtaining ethical clearance in early 2010, this workshop was advertised around the University of the Arts. Interestingly enough, not one student responded to this posting. This result raised a number of questions, including the issue of location; I am working out of Wimbledon Research House and it is quite far out for students to make the effort to come. I also asked myself whether students in their first year of Art College might be worried about a psychoanalytical approach, exposure or fear of personal vulnerabilities in a college setting. Thirdly, are they not interested because it is not

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<sup>197</sup> Neville Symington, *Narcissism a new theory*, (Karnac Books, 1993).

### 3. The Methodology of The Conversation

relevant to where they are today? Fourthly, as Steven Furlonger, who has had 25 years teaching experience at Central St. Martins, says, "students are full of new ideas" so there was a possibility that obstructions and the call to the new is not what they are preoccupied by.<sup>198</sup>

After this disappointing but illuminating result, my supervisors suggested that I moved the enquiry to MA level, as it was felt there may be more understanding of psychoanalytical approaches with MA students. It was decided at this stage that I should resubmit for an ethical clearance, which would hold to 'interviews only' and disband the idea of workshops, reading groups, etc. Together with my Director of Studies we proposed posting a notice to the second year students to invite them to a small discussion group, informally based around the ideas of 'working through obstruction in art practice'. We would show some film clips, engage in discussion, drink coffee etc. The purpose of the workshop was to find second year fine art students who would be interested in taking part in more focused group discussions in the summer term, on the topic of obstruction and creative action. The one MA student who turned up to this was, indeed, very interested in finding out more about psychoanalysis and obstruction. In July 2010, after obtaining the amended ethical clearance to undertake interviews only, my Director of Studies gave a lunchtime talk at WCA on 'Psychoanalytical Perspectives in Research'<sup>199</sup>, looking at his work on psychoanalysis and arts-based research, which was appearing in a forthcoming publication. In this setting there was an opportunity for me

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<sup>198</sup> Steven Furlonger. Interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>199</sup> 'Understanding and Negotiating Obstruction in Fine Art Practice', Wimbledon College of Art, London, March 11, 2010.

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to talk about my PhD research from a psychoanalytical and Aeolian perspective dealing with obstruction in fine art practice, involving interviews with artists and art students. Four MA students turned up from UOAL, three of whom were prepared to be interviewed. At this stage of analysis, it was felt by both my supervisors that it would be informative if we also expanded the research to include teachers in art colleges; moreover, this would throw greater insight into obstructions within art colleges and ask the questions from the other side of the fence, for example, how teachers dealt with obstructions with their students. I e-mailed six teachers all teaching within the University of the Arts London, all of whom were open to being interviewed. The response from established artists was also very positive, with only one or two artists declining to be interviewed without stipulating any reason.

I then formulated three sets of questions (Appendix F) which would throw light on the artist's experience of obstructions and poesis in studio practice; these questions were tailored slightly to acknowledge the individual experiences of students, established artists and tutors in art colleges.

In accordance with the regulations of the University of Surrey Ethical Guidance, prior to being interviewed the students signed a consent form and were also given an information sheet, which clarified the aims and objectives of this research project. (Appendix G).

### 3. The Methodology of The Conversation

In summary, the interview between Caro and Lawson shows Caro's particular 'tenets of approach' in studio practice and mirrors some of the guiding principles of this thesis. In the first extract from the interview, Caro confirms his relationship to the object as a dialogue with 'the other' and the necessity in his creative process of this 'dialogue' between the artist and his object and the artist adherence to 'ideas around not knowing' as intrinsic to the creative process; that is, he has no idea about the destination of the object. Caro also confirms his resistance to the 'outer interpretations' coming from the art world itself around his art, refusing to adhere to the political interpretations around his art.

From the interviews with Caro/Lawson, the example of the 'call' to poiesis in the conversation held between Shelley/Byron and the subsequent development of the 'methodology of the conversation' through the discussion with my supervisor, we can see how the validity of this methodology came into being and how it can be an efficacious way to bring forth a 'new' body of research together with its intrinsic value in the creative process.

I think Kearney, signifies a different moment in our creative understanding that appears to manifest in our relationship to 'the Other' and can be accessed through the 'methodology of the conversation.' Kearney shows us how the imagination can keep developing and the intrinsic importance of 'the Other' in the creative process.

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From the outset, there were clear differences of approach to the interviews between the groups of interviewees. An overview of this is that the students tended to be the most tentative and very much aware of college life when thinking about being interviewed, whilst the teachers were focused and articulate when thinking about undertaking the interviews and the established artists had an overall tendency to begin to present their studio practice through an 'individuated' narrative and journey. The only obstacle encountered was most clearly seen at student level with a lack of students wanting to undergo being interviewed. There was no hindrance at a tutor level of enquiry; in fact the opposite as there was an engaged, informative response. With established artists, again there was an eighty per cent acceptance, with one artist declining and another not bothering to reply to the invitation. The following analysis of the conversations held with artists will uncover the different levels of engagement and encounter with obstructions in the service of poiesis at all levels of creative endeavour in artistic life.

## Chapter 4: Self-analysis

I will analyze how my obstruction to paint was not dissolved by traditional psychoanalytic processes, comparing my own approach/methodology to that of Marion Milner's methodology, as a psychoanalyst, to 'not being able to paint'. In her self-analysis, Milner sought to answer the difficulties and obstacles she was encountering in areas of moral education and teaching; whereas, I am exploring whether the 'tenets of approach' used in Cox's methodology at Broadmoor are 'useful' or 'similar' to approaches found in art practice. In this self-analysis, I am exploring this basic enquiry along with my own developing methodology in philosophy and art practice. I will examine how I developed my own self-analysis and what I set in place, the 'tenets of approach' and the parameters of research undertaken. Using a developmental graph of 'transition' developed by Hopson (Appendix A), I will set out to 'observe' emotional processes and obstacles in my approach to dissolving my obstacle. I will also give examples of how the use of my personal dream analysis was an 'enabling' tool in trying to unblock my obstacle to paint. I will examine the main turning point in my approach to obstruction; this will involve an analysis of the key artist's, John Virtue, influence on my methodology and how his insights into his own creative processes fuelled a different approach to my approach to my own obstruction. There were two stages of obstructions that had to be encountered in the dissolution of my inability to paint; one was to painting itself and the other to abstraction.

### **4.1. The Obstruction to Painting**

My artistic education from a young age was restricted by received educational formats around 'literalism' and 'representational art'. At the outset, I had excelled in both painting and sculpture; however, with the approach of my then art teacher, my expansion into painting became blocked. Art practice was more about what the art teacher perceived was 'acceptable art' opposed to 'nurturing innate capabilities which were non-conformist'. Even though I was well aware of this, at that time I could not find a way out of my problem, so I took the road of least resistance, and, as I found the medium of plaster and clay so accessible, I put painting to the back of my mind and progressed in sculpture. When I was in my late twenties, I entered analysis, three times a week and, over the course of a lengthy analysis, I got to the source of my artistic block; furthermore, with what I felt was good analytical insight, you could say, I knew my problem. However, this 'insight' did not release me from my obstruction to paint. I spent a lot of time talking about what had created the block but no time in thinking about what I could do to release it. Feelings around at that time were of 'futility'; what I admired in art had already been painted, so why paint? I was also conscious this was my own 'self-deception' against my desire to paint, confronting an entrenched practical and emotional block but still nothing moved. Paradoxically, all through the process of analysis my sculptural studio work creatively grew and my practice developed; therefore, despite the continued block to painting, I was progressing within a framework of what I was already capable of, but unable to go beyond what I already knew. Towards the end of my

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analysis, I came across the work of Dr Cox; it was this meeting with Cox that made me re-assess my approach to my obstruction. In Cox's study group and in supervision/conversation, Cox and I spoke of the similarity in approach in his clinical practice to what I perceived artists doing on a daily basis in their studio practice. Cox's feelings were that there was a creative similarity in that artists are forever seeking poiesis, which is 'to call into existence that which was not there before'. In Cox's own clinical practice, he very much needed this 'tenet of approach' because quite often, when dealing with very mentally ill patients who could 'go no further', the only thing left 'to do' was to 'call' into existence something in their 'understanding' that had not been there before. Linking it to my own personal obstruction and thoughts around poiesis I, too, began to think as far as my own 'not being able to paint' was concerned that I needed to find a new approach to my problem and I needed to be able to stay in the groundwork of 'not knowing', so to speak, to go beyond what I knew.

I decided to look at 'what artists do' in practice with obstructions in art practice. Whilst reading Kearney and Cox's work, theoretically I began to think outside my own parameters of psychoanalytic thought and processes. Ideas around poiesis germinated within me for about five years after Cox's death; at the time of his death he had been encouraging me to take the idea of researching the concept of poiesis into another educational setting, purely academic, which did not appeal to me. It was not until I encountered the work of John Virtue, the painter, that I felt there may be another route to take and that there was a possibility I

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could undertake a body of research which would be beneficial in other disciplines or academic settings. My concern about a purely academic theoretical approach was that I wanted the research I undertook to have some 'use' at a practical level. As far as I was concerned, the fruition of Cox's work had taken some 25 years to emerge and it seemed that his wealth of experience and understanding created a 'necessity' that this research was put to good use. In studio practice, John Virtue became the major influence in making me think a different approach could also be taken with my own obstruction to paint and would warrant proposing a practice-based PhD as a valid and interesting avenue of research into the encounter of poiesis and obstruction in everyday studio practice.

At the outset of this body of research, when thinking about the practice side of the PhD, I decided to look at different approaches; one psychoanalytical, which would be beyond my own personal experience and, therefore, make the research more objective and the other, John Virtue's approach in studio practice, which would help orientate this research into studio practice. I would also, for my own personal methodology, bring into play Kearney's ideas around the necessity of 'the Other' for radical possibility to occur; that is, I was looking for a new encounter, a new conversation and that whatever I sort out from other peoples 'tenets of approach', I would have to challenge against my own needs and integrity so that I would not just be superimposing a 'way' on top of an entrenched difficulty. In that sense, I felt I would be holding to my own path of individuation. First of all, I investigated the work of the

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late Marion Milner, a well-known psychoanalyst, who had written the book *'On not being able to Paint'*, which had become a fairly well-received book on creativity in psychoanalytic circles.<sup>200</sup>

### **4.2. Marion Milner**

Marion Milner's research is based on the technical and emotional inability of 'not being able to paint' for the 'Sunday painter'. Milner gives good insight into a psychoanalyst's approach to 'not being able to paint', which has overtones of 'art therapy' but is also very much engaged with the difficulty in not being able to paint technically. The similarity of her research to my own, is that Milner was interested in this area in correlation to the difficulties she had found in education; by that, I mean she was using her self-analysis into 'not being able to paint' to see if she could expand her scientific research, her misgivings on the 'moral education' she found in schools and the lack of sex education. I am examining my own difficulties in this self-analysis to see if there are commonalities of approach to Cox's methodology in art practice and, if the insights in philosophy, Kearney's idea on radical possibility and Virtue's tenets of approach to calling new work, will be efficacious for me, which in turn might be of use to those interested in creative processes.

First of all, this is Milner's aim at the outset of her research: -

"I needed a new set of ideas in thinking about these controversial questions. Although I felt there was a good likelihood that such matters were all connected with the

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<sup>200</sup> Marion Milner, *On not being able to paint* (International Universities Press, Inc., 1973).

#### 4. Self-analysis

problem of psychic activity, whatever that might mean, I had not known at all how to take the first steps for studying them or even how to frame the pertinent questions. It was only gradually that a persisting idea had emerged that somehow the problem might be approached through studying, one specific area in which I myself had failed to learn something that I had wanted to learn. If only it were possible to find out how to set about learning to paint it should also be possible to find out the basic ideas need for approaching the general educational problem."<sup>201</sup>

Milner followed a simple analytical thought – that the unconscious works through the hand and if you give up conscious control of what you want and let the hand and the eye do exactly what pleased them without any conscious working to a preconceived intention – that is 'free drawing', you will free up creative ability, overcome obstacles and liberate yourself from the conscious 'common sense mind' that can be restrictive. This in turn enables the 'Sunday artist' to overcome obstacles which have been set up by the 'conscious common sense mind' and 'free-up' creativity.

Through the course of her self-analysis, she explores and comes up against many emotional and insightful encounters.

Her tenets of approach are: -

- She dispenses with learning about technique, whilst examining its principles to 'free' her up.
- She analyses 'intention' and 'expression'; that is, she intends to draw something beautiful and finds herself drawing a violent volcano for example.

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<sup>201</sup> Marion Milner, *On not being able to Paint* (International Universities Press Inc., 1957), xvii.

#### 4. Self-analysis

- She analyses a difference/conflict between, the 'common sense mind' and the 'mind of the imagination' and seeks to be able to access the 'mind of the imagination.'
- She continues, through her self-analysis, to find meaning and insight and analytical understandings of her findings through self-observation and self-expression.
- She examines early psychological developmental states and their relationships to the artist's experience of 'the other'; that is the primary maternal relationship affecting the way the artists encounter the art object.
- She progresses to examine many different emotional, psychological encounters and the application of these understandings to her struggles with 'not being able to paint.' Developmental psychological states such as separateness, delusion and hating, the necessity of illusion, emptiness, reciprocity and ordered freedom, refusal of reciprocity in the creative process and then the rhythm and the freedom of drawings, the concentration of the body in artistic practice.

I will give a lengthy example of how she is thinking around her problem with painting, so that a good portrait of how she works can be seen. I will then contrast it with John Virtue's approach to painting and end by describing my own methodology to obstruction to paint. This is Milner:

"At first I thought that such an unwillingness to face the visual facts of space and distance [Milner is wanting to draw a garden]

#### 4. Self-analysis

must be a cowardly attitude, a retreat from the responsibilities of being a separate person. But it did not feel entirely like a retreat, it felt more like a search, a going backwards perhaps, but a going back to look for something, something which could have real value for adult life if it could be uncovered. It almost seemed like a way of looking at the world which the current, 'reasonable' common sense way had perhaps repudiated, but a way which might have potentialities of its own at the appropriate time and place, a kind of uncommon sense that one needed. Somewhere in the books (she was looking at 'A Step Ladder to Painting' by Jan Gordon) it was stated that painting is concerned with the feeling conveyed by space. This was surprising at first, up to now I have taken space for granted and never reflected upon what it might mean in terms of feelings. But as soon as I begin to think about it, it was clear that very intense feelings might be stirred. If one saw it as the primary reality (mother-baby relationship) to be manipulated for the satisfaction of all one's basic needs, beginning with the babyhood problem of reaching for one's mothers arms, leading though all the separation from what one loves that the business of living brings then it should not be a surprise that it should be the main preoccupation of the painter. When I begin to feel about it as well as think about it then even the whole sensory foundation of the common sense world seemed to be threatened. For instance, I remember a kind of half-waking spatial nightmare of being surrounded by infinitude of space rushing away in every direction forever and ever. In a similar way the term 'vanishing point' around areas of desolation. So it became clear that if painting is concerned with the feelings conveyed by space then it must also be to do with ideas of distance and separation and having and losing. What I did not yet see was that the free drawings which had been set aside were all the time silently showing what the feeling about these ideas could be."<sup>202</sup>

The implication here is, of course, the 'emotional capacity' of the artist is always being challenged and the subsequent analysis and understanding of what is emotionally challenging then affects Milner's capacity to work through her difficulties in painting. This idea holds to Glover's idea that the art object is directly related to the artist's emotional development or difficulty. Milner coupled this with a deep analysis of 'free drawing' and, again, her analysis of her emotional attitude to her difficulties. Relating

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 10.

#### 4. Self-analysis

this to her research is also the analysis of creative processes and their handling of 'chaotic' forces:

"The first and most obvious thing about the free drawings was that they were not according to plan. The idea of the limitations of planning, of consciously willed effort towards a foreseen end, was not of course a new idea to me intellectually. But it was quite another matter to try to act upon the idea and then find oneself up against the full strength of one's inability to believe in any non-planned, no willed order, as I was nearly every time I set out to do a free drawing. So I often found it necessary to mobilize every bit of will power I could find in order to stop trying to use will power to dictate the result. But when I did succeed in this I had the fact staring me in the face that the free drawings were so much more ordered wholes than those I had made with conscious effort to produce wholes. First amongst the things to be noticed here was the fact that the mood or state of concentration in which the most expressive drawings appeared had a special quality. It was a mood, which could be described as one of reciprocity, for although it was certainly a dreamy state of mind it was not a dreaminess that shuts itself off from the outside world or shuts out action. It was more a dreaminess that was the result of restraining conscious intention or rather, a quick willingness to have it and then forgo it. Quite often there was some conscious intention of what to draw, at the beginning but the point was that one had to be willing to give up this first idea soon as the lines drawn suggested something else."<sup>203</sup>

Her analysis takes in many areas of human understanding, contemplating ideas around love (though for Milner love is equated with idealization) and the capacity to paint, the jealousies aroused by the primal scene<sup>204</sup> and being outside the parental intercourse is related to our difficulties with jealousy and envy and allowing the creative processes to exist at all. Ideas around the interplay of subject and object are explored along with the idea that she is bringing forth something that she has not known before.

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>204</sup> See glossary.

#### 4. Self-analysis

In her summary, she brings together what she has discovered in the process of her journey, that is, the actual journey of writing her book, along with the activity of creating 'free drawings', which showed her quite simply that she had to surrender the idea that 'new' things are created from above, rather than by a free interplay of differences with equal rights to be different.<sup>205</sup>

Her work is very interesting and analytical; it has overtones of art therapy in that she interprets her drawings psychologically but she touches on many shared experiences that are expressed in John Virtue's work. The fundamental difference exposed in the journey that is recounted by Virtue is that he does not consciously engage with the meaning of the psychological journey, even though he is aware that painting expresses 'all that is psychological in him.' Virtue shares some of the preoccupations that are expressed by Milner, yet circles many of the central concepts/preoccupations of the creative process. For example, aesthetic conflict, tension, 'holding ones nerve' are similar approaches; although Virtue's attitude to love is that it is a central 'necessary' emotion, whereas for Milner, it is a process of 'idealization' that has to be worked through.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 146.

### 4.3 John Virtue

Turning now to John Virtue's tenets of approach to obstruction, Virtue confronts the questions that engages poiesis, obstruction and the perennial question for artists of how do we go beyond what has come before? In developing my own methodology, I found Virtue's approach enormously informative and helpful in aiding a different thought process to occur in my understanding of art practice.

This is Andrew Graham Dixon talking about the way Virtue calls new work, when Virtue begins to question himself:

"To copy gives me no meaning and would be futile. Emulation could be remotely possible, the danger of imitation, pastiche clear. He enters what the poets and mystics call 'the via negativa' that is, he destroys all that has been before in his work, and goes by the way of 'not knowing' to enter a creative struggle.

In 1971, John Virtue hit his creative crisis – the time in his studio life where he felt that he could go no further. He was torn apart, between the idea to be a painter was his vocation in life and that whilst his art was indeed successful it no longer seemed meaningful to him. He could not find a way, a subject or a method. Everything he did seemed to make his problem worse.

The artist loses his way very often and then finds it again and paints pictures that he did not realize were within him. He draws his work from the wreckage of the methods and routines, which the artist had previously adhered to. They are works that are painted in the knowledge that sometimes you have to unsettle yourself in order to remember who you are. A Manichean conflict if fought out and each time resolved differently, but none of the resolutions final, so the fight is always renewed again.

But the paintings fought against their creator and kept falling apart despite his best efforts. Brave enough to recognize that

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this was happening (perhaps welcoming the development), he decided to participate in the process rather than resist it. The painting grids he had been working on for the past decade he ditched, he abandoned himself. He found himself on new territory, art as in life.

He bought several large canvases and began to paint – he rapidly began to alter the way he works, he gave away what he had spent a lifetime accumulating, stripped himself naked and walked into an unknown land.<sup>206</sup>

This is Virtue's own methodology, which he outlined in an interview at the National Gallery at the start of the London paintings.<sup>207</sup>

"I need to call new work.

I am absolutely terrified.

I have no methodology.

Then what do you do?

There is nowhere to go!

If you don't hold your nerve you have lost it!

The typography changed the way that I worked.

I drew and drew and then I could let go into paint without the drawing I would not have the freedom in the paint.

I have been painting since 1971 in this medium of titanium white acrylic.

I fell passionately in love.

I bought canvases, made them, and worked on them.

A terrible conflict is fought out.

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<sup>206</sup> John Virtue, *"A leap in the dark" New Works* (Arnolfini, Whitechapel Art Gallery, Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1995), 1-5.

<sup>207</sup> *John Virtue London* directed by Jake Auerbach "London Paintings" (Jake Auerbach Films Ltd, DVD, 2005).

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Each painting is a call, nothing is resolved.

Everything is achieved by hard-won persistence.”

#### **Assessment of Milner and Virtue’s approaches**

There are commonalities in Milner’s and Virtue’s approaches, in that both are calling into ‘the unknown’ and both bring forth work that they did not know existed before and out of the unknown. Milner adopts a psychoanalytical approach that seeks to understand motives, the unconscious processes and a way to disable the ‘judging critical side’ of human nature that prevents creative play. Virtue’s comment that painting ‘represents all that is psychological’ within him but psychological insight is not a path of investigation that is wanted or bidden, is an obvious difference with Milner. Virtue primarily stays at the level of praxis, whilst outlining the approach he adopts to his emotional and psychological system. They both seem to share the idea that painting affects the nervous system and the nervous system affects our processes and abilities. In the way that Milner talks about the ‘anxiety’ and ‘futility’ and wanting to ‘give up’, Virtue talks about ‘holding his nerve’; however, both expound the importance of perseverance and ‘not giving up’ and allude to areas of ‘not knowing’. Milner seeks to psychologically understand her ‘emotional blocks’ and presumptions of thought and perception, accessing her creative ability through ‘free’ drawing. While Virtue actively does; he walks out every day, he draws for months before he starts painting, he makes his canvases, destroys all that has been before, he begins again and he fights his paintings into existence. However, Milner encourages

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herself, analyses herself and studies 'how to' paint; at the same time, Milner finishes a painting and a body of investigation and, at the end of her self-analysis, writes that the whole process has taught her something that works:

"I had found a definition, which seemed to be at least a workable tool: that is, that psychic creativeness is the capacity for making a symbol. Thus, creativeness in the arts is making a symbol for feeling; creativeness in science is making a symbol for knowing."<sup>208</sup>

Virtue gets to the end of a body of work and feels that nothing is completed, everything hard won and there has been no resolution.

#### **4.4. Self-Analysis**

Turning now to my own self-analysis, it was and is, clear to me that having been immersed in psychoanalytical and analytical psychological thought for over 30 years, I was not easily going to dispel an approach that had come to influence the 'glasses' that I had adopted in life. Once I had fallen upon the work of Hopson and his chart of 'transition' (Appendix A), I decided that there was a way for me to be aware of the emotional obstacles that I would encounter on this journey, not identify with those anxieties, without, in turn, denying the reality of my intra-psychic life and its effect on my inability to paint. Although in my analytical studies, I had eventually become fascinated by Cox's methodology over, say, that of Freud, I still felt and feel that I have a strong affiliation for Jungian

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<sup>208</sup> Marion Milner, *On not being able to paint* (International University Press 1957), 148.

#### 4. Self-analysis

thought, particularly Jungian dream analysis.<sup>209</sup> I have analyzed my dreams daily for the last 30 years. In the analysis of my own dreams, I adopt both a Jungian approach and Aeolian approach to dream analysis; by that I mean I seek both the symbol and the metaphor/poetic language in the dream. This process of dream analysis is now second nature to me and is so much part of my daily life and the way that I approach the world in general, that I knew it would be a useful tool to help me focus on how my 'internal world' was reacting to the demands of trying to paint. Priority was given to some of the 'tenets of approach' in Virtue's methodology. For example, I was not going to identify with my neuroses but look to 'holding my nerve' and view my emotional difficulties in confronting my obstruction as 'transitional states'. Therefore, in a sense, this was step one. Given that I had been greatly affected by Kearney's idea that it was creatively necessary for 'radical possibility' to occur and that 'the Other' had to be outside one's own imagination, step two was to stop the imagination becoming solipsistic. A way of achieving this was to look for another conversation to take me into a field of enquiry, a field of images, that I did not know. In addition, at the time I was also thinking about Cox's idea of poiesis in that it was to do with 'call' and so I felt that whatever I chose to do, that this 'action' created a 'call'. I was also going to take from Jungian psychology the necessity of the 'symbol' in the creative act, whilst trying to develop a philosophical approach for myself, in that philosophy happens when you begin to hesitate how things add up. So to that end, I thought a great deal about Virtue's and Leonardo Da

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<sup>209</sup> See glossary.

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Vinci's statements where Virtue said that "First of all you had to fall in love", whereas Leonardo said "For painting is the way to learn to know the maker of all things and this is a way to love". I decided I was going to take those two concepts together, 'love to knowledge' and 'knowledge to love' and see them simultaneously; that was I was going to try and get to know something new and get to love 'it', at the same time. This was to be both the subject I was going to choose to do and the medium of paint. I took all these approaches and thought about what Leonardo Da Vinci and Virtue were both saying: that it was essential that I become absorbed and preoccupied by whatever I chose to do. Drawing these different conceptual and practical tools together seemed to create 'my own way'. Virtue, to me, seems to create his own methodology through his own typography, challenging the tradition coming out of him through 'holding his nerve' and falling in love. His idea that transmogrification<sup>210</sup> creates the hidden agenda and becomes the deepest way you can express yourself and the cleanest – so the painting makes the painting and the drawing is embedded in drawing. The obstruction of only using black and white paint forced him to invent himself in paint. Finally, at the time I had been reading Hillman's book on 'The Soul and Heart of the World' where he says that: "The move to the heart is already a move to poiesis: metaphorical, psychological". It seems for Hillman that poiesis has 'drivers' for realization, i.e. that it is a matter of heart, of love, that 'calls' creativity into being; to me, this was worth investigating more and

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<sup>210</sup> See glossary.

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marries, of course, to Virtue's statement: 'that first of all you have to fall in love'.<sup>211</sup>

I decided that I would choose a bird of prey to draw. It 'called' a personal symbol<sup>212</sup> for me that represented 'energy' and I was fascinated around the idea of the relationship between the falcon and the falconer, which had been poetically fuelled for me through Yeats.<sup>213</sup> I decided I would go and 'live with', 'get to know', 'love' and study these birds of prey and see what effect this process had on my ability to become 'unblocked'. Here, too, I was implementing Kearney's idea of 'radical possibility' and the necessity of a 'methodology of the conversation' to encounter the other.

At the outset of this project, I took a number of things and put them in place as a 'new way' to deal with my obstruction to paint, drawn from all that I had read, seen and gathered in the first two years of this research. I did not begin painting until the autumn of my second year, 2007 and the process of dissolving this obstruction to paint or to abstraction is on-going.

So, in November of 2006 I went to Scotland to join a falconer I had met in the summer and who had invited me, along with a few other people, to

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<sup>211</sup> James Hillman, *The thought of the heart and the soul of the world* (Spring Publications Ltd, 1992), 109.

<sup>212</sup> Erich Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious*, (Bollingen Foundation Inc., 1959), 170. This shows us the importance the psychologist makes between art and symbolism.' It cannot be stressed enough that the key to a fundamental understanding, not only of man, but of the world as well, is to be sought in the relation between creativity and symbolic reality. Only if we recognize that symbols reflect a more complete reality than can be encompassed in the rational concepts of consciousness can we appreciate the full value of man's power to create symbols. To regard symbolism as an early stage in the development of the rational, conceptual consciousness involves a dangerous underestimation of the makers of symbols and their functions.'

<sup>213</sup> W. B. Yeats, "*The Second Coming*" in (Everyman Paperbacks, 1997), 39.

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the Cairngorms for a week of intensive training with 'the birds of prey', which included falcons, hawks, eagles. This trip involved doing everything for the birds from hunting for food, exercising and learning to fly the birds. It was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life and I think that through this process I began to 'know and love my subject'. The subject got inside me as I encountered the birds more and more at body level; the day-to-day encounter of walking out through frozen snow, snow drifting through woods with a hawk or falcon on your arm, a day where it was compulsorily silent, walking out with the birds for a period of four hours at a time, which meant hours spent observing the birds, seeing the birds swiftly speed to your arm when you raised the arm to call, whilst the forest held its breath in stillness - instinctively I became absorbed - preoccupied with my subject. Taking many photographs, I came home keen to get on with the process of trying to paint. When I got home I decided that I needed to put in place one of the psychoanalytical understandings that I had observed over the years in my clinical practice, which was that if you work with a clinical patient very early in the morning, that it is sometimes easier to bring forth change because psychological ego defences that are gathered into the personality during the day, are not so strong. It occurred to me that it might be useful to get up really early for three months, go to my studio and work to see if I could unblock myself. I did this and chose to work in inks due to my apprehension of working straight away with paints.

After a period of about six weeks of getting up early and going into my studio to work, I had the first dream, which showed me that the method

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that I was employing was making some inroads into my obstruction to paint. I need to state here that I employ a Jungian approach to dream interpretation. Therefore, I do not seek to employ 'collective' understandings to symbols, but only to interpret a personal symbol with its significance to my own understanding, my internal language, so to speak and my perception of the world and how I encounter it. 'Symbol',<sup>214</sup> means to throw forward and, in this way, it is a useful tool in thinking what it is trying to do for you if you chose to use it, in the same way a dream is also useful if you 'dream it on' in your conscious everyday life. I see dreams and symbols as an advantageous tool in expanding our understanding of everyday consciousness.

#### **Dreams – these dreams took place from 2007 up until 2012.**

**Dream 1** - I dream I am behind a concrete façade of a house; blood is pouring down the inside of the house. In the dream I am lucid and I push my hand through the concrete wall. Once I have done this I can reach the painting; I touch the oil paint and I know as I am dreaming that something has broken through and that I can begin. Someone shouts to me, "keep on". Still further ahead I see a door, there is a contrast of light; I am still in the dark to some extent but I can see through the door. There is a much brighter light but I am also conscious that I am frightened, doubtful and cautious to proceed.

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<sup>214</sup> See glossary.

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**Dream 2** - I dream I am sitting in my bedroom with tubes of paint. Michael Harding makes them and I think they are the best paints I have encountered but when I go to squeeze the paint nothing but a dark odorous sludge comes out of them.

#### **Self-analysis and interpretation:**

**Dream 1** - I have had a concrete complex to do with painting; by that I mean that I have felt I literally cannot paint and have been interpreting this difficulty in one way only. In the dream I push through the complex (pushing through the concrete wall) and the blood pouring down the inside of the house symbolizes that this task ahead of me is going to cost me 'not less than everything' at an internal intra-psychic level. I achieve my goal, which is that I break through and touch the oil paint but there is some sort of idea of threshold represented by the door, the dark and the light. However, importantly the over-riding feeling in the dream is one of fear, which, of course, represents well my conscious state; most of the time I was terrified that I just could not do this and I kept saying to myself not to identify and, as Virtue said, 'hold my nerve' and just keep going.

**Dream 2** - When I initially had this dream, my first thought was of alchemy that is the ordure in the paint and the dark sludge; the alchemical beginning of the process of transformation, the beginning of

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the journey so to speak, the encounter with prima materia<sup>215</sup> (shadow). I think this is true but, at another level of interpretation, this was an anxiety dream; at a conscious level I was terrified that the only thing I would produce through painting, no matter how good the paints, was something dark, sludge like and odorous. My neurosis was active but I chose to ignore these feelings and held to a teleological approach, that is where the dream was leading me.

So to assess, in the first stage of this approach I had done a number of things:

I looked for a conversation – symbol – bird.

I fell in love – that is I became preoccupied by the task.

I experienced the object at a body level.

I worked through a psychological block whilst being aware of fears.

I chose to use a medium that did not create too much fear to begin with – that is I chose inks over paints.

I was developing my own way, getting up early, analyzing dreams.

At the beginning of this stage of work I also realized that one of the ways that I work sculpturally is around the area of 'destruction' or 'disintegration' and 'repair' - see the burnt offerings in the documentation of studio work. I am a very 'hands on' artist, working a lot with the 'energy' of the object coming into being. I was aware that when I began to paint, I was looking to be able to 'capture forces' in the medium I had

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<sup>215</sup> See glossary.

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chosen, which initially was ink. Working with my hands and cloths and drawing, I do not use brushes in my work.

At this stage I could keep going. I thought a lot about persistence, which was good, because I then hit a rather big obstacle at the Transfer Document stage of this PhD. During the transfer stage I hit an obstruction in what I was trying to do with this PhD theoretically and what I was showing practically through studio work. When looking at the argument to date, the assessor had concerns about the PhD's practical side and put into the conversation an image of a ladder, with the rungs missing at the bottom of the ladder. As the conversation progressed, I immediately got an image in my head of a ladder, which had no rungs but the colour blue in the place of rungs. I went home and painted this image in my head after the assessment. Here I was then, with the obstruction in front of me. Was this concept of poiesis useful for artistic practice and could it be seen? The point that was being made was 'Why was I not showing 'how' this 'call to poiesis' happens in practice or, indeed, could I?' The encounter with my assessor made me think about the difficulty in conveying this process in studio practice, because poiesis was about moment, not about trajectory; but of course, the assessor was right, I was looking at methodology which does imply trajectory, so this began to get exceedingly difficult in my research. If poiesis was more a 'call' into the present moment, how was I going to show something, which only manifests on arrival or in a moment? I had examined John Virtue's work and he seemed to call through obstruction to the 'new', but I was not

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clear if, indeed, that was poiesis as I saw it or, if it was, according to the artist himself, metamorphosis. To date, the only artist I had found who, for me, showed me a parable of poiesis in action, was Cornelia Parker in her installation of the 'exploding shed', (Appendix B). I had to change my thinking at this point and change my approach. I went back into the studio and started painting the image I had seen during the conversation with the assessor with acrylics, wondering how image creates volition; however, although I felt overwhelmed with my task, I did not feel stuck.

**Dream 3** - I dream my neighbour is painting trees and I think to myself why that image? It seems significant of something I have forgotten.

**Dream 4** - I dream I am trying to get to painting but my friends want something. I write a message on a canvas to deliver to my friends, which will enable me to get on painting.

#### **Interpretations:**

**Dream 3** - I took this to mean that painting is still slightly detached from me; looking at it in an objective way, my neighbour painting and in a subjective way, the neighbour is myself. However, there is also something that is trying to be remembered. When I was young, if you were assessing what I would do in life, you would definitely have said I will do some sort of study to do with trees, most probably photography. I was aware of using photography to aid my approach to my obstruction to painting and evidence of this aim is in the documentation of studio work.

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**Dream 4** – I took to be a conflict of time and importance of need, with me trying to resolve the conflict and get to the painting. In May 2010, I had now been working on this PhD nearly five years and I would say I had been painting but not significantly or dramatically with confidence, working in inks and acrylics, but then I had a major dream. I had by this time, using Hopson's transition consciously, come to ignore my anxiety over what I could or could not achieve and realized I would not give up. I simply made myself persevere and go into the studio as much as I could; this was difficult to balance while carrying out interviews for this PhD in the 'methodology of the conversation', my clinical practice and family demands and it became a very real struggle to allocate the time for writing and the time for painting.

**Dream 5** - I dream that I am out in the fields/wood and it is like the 1989 hurricane. There is an enormous storm going on around me and I realize I am watching something; I see this root, fighting with the storm that then untethers itself from the ground and this vast root/complex/spider-like thing starts moving.

#### **Interpretations:**

**Dream 5** - I wake in the morning and realize that this is a pretty good picture of the mood of the time' I had hit a storm, through personal family

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ill health and endless demands, but at the same time I could feel my attitude to painting beginning to dramatically shift. Despite the terrible conflicts that were going on, I felt I had got to the root of the complex and the root was up, it was moving. I started painting in oils, roots of trees that turned into landscapes. It was unbelievably difficult. I lost count of how many times I began again and it became a fight, with so many conflicting emotions that, again, I just chose to ignore. I kept going until something emerged, which was not what I intended: it was 'Turner-like'. At that moment I had hit another obstacle, which at the time I did not realize. I was missing the essence of what I was trying to do but I could not see it. I felt this painting, whilst 'moving' in trajectory was still not taking me beyond what I could remember I could have done, if that makes sense. I suppose what I am trying to say is that: I think if I had continued painting when I was young, I would have hit this stage of needing to go beyond this style of painting in order to get myself free from my difficulty with 'abstraction'.

In June 2011, Japan was hit by a tsunami of such terrible force. I kept seeing the image I had seen on television and internet, of this black wave. A friend of mine called me and we were talking about how this image would stay in our minds forever and she said "why don't you paint it". I did; then I started thinking about 'capturing forces'. I was aware that I was painting but I was not painting what I wanted to. The only thing I could see in this painting was 'the energy' or the force that felt significant,

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the rest was not what I wanted or liked, but that, of course, was not the point of the task at hand.

I felt stuck. I began, without any consciousness of what I was doing, photographing parts of the ink drawings; in hindsight, I was looking for a freer abstraction but I did not realize that at the time.

**Dream 6** - I am in the studio with my supervisor discussing the work that I have done so far. I say to her "Now that I am painting again, can you help me go outside what I already know?"

I relayed this dream to my supervisor who said that this 'was interesting' (I am paraphrasing) and she would come and visit my studio.

January 2012

Prior to my supervisor's visit:

**Dream 5** - I dreamt I was brushing my teeth with paint. The feeling in the dream was that this was completely normal.

#### **Interpretation:**

I was definitely feeling that painting was becoming part of my everyday life and routine.

## **4.5. 'Methodology of the Conversation' with my supervisor January 2012**

Entering the studio:

S: "I like the floor, there is a lot of wild energy in here."

C: "Do you think it would be a good idea if I start showing where I was when I first came into this PhD Research Project?"

S: "Yes, why don't we start there?"

C: "Ok, prior to my submitting my PhD proposal some five years ago I was working on some sculptural work – which had a working title of 'Burnt Offerings'; these are fire pieces that were surrendered by the fire that I had come across when out walking in a local park in the early hours of the morning. I had stood in front of the fire and seen all these objects forming shapes within the fire, like a bird, a woman's torso, a heart etc. I came back the next day and the fire had delivered them so I brought them back to the studio and began to work on the part of the object that the fire had damaged."

S: "This is interesting, I feel there is a lot going on, the idea of repair, that the wood is, of course, charcoal, which artists draw with, that they are of the earth."

C: "I felt at the time these pieces were the closest to my understanding of poiesis that I could get to. I could see the shapes forming in the fire before the fire surrendered them and there was a moment when I could see the objects that were to come."

#### 4. Self-analysis

We then moved onto the ink drawings that I had done at the beginning of this PhD when I had gone up to Scotland to work with the falconer.

S: "I think your work is about energy, so for example, these canvases don't have energy for me (they were a series of Rothko-style paintings which were a bit dead.) But this does work (looking at the bird in flight, ink drawing) but I also wonder what would happen if you were able to lose the representational. It seems to me that you need to disrupt yourself, surprise yourself. I am getting something is trapped."

C: "That is exactly how I feel. When I was thinking about your visit today, I was trying to see if I could locate where the obstruction was and I decided that the big painting best expresses where I am. (We then go and look at the big painting - this is where I am stuck between Rothko and Turner - that is, if you turn it one way, it looks like Turner; if you turn it the other, it looks like Rothko. I remember reading Virtue and him saying that when he met an obstruction that to copy brings about futility, why repeat what has already been done? Why bother?"

S: Well, I think this painting is really four paintings; you need to look where the energy is. I think the way through this is in the detail. If you look at all your photographs of your ink drawings, you seem to be photographing sections within the painting or drawing that have energy. I think you should cut this painting

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up, or get yourself some board and start framing where the painting is working. It might seem sacrilege to cut up a painting but I think you should. I think you also need to change from a landscape canvas to a square, your work might go smaller but at the moment I feel that you are constrained or trapped by representational art.”

C: “Yes, I think what I have done in this PhD at this stage or level has removed the obstruction to painting but I haven’t removed the obstruction to abstraction. I remember when I was at school, abstraction was the thing that I could do but was not to be encountered, if anything, to be got rid of. In fact, I can remember my art teacher telling me that, she didn’t want abstraction in her class, it wasn’t good art, what we needed was representational pictures. I think if I hadn’t stopped painting when I was doing my exams I would most probably always have hit this place that I am in now. My intellectual self knows, of course, this is rubbish but it’s obviously still there.”

S: “Yes it would have. Well it might be sacrilegious to take a knife to this big painting but it seems you could have four paintings within this canvas. It might be a good idea to work with the bit of the painting that has the energy in it, the detail. If you look at your screensaver on your computer you will see that you have just photographed a fragment of a painting, a detail.”

C: “I hadn’t realized that. I remember interviewing Daniel Sturgis and his comments on the work involved being an abstract

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artist; it really resonated with me, even though I would not obviously call myself an abstract artist yet.”

S: “Yes, he has curated a very good exhibition at Warwick Art Centre called ‘The Indiscipline of Painting’<sup>216</sup> which I went up to see and it was really lovely. Great title. I think what you need to do is to stay with the role of painting, look at the unexpected detail within the whole, surprise you, but immerse yourself in paint and painting instead of trying to make a picture.”

C: “Yes, I would like to move into painting in a different way. I think my main concern is really ‘capturing forces’. Showing a black painting of the tsunami. It’s not really what I want to be doing but I am and was preoccupied by the force.”

S: “Yes but (looking back at the ink drawings) it doesn’t have to be a literal thing, it could be the energy of the bird, just a detail that could convey that and I also think you should dispense with the landscape canvas. You need to go square.”

C: “So I need to go and buy a Stanley knife?”

S: “Yes that would be good.”

We then went through all the ink drawings to look at the detail within the whole.

S: “You seem to work well on paper and also when the painting is beneath you.”

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<sup>216</sup> “The Indiscipline of Painting”, Warwick Art Centre, last modified 2012, <http://www.warickartscentre.co.uk/events/visual-arts/the-indiscipline-of-painting>

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C: "It reminds me all that you are saying in the approach undertaken by John Virtue when he was working through his obstruction (went to get book which shows Virtue working in a field with canvas on the ground and his grid paintings, which he used to work on after he had destroyed all his previous work)."

S: "Aren't they fantastic, these are very earthy, whereas I see you work as lighter more 'up' than 'down'. I think you should give yourself a break for a while, work on paper and work on detail. Use the aspect of the detail in the photographs to make paintings from and make them square. You will need to create a space. So do you think you are ready now to let go of representational art?"

C: "Well I think I was beginning to move towards that in my sculpture work with the advent of the 'burnt offering pieces', even though there is a literalism, they were a movement towards a different way of working. So I would really like to overcome my obstruction to 'abstraction'; for me, it would be overcoming a pretty big obstacle and also take me into a world that I know nothing about. I also think I don't paint like a painter.

S: "Great, well I will come back at the end of February to see where you are."

After my supervisor left I went through about 50 photographs, 30 of them were, in fact, details photos, abstracts of, say, a bird's wing or just the

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energy conveyed in the movement of ink on paper. I then sifted through a few images and selected prints to work from to see if I could approach this second obstruction. I also realized that I had missed something in the interpretation of the dream, which I took to be the dissolving of the difficulty of painting; it was also about the storm, it is the energy, the energy involved in the act of painting.

At the end of this research project, I have done a number of small ink paintings, which show a new progression since the conversation with my supervisor and a 'calming down' of the 'energy' within the medium of paint and ink. These paintings are influenced primarily by the conversation with my supervisor and a number of things that I integrated into my approach to work. Firstly they are small in scale (my supervisor's suggestion to work with a smaller scale of paper or canvas); secondly, they are more abstract (my supervisor's suggestion to stop trying to make a painting, to just stay with the paint). I set this as my aim. Finally, the paintings are simply influenced by the constant 'yellow' that I have been witnessing in nature at this time of year (April 2012) since a move to the country a year ago. These paintings do express somewhere the direction of where I want to go and, to that end, I have achieved my aim even though this task of painting in abstraction is only at the beginning.

Defining my own methodology in difference to that of Milner/Virtue, I would say that, whilst I could locate myself in a 'middle ground' between the two approaches of Milner and Virtue, I did find my 'own' way. In

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conclusion, as to what processes began to be 'at play' in my own engagement with obstruction and the processes of trying to paint, it appeared that when I began, and through a large period of the process, I was very much in the arena of 'intentionality' and 'representation' in my work – a literalism.<sup>217</sup> This can be seen both in my early pieces of sculpture, i.e. it was my intention to repair the burnt pieces and in my paintings of the tsunami and the flying root picture where, it was my intention to paint the 'force of the wave' and the 'root of the tree'. I would argue it was when I adopted using a camera in the method of engagement with the painting process that it could be said I created an obstruction, a critical distance and 'an Other', in the sense that the camera brings to the work another set of 'eyes'. This process released me from a literalism of painting and intentionality and brought to the work a 'methodology of the conversation' or a dialectical encounter between the paint and myself. Paradox and 'negative capability' were at play, in that it was also when I stopped trying to make a painting, that the painting began to emerge and that I also now no longer 'know' what I am doing. I also found that through the 'methodology of the conversation', the encounter of 'radical possibility' had occurred with my supervisor. Indeed, it was my supervisor seeing my screensaver that triggered her 'understanding' and 'perception' of what I did not know I was trying to get to in my studio work, which was a move to abstraction. I could not 'see' this myself. Academically, this steps forward where Elkins stops, in that a 'tutor' acting as 'an other' does indeed bring forth new work and creates

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<sup>217</sup> Nigel Wentworth, *The Phenomenology of Painting*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10.

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'radical possibility' in studio practice. It is teaching through encounter and perception; that is, the tutor is 'teaching' the student or 'the other' to see. This could be seen as maieutic, but, in fact, it is much more than that, because whilst the tutor did indeed help bring forth new work, it could be argued that without my supervisor's 'sight' this type of baby (artwork) would not have come into being; her perception also created the work. In a sense, you could also say she 'taught me to see my work differently'. So, I believe it is far more than Elkins is saying; it is what Richard Kearney is saying – that 'the Other' holds 'radical possibility' for creative processes and it is within the encounter of 'the Other' that this occurs. In this thesis and studio practice this 'other' has been encountered in a 'methodology of the conversation.' In assessing what I did to release me from my obstruction, I worked through different emotional states, held my nerve, I analyzed my dreams and I used symbols, even though I do not interpret them, other than to take myself forward and on in the journey. I did this because these two aspects of analytical life, as far as I am concerned, are part of my nature and, whilst I personally do not make the connection as 'art therapy', they do work in a way of containing psychic processes for me. In the third stage of my 'trying to paint', I also take the image of the flying root of the tree from the dream and try to paint it. I also take the image of the ladder thrown up at the transfer meeting. Is this art therapy? I do not think so; I am not interpreting the image but I am using the image that comes into my mind to take forward the work on obstruction to painting. I do see this as an 'individuating task' and though the image does serve something psychological and emotional in me, it is

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not my central aim to deal with my psychological state but to engage with the obstruction to painting. The fact that it may well symbolize the dissolution of a complex around painting and imply a methodology is significant for this research project, but I have no way of proving this, nor did I feel 'in therapy' with myself. My gaze was turned outwards to the task in hand; therefore, in a sense, you could say that the psychological insight was in service of the task of 'painting' which in turn fulfilled an 'individuation' task but this is not therapeutic. I think that the key element in being released from my obstruction to paint, was going to Scotland and 'finding' another conversation; other important elements included immersing myself in the process and beginning to fall 'in love' with my subject, choosing a medium that was accessible to me and waking early to overcome self-consciousness in the process. There was an element of Bachelard's paradox in the whole process in the fact that, for as long as I can remember, I have wanted to do what I did in Scotland; that is go out and work with the birds of prey. I think and feel the approach that I have adopted mirrors well the person that I have become, in that I do straddle the two worlds of artistic practice and psychological practice. I also feel that the reason my analysis failed to release my obstruction to paint is that I needed to leave analysis and enter into a more art-based studio world to do this. I see this purely as a movement to individuation and not as a failure of achievement in analysis. This, of course, is not to deny the presence of failure in the process. You could hypothesize that the conversation I was having did not facilitate this change, but you could equally hypothesize I was looking for a different

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conversation. I think this is valid, because I have found that the conversation I needed to have in studio practice was with a fellow artist, because it was my supervisor's perception of my work that enabled me to 'see' opportunities in studio practice that I could not see for myself. Indeed, with all the influences in this research project, you could say that I have adopted, at times, the perceptions of those analysts, philosophers and artists that speak to my own search to deepen my understandings of what is taking place in creative encounter. This 'call' from me to 'the Others' has enabled 'new understandings' and 'new work' to come into being. Fundamentally, I differ from Milner in that I do not feel 'falling in love with your medium' is a form of idealization, nor do I seek to analyze in depth my own symbol (the bird of prey); however, as the psychoanalyst, Kenneth Wright, expresses in his paper 'Deep Calling unto Deep', I do feel that the more an artist can manipulate his medium, the more of himself he realizes in his work.<sup>218</sup> The aim to dissolve the obstacle of not being able to paint in abstraction is 'on-going' and not resolved.

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<sup>218</sup> Kenneth Wright "Deep Calling unto Deep: Artistic Creativity and the Maternal Object", *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 14, no.4. (June, 1998) 453-467.

## **The Trajectory of Individuation as a Painter and the Tenets of Approach I adopted to overcome Obstruction to Painting**

### **Influences – Inspirations – Art Actions**

- **Engaging with the concept of poiesis - Cox.**
- **Seeing Cornelia Parkers' 'Exploding Shed'.**
- **Engaging with the concept of 'radical possibility - Kearney.**
- **The idea that we seek relationship – Fairbairn.**
- **Engaging with the concept of 'knowledge to love' and 'love to knowledge' - Leonardo Da Vinci and John Virtue**
- **Seeking a new conversation and emersion in my chosen subject by going to Scotland to work with a falconer - Andy Hughes.**
- **Implementing in studio practice some of the 'tenets of approach' taken from Virtue's methodology which were: there is no methodology; 'hold your nerve'; 'first of all you have to fall in love'; 'persevere'; 'everything is hard won' - Virtue.**
- **Adopting Hopson's approach to transition to help 'hold my nerve'.**
- **Photographing work in 'fragments' to seek abstraction and 'energy' in painting.**
- **Being aware that I had to find my own 'individuating' way in approaching my obstruction to paint – Jung.**
- **Implementing into 'tenets of approach' to obstruction dream analysis - Jung.**
- **Applying and implementing 'early rising', an approach gleaned from clinical psychotherapy work, to overcome psychological defences – Self.**
- **Choosing a medium I found accessible - Ink.**
- **Moving away from 'landscape' canvases to seek abstraction in painting.**
- **Using a 'methodology of the conversation' in studio practice to enable a new 'tenet of approach' to obstruction to be facilitated.**

## Chapter 5 : Analysis of Interviews

### 5.1 Tutors

In analyzing the relationship between tutor and student, it was noticeable how the inextricable link between the failures and difficulties that the tutors had in their own experiences of art college life fed into their overriding concerns about the obstacles that their students were facing. The formulation of the 'tenets of approach' to both their own obstructions and those that they encountered in their students came under two broad umbrellas. The first was pastoral care, empathy, emotional support self-esteem issues, inferiority complexes etc.; the second was guidance and approach to art practice. Tutors having themselves worked through various emotions, failures, needs in their life as students, all felt helped by past experiences in art colleges or their own studio practices, in the way they subsequently dealt with incidents of student isolation or confusion. This was contrasted to what I would call 'the tenets of approach needed', which came from what sort of 'glasses' the tutors were adopting; for example, how the nature of the obstructions encountered in art college were intrinsic to being there, the necessity to see the role of art vocationally and the necessity of understanding art in relationship to the commercial world and its demands and expectations.

**"Thinking back to my own experience as an art student and also amplifying the concerns of the students that I teach, there are two broad, or two places where obstacles might occur when thinking about what 'stops' or what 'strikes' a**

**creative practice. One would be a very practical thing, like time or other influences one has wrapping around one's life which can deter you from making work and one of the most important things an art institution can do is throughout the course of the degree, or with post graduates, is to say, or make students realize that everything is in a sense about making art. As in truth there is no need to and there is no demand for it. It is a personal vocation, it's not really a career, it's a vocational profession. I suppose one of the other things, or one of the big differences, I see is there was very little commercial art world in the past, so one didn't really think one was ever going to sell anything, or, if one did think one was going to be in that sort of position, it would be much later in one's career that one would do that, so perhaps one of the things that I think it is different now, with the explosion of the art world in the last few years, is now there is an expectation; expectations are high and I suppose that's one of the things one has to counter, one has to think about and to prepare people for that might happen, but it also might not happen."**<sup>219</sup>

The general over-riding concern, interest and understanding of student life on the whole were in marked contrast to student experience. The obstacles that the tutor experienced both in their own practices and as tutors were well articulated through the very nature of the demand of being tutors and the lived experience of being artists. The speaking about

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<sup>219</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

obstacles, both personal and in teaching practice, came under three headings: Obstacles to Self, Practical Obstacles and Teaching Obstacles, which incorporated 'approaches' to teaching practice.

Obstacles to Self. **Confidence:** "Thinking about this notion of obstacles, there are all sorts of obstacles, the first that comes to mind that of confidence; confidence being an obstacle and that is something that I observe and recognize with my students."<sup>220</sup>  
**Inferiority complexes:** "I still felt a lack of the intellectualization of art and that was a big obstacle and it is still a problem for me now."<sup>221</sup> **Commitment to Practice, Existential Concerns:** "Why am I doing this if mortality is so important? If death is surrounding you, then to do anything other than death, then that's what you are thinking about death and mortality - your own mortality - that's what stopped me."<sup>222</sup> **Loneliness:** "Not just talking about art practice, but it is the sense of loneliness and not being connected."<sup>223</sup> **Feasibility in Practice, Repetition in Art Practice:** "Well the chances are that most art has been made already, so you have a feeling of 'What can you contribute which is a celebration of past known things?' Although past known things may be grand and good, they might not be original or have an element of originality in them and that is a really big problem."<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November 10, 2011.

<sup>221</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November 10, 2011.

<sup>222</sup> Edwina Fitzpatrick interview by author, London, UK, July 22, 2010.

<sup>223</sup> Edwina Fitzpatrick interview by author, London, UK, July 22, 2010.

<sup>224</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

Practical Obstacles. **Life Events, Death etc.: "My parents died and seven people around me."**<sup>225</sup> **Time, Division of Practice between Studio Practice and Teaching Practice and the Practical Difficulties with Money: "What I remember very quickly is being extremely broke and moving from Brighton to London and not having any infrastructure, having to make connections and links and things, and this is something I do pass on because it's funny."**<sup>226</sup>

**Teaching Obstacles**, which incorporated developing teaching concerns and approaches. Again, what was interesting to me as the interviewer was the 'guidance through experience' approach that was generally taken by tutors and the overriding stress on a need for a consciousness of obstructions and the working through difficulties in studio practice. The general ethos is that the obstruction is intrinsic to studio practice and, as such, this had to be known consciously. Conveying understanding of issues was a challenge, so ideas around making, reflection and play were coupled with the need for critical reflection and how this can be an obstruction in student life. There was a general feeling that through the maturity of 'artistic life' the nature of obstructions changes, so much so that some tutors were aware of creating their own obstacles; this approach is, of course, the same as the artist, John Virtue, adopted. Ideas around the boundaries of art practice and the mode of art making, which seemed to be on-going challenges, related to the discovery of what works in a practice and how the resolution of conflict occurs. The

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<sup>225</sup> Edwina Fitzpatrick interview by author, London, UK, July 22, 2010.

<sup>226</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November 10, 2011.

principles of communication and responsibility, both in the tutors' own practice and that encountered in student life, seemed of paramount importance, as was the instilling of a growing confidence that came about through experience and was also sought to be instilled in students within their practice with tutorial support. **"I think that the main obstacle that I remember lasted about a year and, thinking back to post-graduate work at the Academy Schools, is unusual as it's a three-year course and there were a whole lot of issues that I found problematic, which were to do with content and to do with language, and these are very normal things you have to deal with, and I felt there was inadequate help and tutorial support, particularly my academic tutor who shall remain nameless. I said to her that I need to talk about ideas and she said that she couldn't help me with ideas; ideas were my department that I had to look after. She couldn't discuss them; she could only talk about formal things. So when I think back to that, the first thing I think is that obstruction is a fairly normal process and what happens in art colleges is that you are constantly asked to reflect upon and confront and reassess everything that you have known. I think the obstacle is intrinsic to the process, I think it is and I think I know that and have experienced that as an art student."**<sup>227</sup>

The importance of 'the other' in conversation, which by the presence of the other creates a facilitating environment of creativity was discussed, as was the creative process being a 'conversation' which could be stopped by

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<sup>227</sup> Geraint Evans interview by author, London, UK, June 23, 2010.

pragmatic problems, which affect dynamics of teaching practice. **“So there is a methodology there, but I don’t think it is particularly strict and formalized. So there is a methodology and it may be more than possible to work it out, but I think the encouragement to postgraduate students is that methodology should be much more stated, formalized and transparent. There are a whole set of things that you do, asking students to go and do something else, even the idea of going to have a pizza and a beer and watching a film; and you were talking about John Virtue before we started about making life difficult for himself, restriction, parameters on his practice. It sort of chimed with me when you said he would work in black and white. It is something that I found myself saying to students quite often. My specialization is in painting, painters have huge problems between transcribing, translating the work or the initial ideas that might have manifested themselves in drawings, to very simple things that you have to reduce the complexities – the issues that paintings throws up, for example using ink on paper – by taking the pressure off yourself.”**<sup>228</sup> The idea of the teacher as ‘the Other’ who brings experience and historical access to areas of unknown art practice was seen as an essential part of teaching practice. **“I suppose experience is what one of the things an artist is teaching in art school. As an artist bringing other artists in to teach experience as well, experience is one of the things you are interested in, showing students that they may have very different ideas than you do, be a different generation to who**

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<sup>228</sup> Geraint Evans interview by author, London, UK, June 23, 2010.

**you are and have different terms of references than you do, but I think it is very important as a person in a position of teaching art students to show the things that have happened in the past. Inform them in the painting department of paintings recent history, particularly painting history from the 60's onwards so they feel part of a live debate and dialogue."**<sup>229</sup> Tutors spoke also of the facilitating ability of being able to take students outside areas of comfort or actively stop repetition compulsion in practice, by challenging ideas and the implicit cultural agreements on which they based their practice.

**The methodologies employed varied from teacher to teacher but can be summed up as follows:**

- **Teaching through one's own experience of being an artist.**
- **Conveying artistic knowledge that references the past.**
- **Holding the mirror up to a students practice.**
- **The implementation of 'tough love'.**
- **Learning by 'discovery' not research. I took this meaning to be the difference of 'intention', i.e. research = "I go to find", whereas for discovery the emphasis is more, 'it' finds me.**
- **Creating opportunities out of obstacles - for example, taking pressure off a student, changing the medium a student is working with, thinking into student practice.**
- **Conveying that the art object is not finished.**
- **Teaching students to open up areas of communication at peer group level.**
- **Responsibility and commitment to the art object.**
- **Encouragement and development of creative processes.**

The PGCE was seen as a reflective and helpful tool in the development of teaching practice and the development of resources for student communication and support, as was the tutor's own developing methodologies from lived experience or other study. **"I am currently**

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<sup>229</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

**doing a PGCE Cert; actually undertaking the PG cert and becoming a student again is getting me to think very much what it is like to be on the receiving end of information and how one absorbs information and what do you actually understand. The course is really affecting my approach. Definitely wanting to find different avenues for communicating about subjects or information; it's just come really apparent to me that ideas and information doesn't really get absorbed."** <sup>230</sup>

When engaging with the question around psychoanalysis and art practice four distinct approaches were taken. The first was 'no comment', which I took to be that this was not a subject that the tutor was engaged with. The second was around education and the benefits of psychoanalysis for teaching practice and student life where, if possible, it should be taught in art colleges, **"I think it's a major role and I think one of its heritages is, along with philosophy, that now it is regarded as normal territory for the artist, particularly graduate students; it's a rich territory to kind of inspire the practice. I would really like to bring in a psychologist and talk to the students in a completely different way about art, if we had the money. I have done it with writers so far this year, but I think it would be fantastic."**<sup>231</sup> There was also an apprehension to the complexity of the territory of psychoanalytic practices and present day caution towards the emotional vulnerability of student life and what is said to students about emotional

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<sup>230</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November 10, 2011.

<sup>231</sup> Edwina Fitzpatrick interview by author, London, UK, July 22, 2010.

problems. In addition, there was a feeling that the psychological arena has become specialized, so reducing or creating a wariness of approach in teaching. **“Interesting one, historically in academia psychoanalysis was pushed to one side, it wasn’t really present. Then, I think in the 70’s, they got a bit worried and they got a bit more ‘touchy feely’ and in bed with some psychoanalytical approaches to teaching and then I think now they are not sure where they are.”**<sup>232</sup> Finally, what I felt was a very interesting observation into psychoanalysis and its role, if any, in college life. The observation was that one could be aware of the therapeutic role of making art and its benefits, whilst also being aware of the problematic outcome of applying psychoanalytic understandings and principles to art making. These ideas were then contrasted with the view that a recent exhibition from the Maudesley’s Collection, ‘Patient Art’, together with ‘Established Artists Art’, dissolved false divisions and demonstrated that it does not necessarily matter, because the only thing that matters is what is seen. **“This is a big question, isn’t it to do with art and therapy. I suppose and though I completely recognize the therapeutic method of making, the idea of psychoanalyzing someone through his or her making seems to me quite problematic at times and I think it’s much more interesting. Two things are interesting; one is looking at objects that have been made as part of the culture that they come from and, of course, you might use psychoanalytical or anthropological understandings to see that on a broader cultural level and an individual level. One of the most interesting exhibitions that I**

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<sup>232</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November 10, 2011.

**looked at recently is one that John Thompson curated at Whitechapel – an artist curated project – where he was using a lot of work from the Maudesley’s<sup>233</sup> Collection and a lot of work by established artists and making the point that there is no difference. We look at these things together in a sense that things to do with mental health and art in the same way; we all have special needs at special times so looking is important”.**<sup>234</sup> This opens a challenge to the philosopher Alain Badiou’s position; in his criticism of psychoanalysis using art ‘for its services’ he posits another way of ‘thinking’ about psychoanalysis and its relationship to art practice.<sup>235</sup>

In response to James Elkins statement “that art cannot be taught”<sup>236</sup> there was one definite ‘yes’ to the idea that art could be taught and a visible hunger for knowledge about art practice, **“I think I am much more of the position that, as in any creative discipline, art can be taught and there is a hunger for people to understand art, not only in art colleges. You have just to go around galleries to see the popularization of contemporary art and I think, through knowledge and understanding and the looking at things, that people get more into it.”**<sup>237</sup> One tutor challenged Elkin’s idea that art has not gone beyond Bauhaus and said: **“it seems strange that Elkins**

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<sup>233</sup> John Thompson, *Outsider Artists "Inner worlds outside"*, Whitechapel Gallery, April 25, 2006. Last modified April 25, 2006, <http://www.whitechapelgalleryorg/exhibitions/inner-worlds-outside>

<sup>234</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

<sup>235</sup> Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, (Stamford University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>236</sup> James Elkins, *Why Art Cannot be Taught* (University of Illinois Press, 2001), 39.

<sup>237</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

**stops at Bauhaus. I think the simplest way to talk about it is to look at the way we talk to MA applicants; they are the people that make decisions on their area of interest, their projects, they set agendas and the college and its workshops and tutors and their peers and this is the most important aspect of this, with their immediate colleagues, other things that will help challenge and critique and support their own investigation and, in a sense, teaching depends on this. Teaching means encouraging self-awareness to stretch themselves, to reassess what they do, then that probably can be taught, it probably works when it is not too didactic.**<sup>238</sup>

Whilst there may be a feeling that teaching thrives best when it is not too didactic, 'teaching' was often seen under the headings of guidance or coaching, support etc. **"I think art practitioners are coaches. We are like the guys on the bicycles with the runners peddling along; you go on the journey with them but you can't teach them. You can't teach creativity because everyone has their own way of negotiating, particularly the points where they are stopped and what stops them is so unique, so individual. This notion that you can apply a formula to delivering outcome is wrong; it's like what I was talking about with art practice – a production-line mentality. I can't apply that to my practice, so why would I adopt it for my**

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<sup>238</sup> Geraint Evans interview by author, London, UK, June 23, 2010.

**teaching?”<sup>239</sup> What Elkin’s has not written about and is relevant to art practice and teaching today in art schools, is the role or awareness and influence of a psychoanalytical approach to encountering emotions; consequently, a psychoanalytical or analytical engagement with concepts such as ‘isolation’ is a tool to develop a capacity within art practice. **“In 2000, I went to meet Louise Bourgeois and I went to one of her salons and I showed her my drawings and she asked me about my teaching, and she said, as she was quite confrontational as she was, “Why do you teach? How do you teach?” She was obviously being quite provocative – the idea of teaching art and I explained a couple of projects I had been doing with some foundation students and one of the projects title was ‘Isolation and Claustrophobia’. So the foundation I have taught for a number of years is a bit of a joke with the other tutors, what goes on in that class is quite strange because my practice is informed from a deeply psychoanalytical base. The projects I teach and my approach to teaching, is always from that angle so that is my area of interest.”<sup>240</sup>****

The concept of poiesis was again, as with the students, the most difficult to engage with because of its meaning and its use in art practice. There was a feeling there was a difficulty with the concept as a point of originality, as so many positions and ideas already exist; however, there was consensus that things could be ‘new’ to you, in the ways that you

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<sup>239</sup> Edwina Fitzpatrick interview by author, London, UK, July 22, 2010.

<sup>240</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November 10, 2011.

look at an object or 'new to you', in terms of form. The idea of new, as in subject, was thought of as exciting but difficult to discover. **"I think the idea of calling into existence that which is not there before sounds to me like an act of creation – you have created something that does not exist. The difficulty of that as a concept is that everything, or so many ideas or so many positions, exist already; that really we are rearranging things with positions, ideas, history that have already existed, but we can do that in new ways which creates a new position. So, although I think the idea of something original is very difficult, I think originality can happen through an individual looking in a particular way, whether that be through materials, art history or what have you, so that would create a new position."**<sup>241</sup> Again, the concept of both 'metamorphosis' and a concept of 'lostness' were favoured over the concept of poiesis; for example, one tutor spoke of how intrinsic obstruction was to creating the new and, for him, that was a definite experience but he had to work through various stages to bring forth new work: **"Well, I think this relationship between obstruction and creating the new – there is a relationship, there is definitely a relationship and I guess it gets you wondering what happens in that first moment of obstruction, what was there before and what happens during?"**<sup>242</sup> In the methodology of art practice, this was very similar to John Virtue's ideas around perseverance, changing his medium, holding one's nerve etc. were present in 'the methodology of the conversation': **"to change the scale**

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<sup>241</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London UK, September 28, 2010.

<sup>242</sup> Geraint Evans interview by author, London, UK, June 23, 2010.

**and the medium – not a lot - to make I think what happened is that I carried on making painting but very slowly and part of that was a loss of belief in what I was doing and a dissatisfaction and it was probably a lack of confidence. But during that period things were occurring that I would like to do, not outstandingly different to things that I was doing before – enough of a difference. I think in the end it was a pragmatic thing, which I was heading towards unlocking, to be able to ‘act’ to make new work. I think in the end it is because I applied for internal research funding from WSA and got some money and went out and brought some materials and something as simple as that was ‘right now I can make stuff’ that was probably the catalyst for active change.”**<sup>243</sup> Another tutor favoured the experience of ‘lostness’ and ‘not knowing’ over poiesis as a necessity for creativity. The ‘tenet of approach’ that art was not made within ‘production lines’ and this state of ‘lostness’ was one that needed to be consciously engaged with; whereas poiesis was not a concept that was either thought about or something that would be engaged with **“I think the notion of ‘lostness’ very important. It is really a very central aspect of creativity, because, again, its anti-production line and gaining methodology and it’s got a humility to it because it’s ‘I don’t know where I am going’. I think what it does – unless you are lost, how can you be creative. I don’t call it poiesis; I call it ‘lostness’.**<sup>244</sup> There was reference also to Louise Bourgeois using an ability to tap into her own primitive unconscious to bring forth unknown

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<sup>243</sup> Geraint Evans interview by author, London, UK, June 23, 2010.

<sup>244</sup> Edwina Fitzpatrick interview by author, London, UK, July 22, 2010.

objects into the world, which did indeed seem to test the idea that both subject and form could be challenged by poiesis; however, in whatever way poiesis was engaged, the general feeling given was that it was not a concept that was really thought about or actively used in tutors' art practice today.

## 5.2 Established Artists

When analyzing established artists, the first noticeable fact is the commonality of experience when young. The majority of established artists had positive, encouraging, supportive and creative teaching experiences at art colleges. The 'tenet of approach' to becoming an artist was very much centred on a process of 'individuation' with the encounter either inspiring, supporting or illuminating teaching. This was the experience of three of the artists interviewed as it played a direct and inspiring role in their lives. ***"I had great teachers at school; I wasn't particularly academic at school, but the people who mentored me the most were two great art teachers, husband and wife, and I was very interested in English literature as well. It appealed to me because it was about freedom and I didn't know about all the orthodoxies in art, as there is in any other subject, but I felt it was a free space that you could reinvent yourself."***<sup>245</sup>; another artist remarks: ***"I found myself the first day, and I felt myself at home; brilliant people explaining brilliant things and the answers of the***

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<sup>245</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

**art world began and mysteries were unlocked in Lowestoft.**<sup>246</sup> **"I think, in the first instance, it was the classic experience of having a really quite inspired art teacher at secondary school; so this guy, Bruce Rennie, fetched up as the art teacher and he was extremely extravagant, had a camp manner and highly theatrical, passionate and utterly shameless in his way of conducting his life, which at that stage was utterly radical and hilarious to absolutely everyone, including myself, as he just erupted onto the scene and didn't seem to care in some way. I think he recognized I had some sort of agility, let's call it agility, for drawing what have you and he insisted that I take it seriously, invested a great deal of time and anger obliging that"**<sup>247</sup>. The fourth artist possessed an innate sense of 'knowing' that to be an artist was his chosen identity: **"I don't think that I ever thought of anything else. I always used to draw and paint."**<sup>248</sup>. The retrospective view taken by the established artists enabled me to get a glimpse of the 'individuating' journey that artists undertook and their various 'tenets of approach', which encouraged development to the contrasting 'obstacles' and needed to be worked through in the life of an artist. I would say these initial positive encounters of supportive teaching moulded the way they all dealt with the more difficult encounters of Art College. The established artists did not express any enmity towards teachers but had a more pragmatic approach to obstacles. **"There were good tutors all around. I was in Iris Murdoch's tutor group, she was pretty wonderful and introduced**

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<sup>246</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, London, UK, November 19, 2009.

<sup>247</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>248</sup> Howard Rogers interview by author, London, UK, January 13, 2011.

***us to quite a lot of philosophical ideas; she was absolutely wonderful and the fact that she was clearly brilliant and famous and she took you seriously, that was a gift – another great gift.***<sup>249</sup>

In breaking down the statements into various categories, firstly, obstructions to self, across the board these can be seen as mainly issues of self-confidence: ***“Talking about obstacles encountered – starting off, I think self-confidence played quite a large part, which is where I think the notion of agility is important, I think I mentioned it before, because I was quite agile. I can draw all right and I have a good eye to know which way up things go and all the rest of it, so that was terribly helpful. I do remember for a long time being nonplussed.”***<sup>250</sup> Self-belief, self-doubt, the pretence when young of trying to be an artist, conservatism or grandiose ambition that was not anchored in reality, were spoken of by many of the established artists: ***“As a young student, the main obstacles that I encountered were inherently with myself to begin with, my lack of belief, confidence, my conservatism through lack of knowledge. My ambitions were lunacies, very small, very limited, because I wasn’t aware of the potential that I had or what could be achieved and it took many years through art college and beyond to slowly incrementally build up ambition.”***<sup>251</sup> Lack of comprehension as to the role of an artist, lack of energy or ego to promote the artistic self to the world were spoken of, as was the idea of being an artist driven by

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<sup>249</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>250</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>251</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

obsessions: ***"One of the obstacles has been a sort of lack of energy when it comes to that necessary component that the successful execution of artistic life - which is to do with all the stuff that surrounds the making process – the hustling, the publicity, the taking the photographs, the writing of the stuff and the photographs I have always found enervating. You do it, but I do find it difficult; that was an obstacle, the diaspora of stuff that has to go round or beside the 'act of making'. The other thing I think is, because I am aware that you can or we all have something inside us verging on the obsession, obsessional really and one can tap into that fairly adroitly – one can learn to tap into that."***<sup>252</sup> and ***"They are the same obstacles that I encounter now, massive sense of importance of what you are doing with a complete lack of reference as to why you will be doing that. I suppose, essentially with massive self-doubts based on an absolute belief of being able to do it, so lots of paradoxes really."***<sup>253</sup> Another factor was the need for single-mindedness and the subsequent lack of this quality that eliminates other concerns in life. ***"I am aware if you are prepared single-mindedly to push family and friends out of reach, walk in that sort of way, I have never been at all good at that. To say no, to make time, is really difficult. I have been told it's a failing many times and I can recognize it. I couldn't change, nor do I think I want to change, but from the point of view of being a successful artist then you do need to have that single-mindedness,***

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<sup>252</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>253</sup> Howard Rogers interview by author, London, UK, January 13, 2011.

***and I don't think that I have. I don't have it in abundance that is for sure."***<sup>254</sup> ***"Also art students go through a mini sort of nervous breakdown while they are at art schools, because I have taught in art schools for fifteen years, so I have noticed it, they don't realize that you have to draw on yourself and you have to be self-disciplined and self-focused, if you don't do it nobody will do it for you."***<sup>255</sup>

The quest for individuation through obstacles encountered in the art world was very noticeable in this artist: ***"I tell you what the biggest obstacle is, it is the class system within the art world. I am a technician and it has taken people a long time to realize that a technician can be a thinker and a creative; it has taken me many years. It started at RCA when I went to a foundry course alongside a sculpture course with the bright young things and it was very trendy. They became YBA, bright, intelligent and, from my point of view, slightly indulged students and I was working effectively as the coalman next door; and to have a class system set out for me didn't do my confidence any good. To be at the wrong place at the right time, it was not good, but at the same time brilliant because I sort of developed and grew basically to feel out of my time. To deal with the lack of confidence and to deal with the insecurity based on that experience, took a long time, to not be tempted to join that world and try and talk about language has been very difficult. To hone my own style, skill, aesthetic, school***

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<sup>254</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>255</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

***of ideas has been very difficult because mostly it has been about me qualifying myself in the context of feeling or being a second rate citizen; the effect, the British class system, has been the major obstacle in my own self-development and the development of my career as well as my geography.***<sup>256</sup>

Contrasting this with the positive side of 'learning to be an artist', all of the established artists were conscious of their natural ability or agility and spoke about the paradox of 'not knowing' to that of 'knowing' that they possessed something that was serious. This slow building of ambition was very much nurtured by the witnessing of tutors, the necessity of being taken and taking seriously their art and the working through of different levels of maturity; the realization of doing something important whilst, more crucially, finding their own way. The long term idea of the making of art becoming harder as one gets older was also expressed and the necessity of an 'empty creative space' to allow 'new things' to occur was touched on. ***"Well I think myself the biggest obstacle and I think the older I get it's not necessarily easier to make work. I think I found it easier twenty years ago and I think now I have got so many holes that I have dug all over the place; it's like a very messy football field with craters half dug and I am going to hit the water table soon and it's all going to link up. I think perhaps I dig too many holes, that's my problem. But the avoided object – somehow there is always that and that seems to be the overriding***

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<sup>256</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

***idea. Sometimes in the writing of empty space, Susan Sontag writes about that, people who meditate trying to create an empty space, but somehow as you get older it's harder and harder to create that empty space because you have created so many pathways in your brain that somehow the empty unexcavated bit is hard to find.***<sup>257</sup>

At the initial outset of these interviews I noticed a marked contrast between the present day experience of students in art college and the statements from the established artists about their own encounters with tutors in the art colleges they attended, when young. Of course, this begs the question 'has something been lost in teaching today?' It is an obvious conclusion that the world has changed and our expectations and commitments alter the experience for students attending art colleges today. Yet, I feel this is possibly an over-simplification and this area of 'discontent' coming from students within art colleges needs further analysis. By their very statements, all of the established artists acknowledge the idea that 'the other' is intrinsic to both the creative process and to 'possibility' and 'calling' the new through their relationships to their tutors who created facilitating environments and essential conversations for them. I will discuss the implication of this finding, in more depth, in the conclusion.

***"I think it affects (talking here of a methodology of the conversation) in so far as it works by affirmation of ideas; and the***

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<sup>257</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

**received view is that one is either informed of new things one didn't know but also the pattern is confirmed in one's mind through those conversations."** <sup>258</sup> Here, we see the conscious acknowledgement of the importance of the 'methodology of the conversation': **"Oh huge, I think conversations not about art have a huge place. I realize that a lot of my art is quite oral and I am aware that very often I feel inspired during a conversation; it might be the search for the mermaid or it might be talking to someone who has nothing to do with my line of art. So, if somebody who knows how to melt lead and draw in wire, I might find myself talking to someone about metallurgy or geology, the properties of materials really; not only that, but chance encounters and conversations you have with someone who might be a tree surgeon. I find myself far more stimulated in a conversation than I would ever have been in a studio; I am not a very studio orientated artist."**<sup>259</sup>

The necessity of learning self-discipline and self-focus was a 'given' for these artists. With the established artists there was less focus on the practical but more coming to know or understand their mediums which led to a validation of the self in the process. **"I have grown to understand that there is, this might sound a bit pseudo-ish but please forgive me, there is a sort of syntax. Every material has an appropriate syntax, a sort of grammar and we were all brought up with the**

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<sup>258</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

<sup>259</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

***notion that somehow materials were dumb and somehow we imposed determination, will or vision on them and turned them into that vision by some means or another – by hacking away or building them up so that they were all in the service of the goal of that idea. Now, in fact, I think that is wrong-headed and I grew to understand that it doesn't work that way. There is a sort of insight which occurs when the materials are in your hand that cannot and could have been vouchsafed prior to that act of manipulation.***<sup>260</sup> Another artist talked about the engagement with ideas conceptually: ***"Do you know Duchamp's notion of imframince? It is very wonderful, it is the difference between something crumpled and something ironed. It's just this slippage between one state and another and that's very much my territory. "Is it Liminality?" (My question.) "Yes it is. I try not to be too defined, what it is I am trying to achieve, because I don't really know what I am trying to achieve. But I always try to keep things out of focus for myself."***<sup>261</sup>

The challenges relating to college life related to their own studio work, individuating quests and the demands of expression; hence, the validation of the technician over that of the academic, the class system that operates within art colleges and a sense of one's own importance and individuality against the norm. The emotional semi-breakdown that arises from the struggle to express 'non-received ideas' and realization that 'art' is about the self can strictly be seen as a challenge to the self, a call to

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<sup>260</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>261</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

## 5. Analysis of Interviews

individuation, that derives from the 'obstacle' of being at art college, through the necessity to produce and articulate work. As one of the tutors remarked, the very act of being at Art College creates obstruction and what the artist does with it varies. General feelings of being at the wrong college at the wrong time in the wrong town were expressed but, again, did not come across as major failures, more as difficult encounters that were passed over: **"I went to Manchester as a way of moving out of home and, at that point, to get out of London. I didn't like Manchester; I spent three years at Manchester really sort of not liking it, just existing, in a serious way under an existential cloud. I was the grumpy person at the end of the bar. And I painted, and at the end, I stopped painting, but by the end I had actually got into Chelsea so graduated by some massive fluke. And I completely, at the end of my time at Manchester, had changed my work and they didn't like it, and I ended up getting a 2/2 but I had already gotten into Chelsea so I didn't care."**<sup>262</sup>

There were four distinct approaches in relation to the question about whether there had been a change in their relationship to obstructions to the advancement of their practices. The first expressed learning from experience and working through of anxiety through perseverance, coupled with resisting outside influences. The second interviewee denoted a growing confidence in the self, so much so there was a conscious awareness that he had created a 'harsh' space, (my emphasis), which was seen as a necessity of the creative process in creating a facilitating

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<sup>262</sup> Howard Rogers interview by author, London, UK, January 13, 2011.

environment: ***"You know that you need the grit in the oyster in order to create the pearl and so, for example, I purposely, much to the annoyance of people who work here, don't make a nice studio for myself. So people have to suffer it, my studio is a sewer. It's the lowest of the lowest; it's a hard place. It's dirty, its dusty, its dark but out of that I find that it feeds my creative spark. I don't want it to be too comfortable that would kill my art."***<sup>263</sup>

The conscious acknowledgment of the necessity for people to be around in studio space for the mutual exchange of ideas and the creation of a growing self-confidence in both parties was spoken about as a necessary 'tenet' of a particular studio practice. ***"I do believe there is a social dimension to my practice, which is what this is and I feel passionate about it. So that sort of development, which has come out of necessity, has become a philosophy. So the idea that I needed to share my studio and was forced to share work through the process of my bronze casting, so I needed help, so I had to deal, had to share, or show how to do. So to begin with, it was mediated by other people who were in the world of education, but it has slowly developed in my social world in two spheres. I have a hierarchy of people that come in from the established professional reputation base, as it were from London, who come in and work alongside me or I work with them. Then I have the student world that comes in and assists and helps and takes studio space and learns. So I have these two worlds that I am a***

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<sup>263</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

***part of and that I am in the middle of and then there are the established artists who are on the journey with me and that is very important and each of those has affected my dealing with obstacles.***"<sup>264</sup>

Thirdly, the acknowledgement of the developing maturity of the artist in his understanding of the innate nature and capacity of materials that cannot be known before the process of making and the realizations that one's own sensibility has become embodied in the object; the necessity of learning from one's peers. An idea that art is particular and for the artist it is not about looking back, even though one may go full circle and visit an original idea from years ago. There is a confidence to work through the 'unknown', to hold that tension of 'not knowing' and to find a place to dig for the object, that art is a process of finding the place to dig.

The consciousness of the necessity of 'the conversation' was seen as intrinsically important to creative processes in all cases bar one: ***"So really conversations are very important. The more successful you become as an artist, it's very hard to have those conversations, those kinds of conversations with your peers."***<sup>265</sup> There was also a feeling that there were few conversations to be had and, moreover, the overriding conversation was with the self. ***"There are very few of them. Artists in my experience don't talk about art in that sort of way and, as you get older, I think conversation often gets more***

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<sup>264</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

<sup>265</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

***and more difficult, because in a way, you have been having a conversation with yourself, which is quite difficult for anyone else to join in with.***<sup>266</sup> Those artists, who deemed the importance of the conversation as tantamount, varied in their description of how the 'methodology of the conversation' was encountered. Therefore, these conversations expressed various concerns, from the idea that conversations outside artistic disciplines were extremely important and intrinsic to inspiration to the necessity of conversations that affirm existing ideas. The creative use of language for opening new levels of experience in the creative process was put forward as a creative tool as was the absolute necessity of 'the other' in studio practice which brought about the practical engendering of a space to call the conversation so there can be a permanent, stimulating and critical scenario close at hand

***"So I am happy for all the artists to be in their little spaces doing what they want to do, but I have to be in a place where they all meet, where they are sociable. So I get the benefit of everyone's dismissive comments, offhand comments or unguarded comments, so I have a permanent critical scenario around me which is white noise and which I would be very surprised if many people could handle. But I have had to learn to have it in order to create this social world that I deem important."***<sup>267</sup>

The statement, "does art start with a blank canvas?" drew two quizzical and hesitant answers and two clear answers of affirmation and denial.

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<sup>266</sup> Howard Rogers interview by author, London, UK, January 13, 2011.

<sup>267</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

## 5. Analysis of Interviews

First of all, the concept seemed difficult to envisage but the advantages of dealing with an 'empty space' as far as the creative process was concerned seemed very beneficial in the progression of confidence in a creative ability. The problem with the literalism of the idea was suggested, in that as soon as we think then it is no longer a blank canvas and this was also where it was not engaged with as a possibility; for the artist speaking, art starts from where '**we are**' (my emphasis), which is not blank. **"No, I think it doesn't, we start from where we are, which is not blank."**<sup>268</sup> The only affirmative answer saw the blank canvas as an 'alive' object that consumed all that was around it into the empty space. **"Literally for me, yes, but I think it sucks up on everything that is around and in you, so it is like detritus all around you."**<sup>269</sup>

"Should we let the artwork speak?" The ideas around this topic ranged from the idea that it would be refreshing to let the artwork speak, to the contrasting idea that ideas around 'shutting the artist up' covered an old idea of 'truth of materials dictum', that is we should just let the artwork speak. There was an idea expressed that is employed by psychoanalysts, of not filling the 'space' of the 'art object' with too much of one's own desire and, thereby, allowing the object to be used by the viewer for transference purposes; here, the psychoanalyst tries to keep a lot of his own 'everyday self' out of the analytical encounter, so creating a space to 'think' about the patient). There was also an idea of just how important

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<sup>268</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>269</sup> Howard Rogers interview by author, London, UK, January 13, 2011.

words are in relation to the art object, to clarify and clear any obfuscation that may occur and a feeling that you cannot come to an art object without a massive amount of knowledge. ***“I think it is a thoroughly machismo view of sculpture, (the artist here is talking about the choice ‘not to speak’ about the art object), and basically I think words are used to the very best of one’s ability to insinuate themselves within the experience you are trying to describe and every effort should be made to do that appositely and with as much grace and elegance. That’s what words are for, it’s not to confuse the one for the other because they can be used to obfuscate, blur, as readily as they can be used to clarify – they should be used to clarify.”***<sup>270</sup>

The question of how relevant psychoanalysis was for artists drew reluctant comments from two artists. They admitted that they could not deny the therapeutic aspect of making but were very wary of the blur between therapy and art and the view that art was not a problem that needed to be solved or understood but to be judged on its results. There were two positive reactions to the question; one a curiosity to the areas that psychoanalysis investigated, which stood outside common cultural trends that could be informative and interesting and two, a memory of having felt like a psychoanalyst when teaching and the idea around art which makes it a process of analyzing, so that we as artists draw on many fields of understanding. ***“Yes I am sure there is. I did think when I was***

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<sup>270</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

***teaching I felt a bit like a psychoanalyst. I certainly did. Yeah, I think there is room for every kind of activity in art practice, whether it be science or history or geography or astronomy.***<sup>271</sup>

The question of how artists call new work covered many different concepts, to do with call, emergence, memory and image, destructive forces, metamorphosis and the beginning of the conversation between artist and objects. This seemed an easily accessible question for all the artists, as they were able to freely articulate exactly how this process worked for them. To begin with there was the interplay of conscious and unconscious images and memory playing within time and coming together in one's head. There were strong references to Bachelard's Paradox, that 'the image has to stir the depths before it reaches the surface', with an example of work that had come through an encounter as a young man in art college, which, many years later, was only now manifesting in an art object. ***"So I think what happens is that we consciously and unconsciously – there are some images if you like, let's call them images, some moments, images stay with one just as some memories stay with one, as we don't remember everything, some images stay with you, a reflection in a puddle or whatever it is, and at another time and unbidden one finds a correspondence in another part of one's experience. So, correspondence is most probably the key word. Those can be completely disparate experiences, and completely disparate in time, but there is a sense that they begin to inhabit the same space in one's head, or they***

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<sup>271</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author. London, UK, September 15, 2011.

***can be made to inhabit the same space in one's head, and I think that's the beginning of what you are talking about. It sounds like a call. I can remember also going gliding, that feeling was sufficiently powerful to stay [the experience was when the artist was a young man] and found its correspondence in some material that I was handling and twisting (in the present time) and basically, if I can describe it in a very crude way, you have a vertical thing and it collided with a horizontal thing turned (the embodied memory of the physical memory of gliding). I do it in the gesture quite naturally; you get what I am getting at in the gesture. It is a kind of affirmation of that feeling, done through pointing a torch, it's like pointing a torch, something comes up and you think that's amazing.***"<sup>272</sup>

There was an idea of metamorphosis and that work did not come 'out of nothing' but came through engagement with old work and was an example of the way the artist experiences the 'not yet' art object worrying below the surface, waiting for emergence and the use of the 'conversation' as a tool to bring things to the surface.

***"I have ideas that are brewing away which have not come to the surface but a conversation might trigger them breaking through, or a request like the mermaid; perhaps this little mermaid wants to come out. Things worry away, then they pop out. but in the end, the only person that can get them out is me, but sometimes having pressure helps.***"<sup>273</sup>

A consciousness that often the pressure

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<sup>272</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>273</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London UK, September 15, 2011.

(obstruction) aids the emergence of the art object, to finally, a wrestling with the idea in the imagination of the artist to the actual reality of the object, how the process of destroying the object of the imagination in the process of making enables the dialogue between artist and object to commence. ***"I have to make something to cause trouble, so I think I want to make a figure and I can imagine the figure and that's fine. It looks brilliant in my dreams and I will get up and I know full well that it will die immediately, a death immediately I make it and that is the moment when the things starts and that is the moment when I call things."***<sup>274</sup>

It was thought that 'art could be taught' but there were some clauses and definitions of how far one could go. So, first of all there was a feeling that you could teach, but you could not teach an artist to do great things. So teaching was a dynamic, influential and educative experience that helps both student and tutor. What you are doing in teaching, is allowing the student to glimpse a different world through using somebody else's (the tutors) eyes. What was also thought of as essential to the task of teaching were certain virtues which were: commitment, imparting a feeling of **worthwhileness** to students, the act of **being there, communication**, the act of **sympathy** and **conviction** (my emphasis); all these virtues were seen as deeply significant in a student's ability to progress to becoming an artist. ***"What I think about it is this; I guess that I have had too long a time in teaching to think that it can't be***

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<sup>274</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

***got at. I know what you are driving at – it is in a sense, if it can be put in any sort of format that can be transferred to somebody else, so probably not. But what can be done, you can convey passion and importance and also give the technical-making tools, so you can convey a great deal. So the essential bit, the true bit of art, is to enable oneself to somewhat vicariously glimpse the world through someone else’s eyes and to feel their own position of the world at the moment by contrast or affirmation.***<sup>275</sup>

The question around poesis was engaged with quite swiftly and without much hesitation from the two artists interviewed, who simply gave an emphatic ‘yes’ and expressed a curiosity as to who would answer ‘no’? They confirmed a feeling, which has been expressed before, that one can make something ‘new’ to you and not ‘new’ to the world; to a final exploration of how you can define ‘new’ areas of creativity in art, the idea of being able to show the edge of ‘nothingness’ or the exploration of areas of liminality hinted at poesis but this was not an observable area of proof. There was more a feeling for them that everything has been before, using the analogy of cold dark matter, we define by the edge of things when we cannot see the ‘emptiness’. ***“So bringing into being that which didn’t exist is what I am trying to do, but you have to give it the edge. If it was an embryo firearm, we know what it is going to become, we could fill it in, but it has been stopped. I***

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<sup>275</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

***think that is one of my favourite works, as it has not yet been born but its intention is there.***<sup>276</sup>

### **5.3 Student Interviews**

The student interviews were conducted with mature students and this needs to be taken into account when analyzing the data. The obstacles that were encountered at a student level came under three broad areas of human experience. The first are those obstacles related to the self: human development and life events. The second set of obstacles is seen as those obstacles that are related to practical obstacles, such as time, travel, space and money. The third set of obstacles is related to what I would call 'course challenges', the student's experience of college life and tutors.

In the area of human development and life events, there were varying stances taken around the effect of personal and emotional development as well as life events having an important impact on how a student encounters college life. One student stipulated that for herself, she could not locate a hard boundary between the dynamics of stress and encounter in home life and her encounter at Art College: ***"I think the term obstacles for me probably relates more to life than to practice. The thing with obstacles at college is they are often to do, or are related to things outside college. So any difficulties I have***

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<sup>276</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

**experienced in my practice have been directly related to the difficulties I have had in my life, so I think the two are totally intertwined.**"<sup>277</sup> Yet on an equal par another student did not feel that her life outside college impacted at all on her creative difficulties, nor were they obstacles in relation to the self; these were seen as personal failures in her work and the obstacles that were encountered were put into a category of practical problems: **"Ok well there are practical things like a lack of space"**<sup>278</sup> or **"Obviously what I haven't talked about if your question is intended to embrace things like obstacles in terms of one's own practice, I suppose I don't interpret that as an obstacle but as an inadequacy on my own part. I think of obstacles as something that has been put there by someone else rather than something that is within me."**<sup>279</sup> The practical problems that were outlined by students focused primarily on time and money: **"So for me, having things like an economically viable practice, that kind of thing, so if I don't have a lot of money to make things I put the boundary in myself; I create the obstacle that I will make work that will not cost any money and that will be part of my ethical practice."**<sup>280</sup> Space and travel were viewed as a big problem: **"The first year I lived in Cambridge and I travelled to London and spent a night or two and in way that was a problem as well, travelling to and from."**<sup>281</sup> The most vociferous part of the interview came under what I would call 'college challenges' where many

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<sup>277</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, November 30, 2011.

<sup>278</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>279</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>280</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, November 2011.

<sup>281</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

## 5. Analysis of Interviews

disagreements and obstructions were identified; these ranged from disagreement with the outlines of the various MA courses: **"A sort of sense of disorganization, I would say quite strongly about the way the course is organized."**<sup>282</sup> and research issues: **"For me personally, I think the obstacle that I encountered which is that the notion of art education in the MA situation is specifically about a research question, to me I found it was kind of too narrow and doesn't allow for artists and practitioners who have quite a disparate practice, that notion of narrowness, or narrowing down what the research question is, that was one of the biggest obstacles for me."**<sup>283</sup> There were complaints about unavailable staff; therefore, issues around lack of support. A very strong sense of disorganization within art colleges, a lack of respect for students and the way they were challenged were spoken about too. Whilst a great level of dissatisfaction was expressed, I could also see there was a rationalization at MA level that, if 'things' got really bad, then a tutor would do something about it. However, one also had the feeling that these students, who at times were 'upset' about the lack of support, were also quite capable of 'just getting on with it' and would successfully negotiate their creative paths; the overriding feeling that I had when interviewing all the students was the 'lament' was really for wanting more stimulating and supportive conversations around their artwork. **"I am not sure I was consciously aware if they were supporting me through this time, I suppose if I**

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<sup>282</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>283</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 7, 2011.

***was failing and I really was going to drop out they would have done something.***"<sup>284</sup>

Of those students interviewed, I felt there was a general perception that there had been engagement with obstacles to the advancement of their practice. At times, this could be seen as contrary to the students' experience so during interview I could identify what seemed like a 'working through' of many difficulties; for example: ***"irritation of disorganization through applying a certain mental attitude, I went onto do further study, so I was mentally prepared for it, but it doesn't make it any easier, there are still obstacles that cause me frustration."***<sup>285</sup> An idea that the students were not abandoned and the staff did know what stresses they were going through: ***"I guess the whole course, in a way, is part of psychology, it's testing you internally and externally and I am sure the tutors are aware of how the students will be going through these crisis at certain periods and I bet it's pretty predictable as well."***<sup>286</sup> An attitude of humour against criticism expressing a growing resilience in personality: ***"I developed a sense of humour which seemed to help a bit."***<sup>287</sup> Putting in place a monetary boundary, which in turn, would create an obstacle within which the artwork was forced to work: ***"I will make work that will not cost any money and that will be part of my ethical***

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<sup>284</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>285</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>286</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>287</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

**practice.”**<sup>288</sup> A developing sense of identity and creating boundaries with tutors on where personal artwork was aimed: **“The tutors were quite critical, fine. I think the biggest obstacle I had then was having a sense of humour and staying on course and not being swayed from something I went there to do, which of course was painting, and they would have liked me to make a DVD, video or something like that.”**<sup>289</sup> This shows a developing sense of creative self and is a statement connected with the process of individuation. The relationship to others, i.e. using peer groups for emotional and creative benefits was talked about as were the benefits of working through difficult research essay demands: **“Although I hated what I had done, I realized that when I had gotten to the end I had quite a relevant research question.”**<sup>290</sup> This was a good example of working through obstruction and possibly an indication that the student, no matter how ambivalent with the course, at some level was not fighting the tutorial process. Yet, and this was across the board for all the students interviewed, there was a general feeling that the obstacles on the whole remained the same: **“The obstacles didn’t change, but did I change? Well I suppose you have to adapt to it.”**<sup>291</sup> There was one very positive experience of tutorial support: **“Yes, Yes, I can, my tutor was incredibly helpful. I think, unlike other people, he helped me, so if I did feel very lost or there was even a problem that was a personal problem or a dip or a lull in my confidence, he did help me and I could call on him,**

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<sup>288</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, November 30, 2011.

<sup>289</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>290</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 11, 2011.

<sup>291</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 14, 2011.

**he would be there. I would say probably not outside of college hours but certainly he would say 'Well, look I have ten minutes' so yes, I found him very helpful."**<sup>292</sup> In contrast to this very positive experience there was also a negative experience from another student, whose college experience was of no support at all: **"No, I think no."**<sup>293</sup> There were examples of support from tutors acting as an overseers, who pointed to areas of repetition, alluding to the benefits of 'the Other' in the creative process: **"I think the role of a guidance element is having a tutor that shines a light on something that is quite obvious and you go 'Oh phh, yes it's that!' so when you are caught in your own work, it's hard to see the wood for the trees."**<sup>294</sup>

Turning to the question of psychoanalysis again, we can see a lot of varying experiences and wishes were expressed as well as surprise that Freudian practice was so prevalent in art schools as if had become outdated and no longer of interest: **"I found it quite interesting that so much interest was put on Freudian practice, when for most practical purposes we have moved on. I suppose I just had to accept it; it's not been an area that interests me and my art is more concerned with real life politics"**<sup>295</sup> This was sharply contrasted with a longing that access to psychoanalysis could have been available, as a positive contributor to the making of the art object: **"I remember thinking at the time that if I was to go with this collection then I**

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<sup>292</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 14, 2011..

<sup>293</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 14, 2011..

<sup>294</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, November 30, 2011.

<sup>295</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 14, 2011.

**would want some psychoanalysis, that was what I wanted to really go with.”**<sup>296</sup> A feedback observation was made during an interview about a talk, which was given by Dr. Quinn and me in May 2010 at WCA on ‘Psychoanalysis and Art Practice’, which had brought about a ‘feeling’ amongst some of the students which was: **“Why had we (the students) not encountered this before? I have been at three different art colleges, many different backgrounds and it has not come up once. I don’t think so, not until I met with you and Malcolm and it was funny the interesting thing about the talk you both gave was us all sitting there going, ‘Hmmm, that’s interesting, how is it that we have not talked about this before?’”**<sup>297</sup>

When asking the question ‘can art be taught?’ again there were no set views or ideas around skill, perception, being shown how to look, education, the construction of language, peer group benefits and the drive needed to make art: **“I believe in a propensity or a drive towards something, so you have an innate feeling or attachment to some things that grows later on.”**<sup>298</sup> were all discussed with three main statements around inabilities which centred around the feeling that ‘you can’t make an artist’: **“Well this is very controversial – you can’t be taught how to be an artist, but obviously there are things that can be taught that will give you some tools, so you can start on the road, it’s a balance between those craft skills which can be taught to some extent or certainly a way at looking at things can be**

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<sup>296</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 7, 2011.

<sup>297</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, November 30, 2011.

<sup>298</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, November 30, 2011.

***taught and pointed out and then it's up to the individual what they make of those tools, so that's a yes and a no answer; there are elements that can be taught but you can't be taught to be an artist and I think that you can be taught the skills, I think you can be taught the thought processes, I think you can't be taught to push those boundaries and look for something else and look in a creative and open way and I don't think you can be taught that I think is entirely up to the individual but it's good to have art colleges in place for anybody who wants to go.***"<sup>299</sup> The whole idea of a black and white question around art practice and teaching didn't seem to fit into the students' vocabulary: ***"Saying art can't be taught doesn't identify the different components of being an artist that are related to skill and thinking around practice and the social relationship we have to other artists, other concepts and movements, so it doesn't fit my vocabulary."***<sup>300</sup> to the idea that openness in creativity can't be taught but paradoxically education opens a world of creativity: ***"there is a quality issue that for a lot of people without having any art education, that's not for everyone, but for a lot of people. Let me put it another way: you can see people's art get better through art education. So I don't think that's an accident."***<sup>301</sup>

Of all the questions asked during the interviewing process, the final question around poiesis was the hardest to engage with. It's meaning,

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<sup>299</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>300</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, November 30, 2011.

<sup>301</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 7, 2011.

how to 'use it' in the language of art practice. This question was passed over with the greatest speed in all but one interview. There was a general feeling that poiesis is what everyone strives for in art practice but an acknowledgment that it is hard to do. Links were made to the individuation process: **"Well personally, I think I called into existence that which was not there before in the sense that my education as a child was pretty disruptive and I knew it was up to me to put into place, so, in that sense, yes. If we think that we can create anything new maybe we can for us, but almost as soon as something is 'new' it is 'old' by definition of the moment it has been created that's yesterday, so the future is something else. I think it's worth trying."**<sup>302</sup>

The following statement shows how a student is thinking creatively into the concept of poiesis and her own art practice, **"I think in my understanding of this it has to be possible. I think most of the time I am thinking about what my own work is about, you know, about identifying something that is new frameworks, or new combinations of different ideas and different practices, so to say it's not possible would be un-empathetic to the way my own practice is. I think it must be, but I have a limited understanding of this area."**<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>303</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, November 30, 2011.

## 5. Analysis of Interviews

One artist was drawn to the relationship of obstruction to poesis and the advantages of 'not knowing', the toleration of disharmony and the surrendering of control in a call to the new were touched on. An idea of obstruction and the release of a 'sort of creative blindness', when the obstruction lifted is spoken about, as the student psychologically 'let go' of difficulty: **"To me, it's a kind of series of revelations and I think that is one of the really interesting things about the MA. I remember writing in my diary that it was really like there were these veneers or cataracts. I had this with the collection actually, there was this really anally-retentive holding onto a kind of order of these objects, that they must all be dated and there is this inventory and this is how it must be. But I can remember, it was a project here in one of the rooms and I set it up and, somehow, I can't remember exactly, but I was twiddling my thumbs and being really frustrated. I can't think of exactly how to define the obstruction but actually of just letting go of all that and it was a huge thing – this cataract being lifted."**<sup>304</sup>

In assessment of the data in relation to the PhD Question 'is there a methodology that engages with obstruction, which in turn calls new work?' one student did use the obstacle, that is the restriction of money to create an obstacle out of which to call new work which was ethically driven: **"I create the obstacle that I will make work that will not cost any money and that will be part of my ethical practice."**<sup>305</sup> The other

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<sup>304</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, October 7, 2011.

<sup>305</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, November 30, 2011.

obstacle that was engaged in was an approach to being stuck; that is engaging with the obstacle but also at the same time turning away from it to allow something else to happen. This seemed to express a consciousness of the role of the obstacle in the creative process, as both students seemed consciously aware that he/she was setting up something that might bring the 'object' into existence. In relation to the idea of the 'necessity of the other' in the creative process, tutors were seen as people who seemed to turn up to encourage a different perspective, conversations around **"It doesn't have to be like that"** [my emphasis] or the tutor who **'shines a light'** [my emphasis] on an obstacle expressed a clear necessity for 'the Other' in the creative process. There was an overall feeling of guidance as opposed to instruction, which resulted in positive feedback towards the tutors. Poiesis did seem intrinsic to practice, firstly at a conceptual level, with one student, as mentioned previously,<sup>306</sup> alluding to 'call' through the necessity of drive. Most students felt that they could do something new, a body of work, for themselves, but the idea of new to the world, or of the object 'coming into existence' was not engaged with.

### **5.4. Individuation and Poiesis**

At the beginning of this thesis I hypothesized that a Jungian concept of 'individuation' was a useful and more appropriate understanding of art practice than that of Freudian 'pathography' or psycho-biographic

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<sup>306</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized) London, UK, November 30, 2011.

## 5. Analysis of Interviews

interpretations of art practice. I will now give examples of individuation at play in art practice. What was interesting in this research into poiesis was that, in art practice, it could be conceptually defined in relation to a developing practice; that is, I could see 'tenets of approach' which alluded to this process, in the placing of the obstruction in practice, 'the call' to the other in conversation with students, the ability to hold creative tension and 'not know' all seemed to point to an emerging methodology around poiesis. However, it is extremely difficult to make substantial concrete claims regarding the existence of poiesis in art practice. What was more easily identifiable in my understanding was the evidence of a process of 'individuation', which came across in the journey of creative processes that was linked to psychological development in all three categories of interviews. In this process of individuation, the student was becoming an artist at the same time as becoming more and more themselves through the encounter with the Art College, be it positive or negative. The same can be said of the on-going studio practice of all of the artists, changing and developing. The engagement with 'vocation' of art practice seemed intrinsic to the process in the act of 'becoming' and being able to hold to 'who one was' or 'who one was going towards' was evident in the way artists spoke. Poiesis, or what was known of it, was seen more as a given, or an aim; an idea, as Cox said, that all artists are engaged with – trying to call the new but it was not something that was actively engaged with at a conscious level. Here there seems a subtle difference to The Aeolian Mode, which, through a definable methodology, actively sets out

to 'call' the new and I will expand on my understanding of these differences in the conclusion.

**The following are examples of the individuation process at play:**

Here, the artist is talking about her 'connection' to her art, her quest for self-realization and to be free of her anxieties or inferiority complexes: **"I have picked up a big knowledge of historical and contemporary art, but it has come through my own research (my emphasis), my own practice (my emphasis). I wasn't just going to read stuff for the sake of it. I was never that sort of artist: my work was always something, about whatever I make is always something connected to me at some level – maybe a level that I am not aware of."**<sup>307</sup>

This is an example of the same artist being guided by a visiting tutor to 'hold' to her own individuation: **"I wanted to be an art therapist at that point and a visiting artist said to me, 'I think your work is really too strong to make that decision right now. You really have to go for it with your practice', and really recommended I do an MA; none of those other tutors picked me up as one of those star students. I didn't fit into the box – the intellectual box. It was obvious I was dedicated; I didn't fit the picture of what was expected of me."**<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November 10, 2011.

<sup>308</sup> Sarah Woodfine interview by author, London, UK, November, 10, 2011.

These are three examples of students linking poiesis to an individuating process in art practice and the realization of 'the self'; the question being asked was 'is poiesis in art practice possible?' **"I think, in my understanding of this, it has to be possible. I think most of the time, I think thinking about my own work is about, you know, about identifying something that is new frameworks, or new combinations of different ideas and different practices, so to say it's not possible would be un-empathetic to the way my own practice is."**<sup>309</sup> (This student was quoted in less depth in the analysis of students) **"I think art practice is doing exactly that; that is bringing into existence that which was not there before. In other words, I think one of the important roles of art is to show people something that they haven't seen before or to get people to look at things in a different way. We are all striving for that, but in our darker moments we know really it's very difficult to create something new, and we all strive for it and that's good."**<sup>310</sup> This artist is talking about how art enables her to bring into her life as an artist, 'something that was not there before', which also expresses an emerging, individuating self: **"Well, personally I think I called into existence that which was not there before in the sense that my education as a child was pretty disruptive, and I knew it was up to me to put into place, so in that sense, yes. If we think that we can create anything new maybe we can for us, but almost as soon as something is new it's old, by definition of the moment it has been**

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<sup>309</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, November 30, 2011.

<sup>310</sup> Student interview by author,(anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

**created that's yesterday, so the future is something else. I think it's worth trying!"<sup>311</sup>**

Here, the artist is talking about the on-going change and discovery of language drawn into his practice and driving him on in discovery and heralding a change of perception: **"The feeling is very much, you know, as you acquire a vocabulary it's not often a conscious word acquisition; it happens according to need and it becomes incorporated in one's scheme of things, and it gives you a grip on the world and one is terribly conscious at a later date of running into new words, new vocabulary which is potentially useful. I get the same feeling looking at Bernini or looking at some of Caro's works, one is granted for a moment – this is a bit of hyperbole – one is granted for a moment, a view of the world; it's like popping up on someone's shoulders for a moment and you see a little bit further, differently or shining a torch."**<sup>312</sup>

Again, with the same artist, in this example you can see the art object emerge from an image seen in childhood which then drops down in the imagination and emerges years later in service of the artistic self: **"I can remember having a paper round and being up very early in the morning on my bike in Dorset at the age of about 11, cycling around and a particularly cold frosty morning – and at that age, solitarily cycling before anybody is up there was a sense of, sort of**

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<sup>311</sup> Student interview by author,(anonymized) London, UK, October 14, 2011.

<sup>312</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

**possessing the world. There was also frost on the trees and I remember the clarity – seeing the tree against the blue sky, feeling a kind of elation that I was part of that now and I know with great certainty that image and that feeling found its way into a later piece of sculpture, much later 1970, which was reflection and stilling, and the clarity of the image.”<sup>313</sup>**

Here, we can see the artist individuating, by that I mean being able to go her own way and keep to her own interest: **“I think I realized it was a much more tougher number than you could ever imagine, I didn’t realize it was all about yourself and I just thought it was about this received idea thing. I was useless at that and hated all that and I thought it was quite deliberate that I had moved from painting halfway through my degree to sculpture where I had missed all the technical processes. So I was avoiding the issue even then. So to me, avoiding the object is trying not to fall into this received idea and this received hole, but I realized that it was very emotionally demanding to be searching through yourself for some kind of way of expressing this non-received idea.”<sup>314</sup>**

In the following example we are given an idea of repetition and change and the idea that the ‘artistic self’ can visit the same places in her imagination but the ‘self’ is changing and emerging: **“I am very weird when I make work, I never really look back on my back issue. I**

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<sup>313</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

<sup>314</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

**begin again every time which is really exhausting but somehow feels like the most liberating thing and sometimes I come full circle and sometimes I am touching on something that is near or identical to what I made twenty years ago. But it doesn't really matter, because I have come at it from a different place."**<sup>315</sup>

Here the artist is speaking about the work he had to do for a confident sense of identity to emerge: **"I wasn't aware of the potential that I had or what could be achieved and it took many, many years through Art College and beyond, to slowly incrementally build up ambition. And it is still growing, so the scope of what can be done and what can be achieved, people and places, is forever expanding in my head. So I started expanding from a very conservative base, not a radical base, but from a guy who didn't understand the scale of the world that he could occupy."**<sup>316</sup>

This is a good example of the artist holding 'true' or 'on course' for the benefit of himself: **"To be at the wrong place at the right time; it was not good, but at the same time brilliant because I sort of developed and grew basically to feel out of my time. To deal with the lack of confidence and to deal with the insecurity based on that experience, took a long time. To not be tempted to join that world and try and talk about language has been very difficult. To**

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<sup>315</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

<sup>316</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

**hone my own style, skill, aesthetic school of ideas has been very difficult.”<sup>317</sup>**

We see the artist here understanding her own chosen concept that gives expression and meaning to her practice; in this case, it is the concept of 'lostness'. She stresses that, for her, the nature of the creative process is about 'the conversation' and then goes on to talk about 'lostness'; this represents a 'tenet of approach' related to an individuating artistic self: **“I think the notion of 'lostness' is very important. It is really a very central aspect of creativity, because, again, it's anti the production line and it's got humility, 'I don't know where I am going'. I think what it does – unless you are lost, how can you be creative?”<sup>318</sup>**

I would say that this statement is very akin to the beginning of Jungian analysis, going into the psychological dark wood so to speak and there is definitely a paradoxical feeling which is that I have entered this process (analysis) to find myself but what I first encounter is that I am lost, lost in the unconscious or lost in life – and, as the artist knows, this is a creative position. In Jungian analysis it is seen as part of the process of individuation.

Finally, two examples of artists struggling with their practices and the boundaries and demands of practice in relation to the self: **“So for myself, it has taken me a long time to find the parameters of the**

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<sup>317</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, London, UK, November 19, 2009.

<sup>318</sup> Edwina Fitzpatrick interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

**things that I am interested in. I feel that there is a lot of work that I want to make and a lot of ideas I want to develop. So I think that is a gradual position and the realization of the things that interest me about work in the studio is to the problem of the legitimacy of the mode of making which might be seen as an art form, or may be seen as legitimate as being very problematic in abstract painting.”**<sup>319</sup> Here, the last artist shows us the importance of ‘action’ or ‘production’ in relationship to poiesis – that is calling new work:

**“I think it was about two-and-a-half years, I made about three paintings and a two-and-a-half year period of obstruction and part of that obstruction was pragmatic; it was definitely the result of a pause in my practice and a kind of dissatisfaction feeling that some alterations had to be made. I think that what happened is I carried on making paintings but very, very slowly and part of that was a loss of belief in what I was doing and dissatisfaction and it was probably a lack of confidence. But during that period, things were occurring that I would like to do – not outstandingly different things to what I was doing before – enough to change the subject or the work or re-direct the subject of the work, but also change the scale and the medium – not a lot but enough to make a difference and I think, in the end, it was a pragmatic thing which I was heading towards unlocking – to be able to act to make new work. I think, in the end, it is because I applied for internal research funding from Wimbledon School of Art and got some**

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<sup>319</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

**money and went out and bought some materials, as simple as that.”<sup>320</sup>**

At the end of all the interviews I was able to develop a matrix of art practice (Appendix A) that emerged as a more developed matrix than the original matrix I had developed with Cox. I was also able to chart the key findings of the interviews for 'easy' comprehension (Appendix A).

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<sup>320</sup> Geraint Evans interview by author, London, UK, June 23, 2010.

## **Chapter 6: Reflections and Conclusions**

This thesis has offered an initial analysis of the concept of poiesis and its application or relevance to studio practice today. The central focus of this research project was to examine whether there was a methodology in art practice that engaged with obstructions, which in turn enabled artists to call new work. This would necessarily be distinct from observations on the methodology observed in Cox's Aeolian Mode, used in Broadmoor Psychiatric Hospital. My research has been undertaken through twelve in-depth interviews with art students, art tutors and established artists, following an outline of questions that investigates artistic attitudes to obstruction and poiesis in studio practice. My research has generated twelve hours of original interview material, together with the presentation of a thesis, which shows a cross-fertilization of ideas from art practice, psychoanalysis, philosophy and The Aeolian Mode. This thesis has offered an initial analysis of the interviews, a definition of what the 'methodology of the conversation' aims to do, together with a presentation of my own self-analysis and studio work in 'not being able to paint', which in turn was contrasted with a psychoanalytical approach as well as an approach taken by an established artist towards obstruction. Accompanying this thesis is the documentation of studio practice work undertaken over the course of this research project and my engagement with my obstruction in not being able to paint.

## 6. Reflections and Conclusions

In what follows I will divide the conclusion up into various sections in order to clarify my research reflections and conclusions. The sections are:

**The Concept of Poiesis (From the Aeolian Mode to Studio Practice):  
Its Narrative of Similarity; Its Narrative of Difference.**

**The Approach to Obstruction (From The Aeolian Mode to Studio Practice).**

**The Methodology of the Conversation**

**How the Methodology of the Conversation challenges Elkins Theory of Teaching Practice.**

**Subsidiary findings**

**The Changing Relationship between Psychoanalysis and Art.**

**In Teaching Practice and the Implications for Further Research for the Benefit of Teaching Practice in Art Colleges.**

**Final Conclusions**

**The Interdisciplinary Transfer of Knowledge – What we learn from the 'other' and the central necessity of 'not knowing' and 'action' in studio practice.**

### Similarities and Differences between Art Practice and The Aeolian Mode

Art Practice	The Aeolian Mode
Poiesis is held in praxis, production – coming into being.	Poiesis is held in the concept being seen and used as a method for 'unveiling truth'
The concept of poiesis is seen in Cornelia Parkers 'Exploding Shed' but this moment of change cannot be proven as it is held in perception	Poiesis is seen and experienced when the patient in therapy reports a change in feeling, something that he has never felt or known before.
'Call' is manifest in the artist turning up at studio and in everything the artist does around practice be it a methodology of the conversations, visiting galleries, inspiration from teachers etc. Bachelard's paradox is present in artist's work.	'Call' is held in a methodology of the conversation. The Aeolian modes tenets of mutative metaphor, poet induction and Bachelard's paradox.
The importance of the unknown is acknowledged as intrinsic to the creative process, as is negative capability and paradox	The importance of the unknown is acknowledged in Cox's use of Edwin Muir's idea "we must make known what cannot be known". Negative Capability.
Obstructions are avoided. Obstructions are welcomed and thought of as being intrinsic to the creative process.	Obstructions are avoided.
The artwork, painting, image, contains all that is psychological in the artist	Cox found that images could 'contain' deep psychic pain
Possibility held in 'being' in studio practice and 'being' in conversation with the other.	Possibility held in 'being' in therapy with the other.

Code: Red = Different Tenets of Approach  
 Blue = The Same Tenets of Approach

The idea of 'the call' to Poiesis, whilst it was engaged with by the very nature of being an artist, is that artists are interested in creating new work; it was not actively engaged with at a conscious level or seen as a primary aim of art practice. It is as if, in artistic practice, the concept of poiesis is there at the back of the artist's mind or inherent in what he is doing, but there is no volition present to actively engage with the concept. When thinking about this concept, it is possible to see the simple act of turning up at a studio to work as a 'call' to poiesis, but this could not be proven. What was notable was the difference between artistic practices lack of engagement with poiesis and the methodology of The Aeolian Mode, where there is a conscious direct 'call' and aim to help the patient bring forth 'the new' (new understandings and realizations). What I discovered and what does affect the 'tenet of approach' to the concept of poiesis, is that at the core of artistic personality, or the 'artistic self', artists were conscious of four capabilities that artists have, which in turn, can be seen to affect their approaches to art practice. These were seen as 'agility', 'ability', 'seriousness' and 'knowing'. If we look at this through 'alchemical eyes' (where artists work in substances) and ask at the outset what the difference is in our 'base material' when investigating the concept or the 'usability' of the concept of poiesis, we can see that the 'artistic self' is starting from a very different stance to the clinical patient, who may sense their core personality as a much more fragile place. So the artists while articulating neurotic processes they are engaged with in practice, do begin their approach to creativity, when engaging with the concept of poiesis, from a different psychological stance. How this basic

## 6. Reflections and Conclusions

confidence of approach that artists have, affects the conscious preoccupation with the concept of poiesis cannot be quantified. It is suffice to say that though many of the artists were aware of the drive to call 'new' work for themselves, there was no expression of an urgency to create work that is new to the world, even though it could be argued, but not proved, that the parable of poiesis is visible in the work of some artists. I have spoken about this in conversation during the interview with Cornelia Parker and of my difficulty in 'proving' poiesis is at play; this is an extract from the interview around a discussion on the concept of poiesis:

Cornelia Parker: "So bringing into being that which didn't exist is what I am trying to do, but you have to give it the edge. If it was an embryo firearm, we know what it is going to become; we could fill it in, but it has been stopped. I think that is one of my favourite works, as it has not yet been born, but its intention is there".

Author: "That is what I loved about your shed (See Appendix B). I can't remember which book it was in, maybe 'Perpetual Canon' where he talks about this thing that I really like which is that 'it's on its way'. Philosophically, Hans-Georg Gadamer says 'we are all on our way'.<sup>321</sup> When you look at your exploding shed, you see the moment of change, you can see it suspended. I personally think, though I don't think you can prove this, that that is poiesis. That

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<sup>321</sup> Richard Kearney, " *Hermeneutics and Dialogue*" in *Debates in Continental Philosophy*, (Fordham University Press, 2004), 178.

moment when you can just capture it. What I have been finding out in this research project is the language in artistic practice is very different to the language of poiesis in psychoanalytical practice. So within psychoanalytical practice you can be working with a patient and bring something new into existence by the language and by what is opened up, that is they have a 'new' feeling that they have not had before. But what I think for us as artists, or what I am trying to see, is that poiesis is held in perception, you either see it or you don't see it. So one person could say 'Yes, I think that is poiesis' or another could say 'No, I think that it is metamorphosis, because there is a bit of old shed there and it is just changed into another form.' It's a very difficult thing that I am finding – to define in artistic practice, even though I feel as if I can see it." <sup>322</sup>

Before going onto explain the difficulty with the application of this concept in studio practice, I need to expand the two levels of understanding of the usability of the concept that developed through the interviews and have greatly enhanced the understanding of the concept for both artistic practice and clinical analytical practice. When conversations were held around the concept of poiesis, it could be seen that Cox's use of the concept of poiesis actually concerned calling the 'new' and that which had 'never been there before'; that is bringing 'new' understanding to the patient. This is the way that the concept of poiesis is being used, to call into existence, that which has not been there before for the patient. If

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<sup>322</sup> Cornelia Parker interview by author, London, UK, September 15, 2011.

one turns this definition to art practice, what we see are actually two levels of engagement and two levels of argument. The first level, of what is 'new' work to the artist, which may be akin to Cox's work with patients, is that an artist may be helped to engage or do something in art practice that he or she has not been done before. Then, of course, there is the much more difficult task of deciding whether what is 'new' to the artist is 'new' to the world. To put it another way, there could be two conversations about, say, Cornelia Parker's exploding shed where it could be argued that this does identify the moment of change, the breaking of a canon, the way the art object explodes into being, is a 'new way of working' producing art. Conceptually, you can see the moment of change. Another view could be that it was not poiesis, but is, in fact, metamorphosis because there are bits of an old shed there. One could then offer the counter argument that poiesis is not about narrative or components, it is about change, seeing the moment of change, the becoming of something, but this still could not be proven. Whereas in a clinical setting one is able, at a personal level, to see poiesis at play as an image or a mutative metaphor comes into being and then the patient reports a conscious change of feeling or has access to feelings that have never previously been felt. What also emerged around the concept of poiesis was the question of the 'usability' of the word in studio practice. It appeared that for artists, the language and concepts of metamorphosis and transformation, transfiguration and feelings of loss, were much more 'usable' concepts. Most artists agreed that they could do something 'new'

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in studio art practice, but something 'new' to the world was a very different thing.

The other interesting difference that emerged between artistic studio practice and a psychoanalytical encounter in clinical practice was to do with the concept of poiesis itself. In using Agamben's definition we have access to a way of understanding that resolves the differences between poiesis in studio practice and poiesis in clinical practice. Agamben said that poiesis can be seen in two ways, one to do with the 'unveiling of truth' and the other with 'production', which were discussed in depth in the 'methodology of the conversation'. The latter enables us to think of the many way artists 'call' work into being; so for the artist, simply turning up in his studio, choosing her medium or holding a conversation, are all in service of poiesis, when it is related to drive and production. Nevertheless, if you contrast this with The Aeolian Mode and its use in the clinical setting of Broadmoor, what you see is that the core emphasis within the concept of poiesis is to do with the 'unveiling of truth'. Of course, artists are also engaged with the concept of poiesis when they are producing work that is 'new to the world' which is not relevant to the clinical patient.

The idea of 'the call' held within poiesis and within practice was easier to identify in the 'methodology of the conversation' than the concept of poiesis as an aim, as the artists were well able to talk about what they did to 'call' work. Again, this felt quite different to The Aeolian Mode, in that the artists were in an on-going dialogue with their own creative processes,

## 6. Reflections and Conclusions

well able to reflect and articulate these necessities since anxieties and neuroses were seen just as part of the process; therefore, artists were easily able to identify their difficulties and obstructions. In the application of Cox's methodology there are very clear 'tenets of approach' to the call to the depths of the other's psyche, yet it is a 'sole' tenet of approach, that is the conversation, whereas for the artists this is only one approach among many, although one undervalued by Elkins. So to summarize, poiesis for artists is used with praxis (which contains a call) whereas in *The Aeolian Mode*, poiesis is about a 'call' to the emergence of truth in the patient's knowledge of himself. Therefore, for the *Aeolian Mode*, the idea of call and truth being revealed is centrally important. Returning to the clinical hypothetical example I gave of Cox's methodology, where a patient says 'it's snowing in July' and the analyst says 'things can't be covered up forever', at the surface there is a frozen image that is 'calling' to the understanding of both the patient and the analyst to reveal a 'new understanding' as it emerges from the unconscious to the surface of the imagination. Clinically, what is brought to the surface is through the image, a potential or possibility of a 'new' feeling, which is more truthful, holds within it 'new' understandings that are unveiled; that is poiesis enabling truth. Cox took this whole idea much further than Agamben did and emphasized 'calling' as opposed to Agamben's idea of an 'unveiling', even though by using Bachelard's paradox as a paradigm of necessity, he is pointing to an image emerging as well as being unveiled; however, Cox is putting into this dynamic, the notion of 'call', more a call to something new, something that had not been there and by that I mean a new

emotion. Agamben's use of the word 'unveiling' is possibly a little contradictory to the concept of poiesis in this thesis, in that it implies something being there before. Poiesis in Cox's methodology is about a moment, 'a felt sense' of something different within the patient's psyche that has not been there before.

Looking again at poiesis and praxis, it is the idea of linking these two things conceptually that seems pertinent to the artist. One is production (praxis) into presence and the other the idea that the art object is endlessly becoming and not finished; a calling to poiesis. The analyst, Kenneth Wright, in his paper 'Deep Calling unto Deep,' mentions this idea of 'call and answer', the dialectic holding within it another call.<sup>323</sup> Virtue also talks about this idea of the art object not being finished. In this sense, we do find a parallel process going on. The clinical patient trying to find a 'new' feeling and the artist searching for 'new' work can both be seen as 'self-individuating' without becoming problematic, if we hold to the idea that 'we are all on our way'. There are parallel processes in Cox's methodology and artistic practice about how we develop and become more and more ourselves in our conversations, our actions and our understanding; the Jungian concept of individuation at play, but not necessarily engaged with. By that I mean that a person can 'individuate' without any conscious acknowledgement of the process or concern. Engaging with psychological material in one's own nature is a choice unless, of course, we fall mentally ill, when it may become a necessity.

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<sup>323</sup> Kenneth Wright "Deep Calling Unto Deep, Artistic Creativity and the maternal object", British Journal of Psychotherapy 14, no.4. (1998):453-467.

What can be seen in the interviews is that for some it is an interesting concern whilst, for others, psychological understandings are not engaged with. Though, I do feel that, in no way, does this concept of 'individuation', which I have found useful in the task of working through my own difficulties to paint, put the artist into a pre-conceived understandable box, because the whole notion of 'individuation' is to do with the individual and only the individual has the authority to define himself.

When thinking into artistic process and the concepts spoken about in this thesis, the idea of a lack of certainty in the creative process that manifests as a 'negative capability' has, of course, a parallel in psychoanalytical and analytical practice.<sup>324</sup> In my personal experience of analysis I found that when I did not know, action was not advised; whereas, for the artist that is not a concern, action takes place with or without knowledge. This may be a small but significant difference in approaches to obstructions in general and an insight into the 'different kind of knowing' artists have that Cox alluded to in art practice.

### **The Approach to Obstruction (From the Aeolian Mode to Studio Practice): A Narrative of Similarity; A Narrative of Difference.**

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<sup>324</sup> David Armstrong in his article on "Making Absences Present" looks into the meeting with Wilfred Bion, psychoanalyst, and Samuel Beckett, writer and their interests in the area of 'not knowing', " Making Absences Present: contribution of W. R. Bion to understanding unconscious social phenomena", last modified May 25, 2005, <http://human-nature.com/group/chap3.html>

Here we do find a core commonality of approach in the necessity of the obstruction in the creative process. Cox devised his methodology when he, himself, 'could go no further'; because of his own obstruction encountered in clinical practice he went on to create a new methodology, which, in turn, enabled the patient to 'call' new understanding into their emotional lives. The artists in all three interview sections showed a conscious understanding of obstruction and the necessity of the obstruction in the creative processes, many welcoming, setting up and working through these obstructions. Even when the concept of 'obstruction' was not 'useful' in application or completely avoided, there was a general responsibility of approach to 'work through' whatever difficulties were encountered in art processes. The majority of interviewees held a central belief that obstruction was an intrinsic part of the artistic processes. However, when dealing with obstructions artists generally develop their own methodologies, gathered from psychological engagement, practice, tutors/peer groups/ conversations and the experience of their own practice and struggles, which, in turn, create very personal methodologies. What also emerged was a direct relation to the tenets of approach between what was a paradoxical encounter and what was a problem. So, although the term 'obstruction' was used, it emerged that this idea of obstruction in art practice, from the artist's point of view, could also be seen as not being a problem at all. The concept of paradox was, of course, used by Cox to overcome his difficulty in clinical practice and this concept was, and is, present in studio practice. I found in my

own self-analysis that it was only when I tried to 'stop making a painting that I made a painting'. The creation of a methodology from understanding another artist's 'tenets of approach,' as I did in using some of the painter John Virtue's approaches, helped me overcome my difficulties and acted as an effective and stimulating methodology when it was tailored to my own individual needs.

The individuating process of the artist's journey towards developing an engaged artistic self, necessitates a struggle to find their own way and their own methodologies, which are hard won through doing the work. One of my failures in psychoanalysis was that I was not 'doing' anything when I had met my obstruction to paint. Artists do and they 'do' when they do not know that they are doing. I have always believed in what Iris Murdoch<sup>325</sup> informs us that "any artist must be at least half in love with his unconscious mind, which after all provides his motive force and does a great deal of his work"; however, as stated earlier in this thesis, creative processes are held importantly in a 'methodology of the conversation.' In assessing my own failure, I am sure one of the intrinsic failures that occurred was that I did not 'live out' in my area of difficulty, the tension between 'negative capability' and 'actively doing'. Very simplistically, I was also not having 'conversations' with another artist. I was 'thinking about painting' but seemed never to have reached that necessary position of being exhausted by my own repetition of thought and narcissism to do something else. I would think if I had addressed this solipsism, held within my own imagination and encountered a radical 'other' there would

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<sup>325</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Existentialists and the Mystics*, (Chatto and Windus, 1997), 7.

have been more likelihood of resolution of the split between what I thought and what I did. Then, perhaps, the psychoanalytical encounter would have broken through the obstruction into an active painting. What is very interesting in this analysis of obstruction, is that only when I decided to adopt an 'observational' approach to my neurosis, i.e. not identify with what I was feeling anxious about, I suspended analysis, and employed an attitude of mind, heart and practice that 'held my nerve'; I then relied on my own methodology of individuation and broke through my obstruction to painting. What this suggests is that the similarity of an artist changing a medium to enhance creative ability may be comparable to changing a psychological approach to enable a different psychological engagement.

### **The Findings in the use of a 'Methodology of the Conversation' and its challenge to Elkins approach to the Limitations of Teaching Art**

The 'methodology of the conversation' proved to be an intrinsic part of the creative process and brought with it 'new' understandings about art practice. There is evidence of this in the way the artists talked about their art practices and were able to think about their differences and similarity to psychoanalytical processes and The Aeolian Mode. One of the most informative revelations in this research was that the 'methodology of the conversation' could challenge Elkin's idea of what could be taught in art schools. It would seem that, in understanding the intrinsic nature of a

'methodology of the conversation' taken from a philosophical perspective, we can see that adopting Kearney's ideas, "the importance of an Other, and this 'Other' is not who I envisage but the 'Other' that envisages me"<sup>326</sup>, together with the many examples in my own self-analysis, had enabled me to 'call' new work. This suggests that the idea put forward by Elkins that students can only be taken to a certain level, can be challenged. Expanding on this understanding, one of the revelations of this thesis is challenging the idea of how creativity occurs. If we take the example of my own conversations with my supervisors and the idea that art cannot be taught, firstly, we have to think of 'how we teach' and we go back to the idea that the experience held within the imagination of 'the Other' through the methodology of the conversation, has a creative effect on artistic process. Therefore, to put it poetically, you could think about the process like this 'meeting myself in you, I find me and 'an Other' beyond what I imagine, this other cannot be reduced to any given image, and from that meeting I find new birth'. If I am unable to go any further, I cannot go beyond what I know then this encounter that is 'the Other' to me, calls new understandings, new processes, new objects into being. This is not teaching didactically, but teaching through encounter, teaching through the 'call' from 'the Other's' imagination meeting another imagination, within a 'methodology of the conversation.' It is not that 'art cannot be taught', it is that we have to expand the understanding of how art comes into being, stand on the periphery of mystery and think into the unknown, paradoxically knowing 'we don't know'; in this way we expand on what is understood in art practice, if we change the glasses we are

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<sup>326</sup> Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination* (Century Hutchinson Ltd, 1988), 370.

looking through. In truth, it is that we have to see the 'methodology of the conversation' as a potential enabling tool in creative processes and allow ourselves to choose 'the other' over our own imaginations at certain times.

Steven Furlonger, an established artist and teacher of sculpture at Central St. Martins for over 25 years says this

"So, the essential bit, the true bit of art, is to enable oneself to somewhat vicariously glimpse the world through someone else's eyes and to feel their own position of the world at that moment by contrast or affirmation."<sup>327</sup>

Of course, I am not saying that our own imaginations do not carry inspiration that challenge the archetypes, but I am saying that Elkins, in his holding to the belief 'no one has gone beyond Bauhaus' underestimates the 'methodology of the conversation' in the actual creative call and the mystery of the creative process.

### **Subsidiary Findings and the Changing Relationship between Psychoanalysis and Art**

At the final point of writing up this thesis, in February 2012, I attended a conference at The Slade on 'Psychoanalysis and the Creative Process' that also examined artists through a methodology of interviews about creative processes. I attended with a specific question in mind; it was an initial challenge that had been given to me by a fellow PhD student regarding

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<sup>327</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

## 6. Reflections and Conclusions

Badiou's statement around psychoanalysis using 'art for its services' and my own fairly critical findings of Freud's use of 'sublimation' and 'pathography'. The conference was set up Patricia Townsend, psychoanalyst and PhD researcher and what I encountered was very interesting. My feeling was Badiou's statement is, on the whole, out of date. Whilst the theoreticians did give papers using psychoanalytic theories such as those of Freud, Klein and Winnicott, it was definitely from a broader sensibility than the approach adapted by Freud so many years ago, which had such an influential way in the way we engage with art. For example, one psychoanalyst used poetry and aesthetics to access the artistic world, while another, their own clinical practice. If one had to assess the dynamic in the room between the presenting artist and the psychoanalysts, you would have to say that the psychoanalysts very much took the approach of presenting their own creativity in practice and seemed to be more interested in, say, 'What the artist is doing'? This approach did seem to signify that there is a search for parallel processes. What was also evident was there was no presumption at all from the psychoanalysts to interpret the artistic process of artists by using psycho-biography or psycho-pathography. In fact, this distancing from an earlier Freudian approach was emphasised a few times. There was also a very conscious acknowledgement of an analyst's ability to be 'envious' of artists and their creative capacities. This, coupled with a great feeling of 'play' (mostly entertained by Grayson Perry's irreverence towards both academic and psychoanalytical processes - even though admitting most of his work came from his psychoanalysis) was pivotal to me in confirming

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something that I had sensed reading Darian Leader's book on Cornelia Parker, namely that a diffuse 'methodology of conversation' between parallel processes of art and psychoanalysis is now at play in academic settings to the benefit of each discipline. It seems that not only are we now living in a 'plural psyche' where some of the determinants are the same and some are different, but also there was very much a feeling within the artists interviews conducted for my research, that the artist takes what he wants and discards what he does not require from psychoanalytical engagement, with texts or understandings, and maybe artists have always done this. I am talking academically here, not from a position of psychotherapy. The extraordinary idea from Kearney that 'the other holds radical possibility' was intrinsic to being able to overcome my obstruction, as was employing the 'tenets of approach' found in John Virtue's work that changed my approach to obstruction and made me implement searching for a new conversation to facilitate a new body of work. In reflection, I acted from gathering in my own methodology that would 'suit' my aim. I sought a new conversation. I called the art object within that conversation. I fell in love with the process and the object. I kept going. I interpreted my dreams.. The conversations I had with my supervisors were fundamental in calling new understandings and work in studio practice. In the assessment of my own work I unblocked an obstruction that I had had for 25 years; the work is 'new' to me at this period of my life, but it is not 'new' as I could paint before. The obstruction to abstraction in painting is something that is on-going. The key finding for myself is that the course of action I took and the 'tenets of

approach' I adopted enabled me to 'fall in love' with the process of painting again.

This PhD has sought to analyze whether poiesis is a 'useful' concept/tool in artistic practice. In answer to my original questions 'Is there a methodology, which engages with obstruction, which in turn calls new work?' and 'Can this methodology be taught?' I would respond that there is not one specific methodology; that artists create their own methodologies to work through obstruction but that there are 'tenets of approach' found in this research into the concept of poiesis which can be identified as taking place in art practice which I have illustrated in a chart at the beginning of this concluding chapter.

### **The Implications for Further Research or Transfer of Knowledge**

I would like to address the 'findings within the interviews' in contrast to the work done by Dr. Duna Sabri in her paper 'National Student Survey at the University of the Arts, London: Voice, Interpretation and Context', October, 2010. Dr. Duna Sabri has done an in-depth analysis of the fluctuating levels of 'satisfaction' between students and tutors in UOAL; in the opening introduction there is the suggestion that this type of research can be a 'potent instrument for enhancement' and to that end her research does just that. However, I would like to suggest that some of the insights gathered in this research project would complement this. For example, students and tutors gathering a greater understanding of

psychological processes encountered at Art College would be beneficial. Sabri's interview states that students were 'positive' in interaction with tutors; she goes on to say, "While the NSS quantitative results reflect an important component of 'student voice', they occlude the complexity and unevenness in students' experience".<sup>328</sup> In her conclusions she touches on issues that this research project leads onto such as the difficulties students have with identity, the difficulty students have with criticism of tutors and the subsequent transference of difficult feelings to the university body as a whole, to avoid confrontation with teachers. The pertinent question is 'are students at art colleges different from students in other disciplines?' This is a psychological question and is contentious in quality, but has been muted in, say, Neumann's disagreement with Freud on Leonardo Da Vinci and his argument that, on the whole, artists have a less developed personality and stay in a more 'childhood' orientated realm of psychological development and are unable to form 'normal relations'.<sup>329</sup> I think there is room here for research without pathologising the student or applying pathography which could be aided, for example, by teaching at degree level some Jungian understandings of 'individuation'. This would be beneficial, as it would bring to consciousness the difficulties in the task of being an artist that would enable a less conflictual approach to their own practices. Of course, to a degree this is already taking place with the tutors teaching through their own experiences; however, I think if this area was more consciously engaged with, and identified, it would

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<sup>328</sup> Dr. Duna Sabri "Voice, Interpretation and Context" in National Student Survey at the University of the Arts, London (September, 2010).

<sup>329</sup> Erich Neumann, *Art and Creative Unconscious*, (Bollingen Foundation Inc., 1959), 16, 17.

really have very advantageous effects on art practice and would focus upon artistic advantages inherent in the artistic personality as such. It would also stop a lot of the transference of 'disappointment' that is due to personal difficulty and not institutional failure. Obviously, I am not discounting organizational failure, but seeking to advance on the findings from the interviews. Reading through the interviews, you will see in examples of, say, Laurence Edwards<sup>330</sup> and a student<sup>331</sup>, how they were able to hold on to their own identity despite external pressures; not all students are able to do this and, again, it would be advantageous to the students if this area of understanding could be made more evident and discussed. I would also suggest that giving students more information about the concept of 'individuation' would benefit students' engagement at art colleges; in the same way, during an interview with a tutor of painting<sup>332</sup>, it was suggested that 'teaching vocational art' in the present day milieu of commercialism was necessary'. To expand on the point, individuation is the 'sui generis' of the artist and, to that end, the more understanding one has of the difficulty of the task of being an artist, without pathologising the artist, the easier it is to deal with one's own nature as an artist. I think Steven Furlonger's comment that 'a lot of acting' goes on in art schools'<sup>333</sup>, coupled with a conscious understanding of a 'methodology of the conversation', would enable both students and tutors to address some of the dissatisfactions that are present in student dialogue. That is, for the student to seek out those 'tutors', 'peers' and

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<sup>330</sup> Laurence Edwards interview by author, Suffolk, UK, November 19, 2009.

<sup>331</sup> Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, UK, October 14, 2010.

<sup>332</sup> Daniel Sturgis interview by author, London, UK, September 28, 2010.

<sup>333</sup> Steven Furlonger interview by author, London, UK, January 27, 2010.

## 6. Reflections and Conclusions

'others' that bring some 'otherness' to the conversation around art and that the 'obstruction' one encounters, be it in conversation or in actual studio practice, are intrinsic to the process. I would argue that there is an undervaluing of this form of teaching in present day teaching models, which may go some way to explaining why the 'established artists' in this research project, had such positive experiences at college; it seemed most of them had 'found' the conversations they were looking for. However, among the students interviewed there was only one student, out of four, who had had a positive experience, which would imply the students had not found the conversations they were looking for, despite the good intention and the aim of tutors. The idea of the 'methodology of the conversation' being as intrinsically important to creative growth and opportunity, cannot be underestimated and, I think, if the 'intention' of understanding and the benefits of dialogue were better understood, then the conversations that were had would have more institutional investment.

At the end of this thesis and before the final points of conclusion I would like to quote Richard Kearney and his idea of 'Otherness' that it is essential to the life of poiesis. This PhD thesis has looked to not only investigate this concept but explore areas that are relevant to it, to see if a 'new' way of thinking about art processes can be encountered:

"For art, as an open-access laboratory of imaginative exploration, is one of the most powerful reminders that history is never completed. As such, art can remain the most persuasive harbinger of a poetics of the possible. But in order

to realize this promise, it must continue to believe that a poetic imagination can play a liberating role in postmodern culture."<sup>334</sup>

In the final assessment of this body of research I would offer the following conclusions:-

- That poiesis is present in art practice but its engagement is different to that found in The Aeolian Mode, emerging through practice rather than as 'revealed truth', which is a necessity of The Aeolian Mode and psychoanalytical and analytical psychology.
- That this research project has enhanced the understanding of poiesis in both art practice and clinical practice.
- Obstruction for 'most' artists is intrinsic to calling new work.
- The idea that 'art cannot be taught' can be challenged by the 'methodology of the conversation'. This challenge was taken up in my own self-analysis and the subsequent realizations/achievements obtained through 'the methodology of the conversation' in the interviews with students, tutors and established artists.
- The 'methodology of the conversation' is a valid tool in creative processes and challenges the idea that art starts with a blank canvas.
- That 'the Other' in the imagination creates radical possibility.
- That the Jungian concept of 'individuation' suits the artistic process.
- That Alain Badiou's criticism of psychoanalysis is outdated.
- That 'pathography' is not a valid tool for understanding artistic practice.

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<sup>334</sup> Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination*, (Century Hutchinson Ltd., 1988), 371.

## 6. Reflections and Conclusions

## **Appendix A: Glossary**

**Alchemy** is the ancient attempt to create the philosopher's stone and mutable gold. It held the idea that the soul was trapped in matter. Jung saw the 'opus alchymicum', the work of alchemy, as an unconscious projection and process of individuation, which starts with an unconscious content (prima materia) and ends with the realization of the self-symbol (the philosopher's stone), so for our purposes you would encounter the 'prima materia' at the beginning of a body of work which you are trying to transform. In alchemy processes arising from individual psyche are described and encoded. The 'soror mystica' (alchemical sister) is sometimes real, sometimes fantasy; in Jungian interpretation the alchemical sister is the sister that represents the male 'soul', the task of individuation that entails the transferences of the man's anima onto a woman and vice a versa in the interests of individuation.

**Anima Mundi** can be seen as 'the soul of the world' or, for the alchemist, the 'spark' inherent in matter. The concept of Anima mundi can be seen in James Hillman's archetypal psychology, forcing a new direction which designates a therapy beyond the consulting room, inner subjectivity and private relationships and turns the psyche's attention to 'the soul of the world' that has suffered at the hands of over-analysis of the internal worlds of persons to the detriment of the world.

**Archetypes** Jung believed that archetypes are models of people, behaviours or personalities. Jung suggested that the psyche was composed of three components: the ego, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious Jung believed, was where these archetypes exist. Jung suggested that these models are innate, universal and hereditary. Archetypes are unlearned and act to organize how we experience things.

**Bachelard's Paradox** is the concept that the 'image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface'.

**Counter transference** is the patient's influence on (the physicians) unconscious feelings (also see transference).

**Individuation** is in itself a process by which there is realized within the personality a possibility of the development; a development Jung sees immanent in everyone, that culminates in rounding out the individual into a psychic whole, which takes into account both conscious and unconscious balances and realizations. Therefore, individuation can be seen as the task that strives towards maturation and self-realization from the seed to the fruit, to the invisible goal immanent within them.

**Jungian Dream Analysis** – Jung believed the psyche to be a self-regulating organism, which conscious attitudes were likely to be compensated for unconsciously (within the dream) by their opposites. Jung proposed two basic approaches in analyzing dream material: the objective approach, where every person in the dream refers to the person they are, i.e. mother is mother, etc. and the subjective approach, where every person in the dream represents an aspect of the dreamer.

**Libidinal Investment** - is a term first used by Freud meaning sexuality, libido; hence, libidinal investment in psychoanalytic terminology. A divergence of the meaning of libido became a central conflict between Freud and Jung. Jung defined libido as meaning interest in general and believed that all libido cannot be reduced to sexuality. Jung saw other instincts, such as hunger and culture, as having equal value.

**Metamorphosis** – is the profound change in form from one stage to another. Kafka's novel of a man turning into a fly is a good example of metamorphosis.

**Mutative Metaphor** - a 'mutative metaphor' is a metaphor that is given in interpretation to a patient at the 'right' 'creative' and 'facilitating time'. A premature 'therapeutic' intervention is always counter-productive because the patient is not prepared.

**Mandala Symbolism** - needs to be defined against the symbols of transformation that occur during the individuation process. Therefore, it is helpful to see that the symbols of individuation that appear in dreams are images of an archetypal nature, which depict the centralizing process or the production of a new centre of a personality. The symbols that are represented by 'The Mandala' are not concerned with the manifold stages and transformations of the individuation process, but the images that refer directly and exclusively to the new centre as it come into consciousness. Mandalas signify nothing less than a psychic centre of the personality not to be identified with the ego. In Hinduism and Buddhism the image of a mandala is a square image with four gates containing a circle with a centre point.

**Negative Capability** - has its origins in the 'via negativa' which was developed by St. John of the Cross. It was and is an initiation approach for union with God, which is directed by the path encountered of which you do not know. In his poem 'The Four Quartets', the poet, T.S. Eliot, wrote about this ability: "To come to what you know not, you must go by the way you know not. In order to possess what you do not possess you must go by the way of dispossession. In order to arrive at what you are not you must go by the way in which you are not. And what you do not know is the only thing you know, and what you own is what you do not own and where you are is where you are not."

**Oneiric** - of relating to, or suggestive of dreams (Greek, oneiros, dream).

**Pathography** - is a retrospective study, often by a physician, of the possible influence and effects of disease on the life and work of a historical personage; it can be seen as a style of biography that overemphasizes the negative aspects of a person's life and work, such as failure, unhappiness, illness and tragedy.

**Participation Mystique** – is a term derived from Levy Bruhl. It denotes a strange kind of psychological connection with objects and consists of the act where the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship, which amounts to partial identity.

**Post-Freudian and Post-Jungian thought** means that psychoanalytical or analytical **psychological** theory has been extended from early theories. It can also be a title of how a psychoanalyst or analytical psychologist reveals their theoretical orientation, developments and differences.

**Oedipus Complex** - in psychoanalytic theory, the term **Oedipus Complex** denotes the emotions and ideas that the mind keeps in the unconscious, via dynamic repression, that concentrates upon a child's desire to sexually possess the parent of the opposite sex (e.g. males attracted to their mothers, whereas females are attracted to their fathers). Sigmund Freud, who created the term "Oedipus Complex", believed that the Oedipus Complex is a desire for the parent by both males and females; Freud deprecated the term "Electra Complex", which was introduced by Carl Gustav Jung in relation to the Oedipus Complex manifested in young girls. The Oedipus Complex occurs in the third phallic stage (ages 3–6) of the five psychosexual developmental stages, (i) the oral; (ii) the anal; (iii) the phallic; (iv) the latent; (v) the genital, in which the source of libidinal pleasure is in a different erogenous zone of the infant's body.

**Primal Scene** – the expression “primal scene” refers to the sight of sexual relations between the parents, as observed, constructed and/or fantasized by the child as a scene of violence.

**The Pleasure Principle** - a psychoanalytic concept, originated by Sigmund Freud. The pleasure principle states that people seek pleasure and avoid suffering (pain) in order to satisfy their biological and

psychological needs, specifically sexually; the pleasure principle is a drive for id.

**Transformation** – is the act or process of transforming

**Transmogrify** – to change in appearance or form.

**Poetic Induction** - According to Cox 'poetic induction' is very difficult to describe. "I know which door I want you to open on my behalf" is an example of a patient using poetic induction in conversation to describe her experience of psychotherapy after the therapist used the initiative we have described as poetic induction. It is inherently more complex than poetic appropriation as it involves the paradoxical reversal of initiatives. The therapeutic process is facilitated because the therapist responds to a hidden initiative in the patient and the patient enables the therapist to 'open the door' which needs to be opened on his/her behalf. Therefore, it is not a question of the therapist forcing the opening of an inappropriate door; rather, it is a matter of "deep calling unto deep".

**Sublimation** – is the process of transforming libido into 'socially useful' capacities, mainly art. Psychoanalysis often refers to sublimation as the only truly successful defence mechanism.

**Teleology refers** to a process that is directed towards ends rather than causes. It is here that Jung diverges from Freud's classical psychoanalysis, which relies on a reductive approach, for example; 'what occurred in your past that produced the current events?' Jung's teleological approach goes a step further and also asks 'What is this current process trying to lead you towards?' The end result, purpose or aim of a symptom, complex or defence mechanism is as important, if not more so, than its initial cause. A symptom develops not 'because of' prior history but in order to express an unconscious process or accomplish a psychological purpose. The clinical question is not reductive but synthetic; 'What is the symptom doing and what is it for?'

**The Transcendent Function** – is the function that mediates opposites; it expresses itself by way of a symbol and facilitates a transition from one psychological attitude or condition to another.

**Transference** – is the process by which a patient displaces on to his analyst feelings, ideas, etc. which derives from previous figures in his life; by this projection he relates to his analyst as though he were some former object in his life.

**Symbolism** – is the practice of representing things by symbols or investing things with symbolic meaning or character. A symbol is an object, action or idea that represents something other than itself.

**Word Association Test** – is a test devised by Jung to show the reality and autonomy of unconscious complexes. Our conscious intentions and actions are often frustrated by unconscious processes whose very existence is a continual surprise to us; we make slips of the tongue and slips in writing and unconsciously do things that betray our most closely guarded secrets. The word association test discovers things that people cannot or will not speak about. The Word Association Test consists of 100 words to which immediate responses are required. The person conducting the test times the delays in response and then repeats the test to identify complexes, which are then discussed.

## **Appendix B: Biographies of Contributing Artists and Tutors**

### **Cathy Courtney**

Cathy Courtney is a freelance writer and oral historian, who is also the principal trustee of the Jocelyn Herbert Archive. In 2004, together with the theatre designer, Hayden Griffen, she was co-curator for the memorial exhibition, 'Jocelyn Herbert at the National Theatre' and, in 1993, working with Herbert herself, was co-curator for a retrospective of Herbert's career held at The National Theatre. In her role as project officer for National Life stories, an oral history organisation based at the British Library Sound Archive, Courtney created Artists' Lives and Architects' Lives, as well as steering other NLS projects. For seventeen years Courtney contributed a column on book art for Art Monthly and much of her research has been motivated by an interest in the relationship between image and text. In 1995 she and Maria White of The Tate, were co-curators of a survey exhibition of artists' books for London's Tate Gallery. Her publications include Jocelyn Herbert: A Theatre Workbook (1993); The Looking Book: A History of Circle Press (1996); Speaking of Book Art (1996) [raw.wimbledon.ac.uk/?q=node/9](http://raw.wimbledon.ac.uk/?q=node/9)

### **Laurence Edwards**

Laurence Edwards, born in 1967, was a postgraduate student at The Royal College of Art in 1988-90 and awarded Henry Moore Bursary, the Angeloni Prize for Bronze Casting and an Intach Travelling scholarship. He then went to Sri Lanka to study casting with the Sri Lankan Master Founder, Tissa Ranasinghe. On his return in 1990, he established his foundry in Suffolk. Subsequently, in 1998, he was included in the Artists of Fame and Promise exhibition at The Beaux Art Gallery in Bath; from 1998-2002 he exhibited in both solo and group shows in America and England. In 1999

he exhibited in Iron Sculptors Exhibition at The Grounds for Sculpture, New Jersey and in an exhibition at The Bodyworks Gallery in Chicago. In 2000, he exhibited his Stations of the Cross scenes at the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Woolpit, Suffolk as part of the New Sacred Art Project, Woolpit, Bury St. Edmunds and in 2002, took part in the Standing up to Scrutiny series in the Naked Truth, a Tate partnership exhibition at the Fermoy Gallery, Kings Lynn. He also sets up Gallery 26, a small experimental space exhibition in Yoxford, Suffolk. In 2003 Laurence moved to the Butley Studio where he built a large foundry and created a complex of studios where he both teaches and created a working community of artists. In 2004 he joined Messums Gallery, London, where he began work on large-scale bronzes. Laurence's most recent work is catalogued and can be seen on both his own and Messum's websites. In 2012, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors. [Laurenceedwardssculpture.com](http://Laurenceedwardssculpture.com); [www.messums.com](http://www.messums.com)

### **Geraint Evans**

Geraint Evans was born in 1968 and grew up in Swansea, Wales; he now lives and works in London. In 1986 he studied the Foundation Course in Art and Design at the West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, Swansea. He then attended Manchester Polytechnic from 1987-90 where he was awarded the Ba (Hons) Fine Art. In 1990 he obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Art from The Royal Academy Schools. He has been exhibiting in both solo and group shows since 1991. Residences and awards include: 2008 - John Moores 25 Painting Contemporary Painting Prize; 2003 - Prize winner Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award; 2002/3 - The Berwick Gymnasium Fellowship; 2001 - Woo Charitable Foundation Award; 1994 - Banff Centre for Arts, Alberta, Canada; 1993 - Tooth Travel Scholarship: USA and Canada. He has exhibited at the Wilkinson Gallery London, Chapter Cardiff and Casa Salamanca, Spain. Geraint is part of the academic team at Wimbledon College of Art and

currently teaches on the MFA. [g.e.evans@wimbledon.ac.uk](mailto:g.e.evans@wimbledon.ac.uk).  
[www.geraintevans.net](http://www.geraintevans.net)

### **Edwina Fitzpatrick**

Edwina Fitzpatrick who was born in 1961, obtained a First Class BA (Hons) degree in Expressive Arts; she is currently Course Director for the MFA Fine Art Course at Wimbledon College of Art/UOAL. She is involved with creative transitions, a cross CCW group of artists, researchers and students who aim to develop new models for a sustainable university.

Currently, Edwina is researching an AHRC-funded collaborative practice-based PhD which she is studying on a part-time basis. Working with Glasgow School of Art and the Forestry Commission at Grizedale in the Lake District, she is exploring the mutable and transient nature of artwork which is sited in, or references, the green environment. Edwina's research is driven by practice-based experiments, using the strategy of becoming and being lost herself, in order to explore what may be lost.

In 1992 she exhibited at The Trophies of Empire Exhibition – Terra, from 1995-99 at the After the Eden Project and in 2005 at the Orchid Exhibition. She has contributed to many publications; for example: The Art of Living, The Arboreal Laboratory, Kings Wood: A Context, Location, Regeneration and Diver(cities) to name a few. Edwina has also undertaken many residencies: Arboreal Lab, windowsills:pollination, flow chart/stolen water and trust. [www.Edwinafitzpatrick.co.uk](http://www.Edwinafitzpatrick.co.uk);  
[www.wimbledonarts.ac.uk](http://www.wimbledonarts.ac.uk).

### **Cornelia Parker**

Cornelia Parker, born in 1956, is a world-renowned sculptor and installation artist who was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1997. Cornelia Parker has had numerous solo exhibitions in England, Europe and the United States which include the Serpentine Gallery, London (1998),

ICA Boston (2000), the Galeria Civica de Arte Moderne in Turin (2001), the Kunstverein in Stuttgart (2004), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California (2005), the Modern Museum at Fort Worth, Texas (2006) and Museo de Arte de Lima, Lima Peru (2008). Her work has been included in group exhibitions and public collections at the Tate Gallery in London, MOMA in New York, the British Council, Henry Moore Foundation, De Young Museum in San Francisco, the Yale Center for British Art and many other venues. She has received numerous awards beginning in 1980 with the first prize at the Midland View Stoke City Art Gallery and Museum; in 1983, the Southern Arts Award; in 1985, the Greater London Arts Award; in 1989, the British School at Rome Award; in 1991-92 Henry Moore Scholarship WCA; in 1998, the International Association of Arts Critics Prize (USA) - best show by an emerging artist, for Mass: Cold Dark Matter at Dietch Projects, NY; 2000, Honorary Doctorate, University of Wolverhampton; 2005, Honorary Doctorate, University of Birmingham; 2008, Honorary Doctorate, University of Gloucestershire; 2010, OBE; 2010 Elected to the Royal Academy of Arts, London; 2011, The Hugh Casson Drawing Prize, Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.  
[www.frithstreetgallery.com/parker](http://www.frithstreetgallery.com/parker)

### **Daniel Sturgis**

Daniel Sturgis was born in 1966. He was awarded an MA from Goldsmiths College in 1994, where he subsequently taught until his appointment as Course Director in Painting at Camberwell College of Arts, University of the Arts London. His recent exhibitions include Plastic Culture: Legacies of Pop, 1987-2008; Harris Museum, Preston, 2009; Invisible Cities, Jerwood Space, London, 2009 as well as solo presentations: Possibilities in Geometric Abstraction, Galerie Hollenbach, Stuttgart, 2008 and Everybody Loves Somebody, The Locker Plant, Chinati Foundation, Marfa Texas,(2007. He has curated a number of exhibitions looking at aspects of contemporary painting and its historic legacy. These include: The Indiscipline of Painting, Tate St Ives, 2011/2012; Daniel Buren's Voile

Toile/Toile Voile, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, 2005; Between Letters and Abstraction, Wordsworth Trust, 2004; co-curated with Richard Kirwan, Jeremy Moon – A Retrospective, 2001; co-curated with Martyn Simpson, Perfidy at Le Corbusier's Convent Santa Marie de la Tourette in France. In 2008 he was awarded a PhD by Oxford Brookes University; his thesis examined the position of painting and the use of the Baroque, in early post-modern thought.

[www.camberwell.ac.uk](http://www.camberwell.ac.uk). [www.danielsturgis.co.uk/texts/nonarrative.html](http://www.danielsturgis.co.uk/texts/nonarrative.html)

### **Howard Rodgers**

Howard Rodgers studied BA Painting at Manchester Polytechnic between 1965-8 and then went onto Chelsea College Of Art to undertake an MA between 1968-69. His most recent solo exhibitions have been The Sunday Painters, 2010; Pictura, Dortrect, Holland, 2011; Peter Pears Gallery, 2012. Group Shows have been 'Seconds, The Perfect Nude', 2012; Charlie Smith, 2012; Sold Meat, 2013. In 1998 he obtained the Abbey Award in Rome.

### **Sarah Woodfine**

Sarah Woodfine was born in England in 1968 and studied at the Liverpool School of Art from 1988-91 and at the Royal Academy Schools, London from 1992-95. She currently is the Pathway Leader for Fine Art Sculpture at Wimbledon College of Art, UOAL.

Sarah's work has been widely exhibited, including: The Jerwood Drawing Prize; Cheltenham Open Drawing Exhibition; Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London; Hales Gallery, London; Jibby Beane, London; Museum of Garden History, London; Middlesbrough Art Gallery; Compton Verney, Warwickshire; Sheffield Millennium Gallery; Maritime Museum, Portsmouth; Aspex, Portsmouth; Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Cumbria; Ha Gamle Prestegard, Norway; Galleri F15, Norway; Trondjheims Kunstforening, Norway; Haugesund Billedgalleri, Norway.

She has also received many awards, residencies and projects, including: Artangel Nights of London Interactive Project, 2006; The Nelson Touch Collaboration between Aspex Gallery and The Maritime Museum Portsmouth, 2005; The Jerwood Drawing Prize, 2004; Drawing Artist in Residence at Middlesbrough Art Gallery, 2002.

Her work is in a number of collections including the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Middlesbrough Art Gallery; Ha Gamle Prestegard, Norway, as well as private collections in England, USA, Norway, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Hawaii and Spain.

[www.sarahwoodfine@wimbledon.arts.ac.uk](mailto:sarahwoodfine@wimbledon.arts.ac.uk)

## Appendix C: Workbook

### Workbook

In studio 2011





Burnt Offerings /study 1 "Enduring Love". Print of sculpture t46cm x 30 cm

**The 'call' to 'the other' in painting.**



Falconer Andy Hughes Scotland Cairngorms 2011



Ink study from journal, sepia and white ink. 42cm x 3cm



Ink Studies from journal, sepia and white ink. 42cm x 32cm



Ink Study from journal sepia ink and acrylic paint 42cm x 32 cm





Ink Study 1 86 cm x 86 cm

Ink Study 2 110 cm x 80 cm





Ink Study 3 70 cm x 40 cm

Ink study 4 50cm x 50 cm

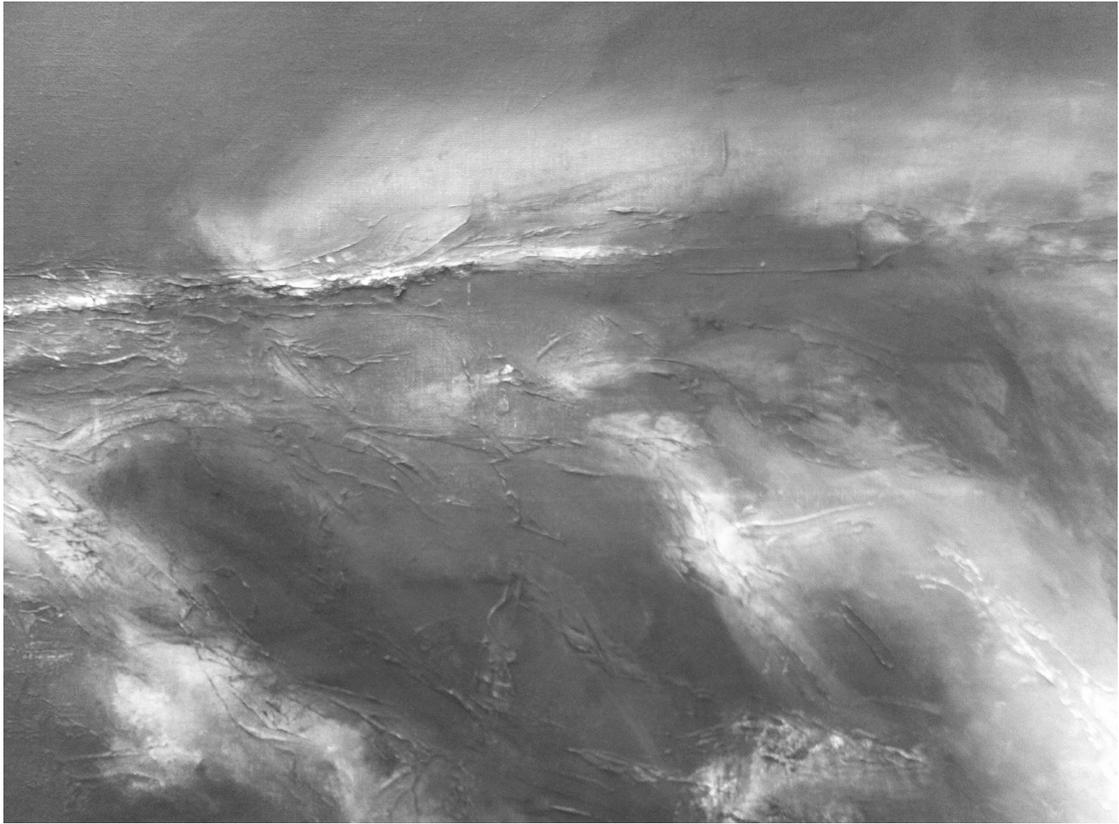




Photographic giclee prints/fragments of ink drawings. Study 1 & 2. 46 cm x 30 cm



Photographic giclee prints/fragments of ink drawings. Study 3. 30 cm x 22 cm



Painting of Tsunami 83 cm x 53 cm oil on linen



Painting of Dream – core complex 83 cm x 53 cm oil on linen

FRAGMENTING WORKS



Cutting from larger canvases 52 cm x 24 cm



Work in fragments Studies 1 & 2 54 cm x 41 cm oil on linen





Work in fragments study 3 29 cm x 22 cm oil on linen



Work in fragments study 4 25cm x 52 cm oil on linen



work in fragments study 5 46 cm x 41 cm oil on linen



Work in fragments study 5 29 cm x 20 cm oil on linen



Work in fragments study 6 52 cm x 24 cm oil on linen



Work in fragments study 7 52 cm x 29 cm oil on linen



Work in fragments study 8 55cm x 52 cm oil on linen



Work in Fragments study 9 50cm x 46 cm oil on linen



Ink studies – ‘not making a painting’ Study 1 0 cm x 26 cm ink on paper



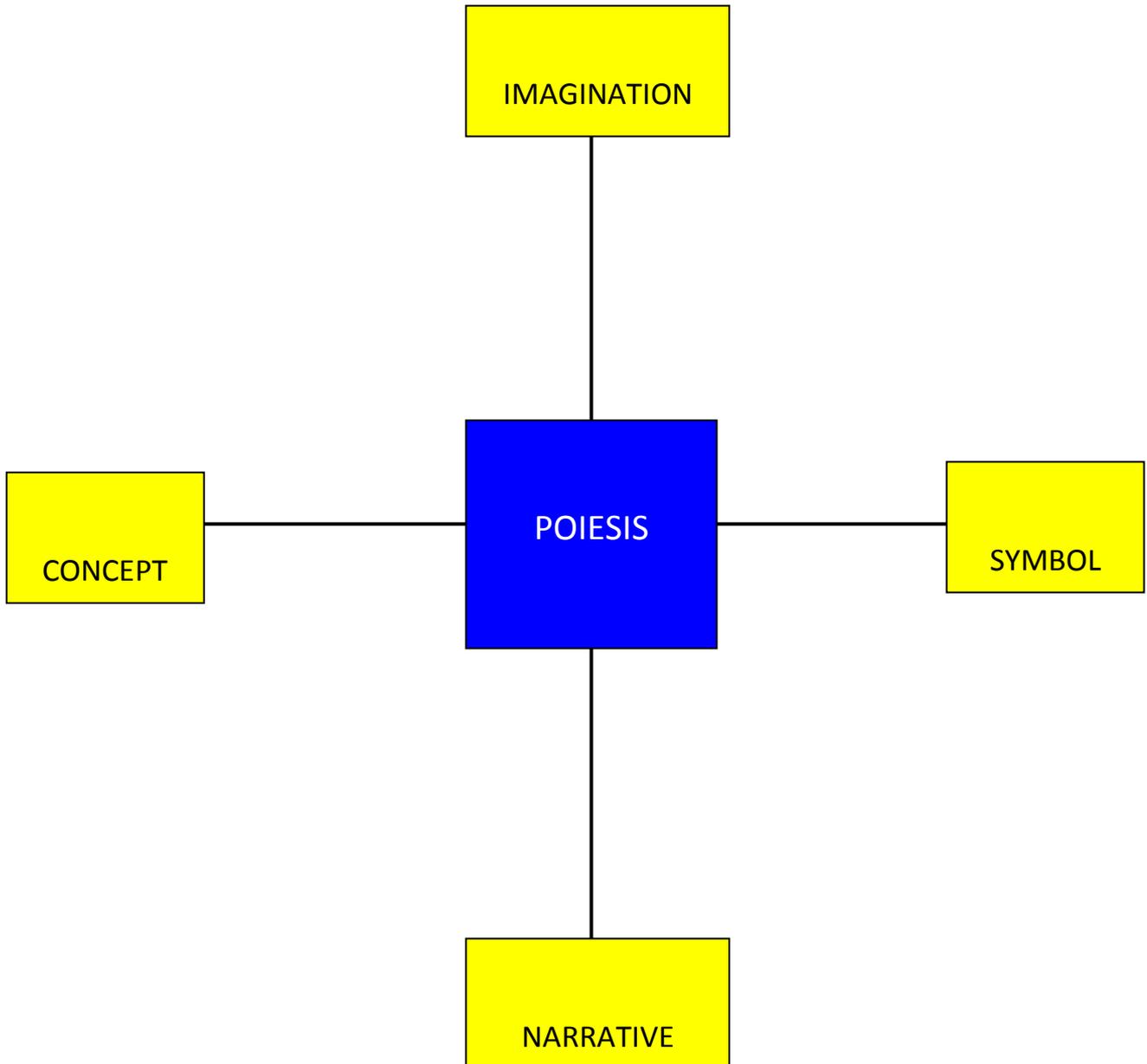
Ink Studies 2 & 3 9 cm x 26 cm Ink on paper



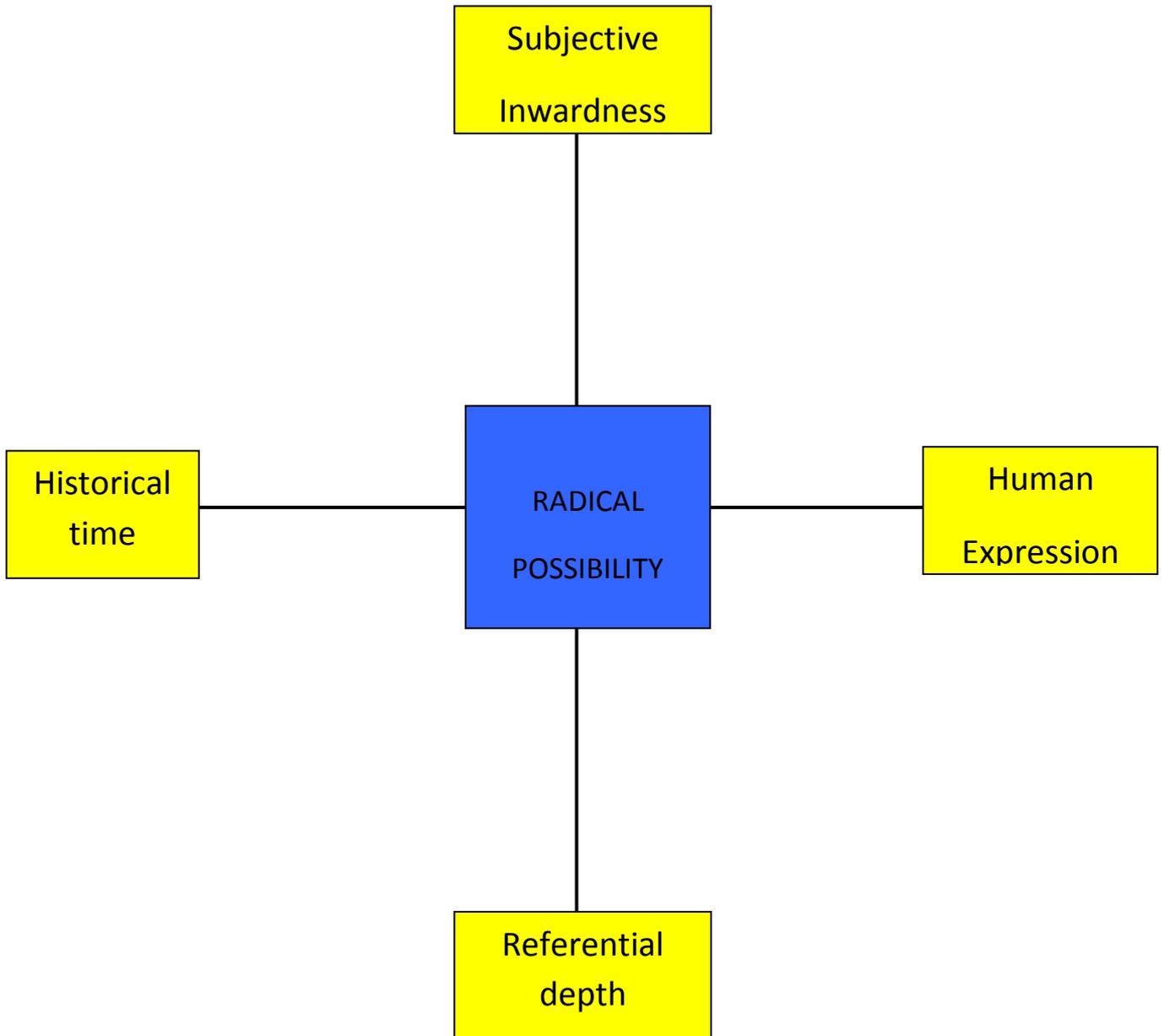
Final Painting from study of work in fragments 68 cm x 46 cm oil on canvas

## Appendix D: Matrixes

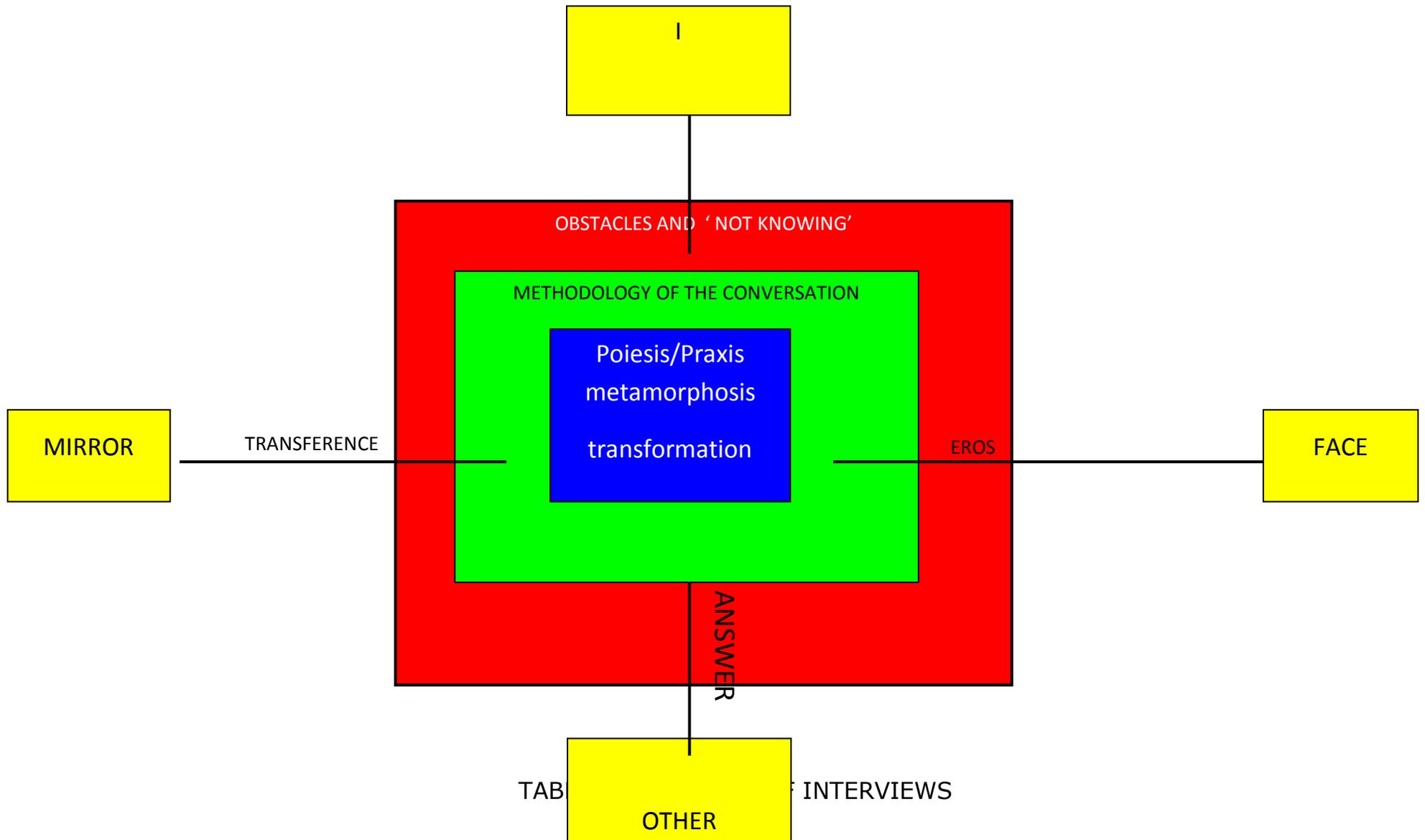
The Matrix of Dr. Murray Cox from The Aeolian Mode



# The Matrix of Dr. Richard Kearney in the 'Wake of the Imagination'



# MATRIX FOR STUDIO PRACTICE



ARTIST CAPABILITY  
AGILITY ABILITY SERIOUSNESS KNOWING

OBSTACLES RELATED TO SELF	OBSTACLES RELATED TO OTHERS	OBSTACLES THAT ARE PRACTICAL
Self confidence	Incomprehension of art world	Time
Self-belief	Lack of respect for students within art colleges	Location
False self	Class system	Travel
Grandiose self	Disorganization in art colleges	Studio spare
Lack of ego drive	Tutorial abandonment	Lack of money
Emotionally Lost	Stress	Life events
Unfocused		
Insecure		
Conservative		
Frightened		
Inferiority complex		

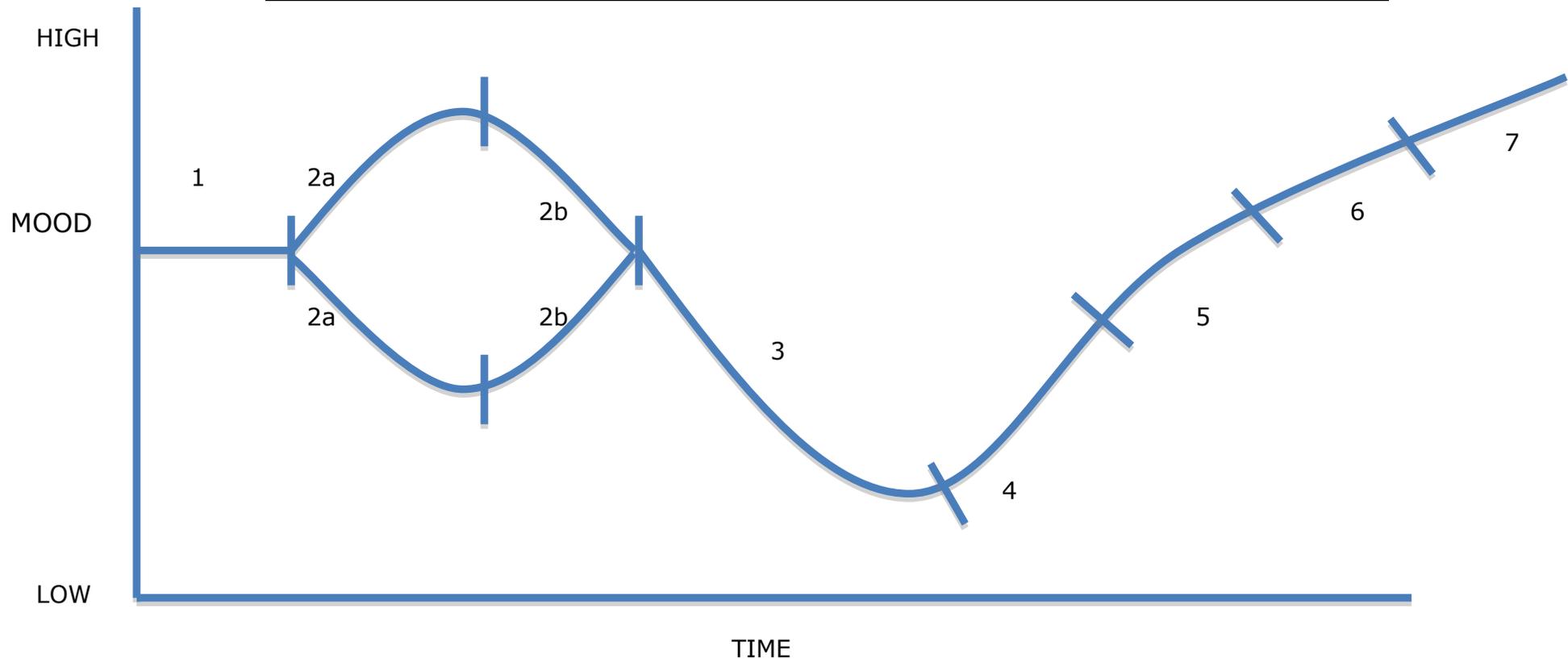
TENETS OF APPROACH TO DEALING WITH OBSTRUCTIONS

RELATED TO SELF	RELATED TO OTHERS OR OBJECT	PRACTICAL
Encouragement	Guidance	Learning to understand the medium
Conviction	Support	Being able to manipulate the medium
Confidence to work through	Witnessing	Understanding the innate syntax of medium
Discipline	Sympathy	Quality of materials
Focus	Maturing to help the encounter with the unknown	A facilitating environment practically
Learning to dig	Removing pressure	
The necessities of emptiness/ negative capability	Allowing the unfinished object	
Communication of need	Responsibility to the art object	
Working through emotional states	Creating obstructions	
Good attitude	Treating obstacles as creative – something to come up against	
Humour	Holding up mirrors in practice	
Art is related to all that is psychological in me	Tough Love	
Commitment	Learning by discovery	
Perseverance	Working through research demands	
Vocational art	Seeing the world through 'the others' eyes	
Pragmatism	Being shown how to see, to look	
Seriousness	The wrestling with the reality of the art object	
Validation of practice	The other is intrinsic to creativity	
Knowing	Art is a conversation – its communication	
Agility	Learning from one's peers	
Ability	An emotionally facilitating environment is good	

## KEY FINDINGS

- That there were four positive attributes common to artists at the outset of artistic life – Agility, Ability, Seriousness and Knowing.
- These artistic capabilities then encountered emotional and psychological obstructions that were common to all three groups. A development of psychological maturity either lessened the encounter with obstructions or made the whole process of approach easier.
- Practical obstructions became easier with establishment of practice and the understanding of the medium.
- The 'other' is intrinsic to the creative process for the majority of artists and the engagement with obstructions is mostly seen as a facilitator of work (not necessarily new work).
- Complaints arose most frequently from students regarding the teaching milieu despite the 'good intention' and experience of teachers.
- The concept of poiesis was notably engaged with differently by artists to the engagement of poiesis in the clinical setting of Broad moor.
- An 'individuating' (Jungian) journey was evident with most artists.

## SEVEN-PHASE MODEL OF STAGES ACCOMPANYING TRANSITION



1. Immobilisation

2. Reaction

a. Elation or Despair

b. Minimisation

3. Self-doubt

4. Letting go

5. Testing out

6. Search for meaning

7. Internalisation

This model is adapted from Hopson's et al 1991 Transitions: "The Challenge of Change". This implies a trajectory of 'working through' but I would like to hypothesize that these 'psychological states' can be expressed from moment to moment and not necessarily linear in progression, by that I mean you don't go necessarily consecutively from step 1 to step 7.

## Appendix E: Images of Cornelia Parker's Exploding Shed



Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View 1991

John Virtue at Work, South Tawton, Dartmoor, Devon.



Landscape 278, 1993-4. 330 x 444cms. Black ink, shellac, acrylic emulsion and oil on canvas.

## **Appendix F: Interviews with Established Artists**

### Questions to established artists

1. Can you tell me how you became an artist?
2. Without obstacles there would be no artists. What do you think of this statement?
3. Thinking back to yourself as a young student starting out do you remember the obstacles that you encountered, if any?
4. Do you think your relationship to obstacles to the advancement of your practice has changed over the years?
5. In the whole of your artistic life what has been your greatest obstacle?
6. Has anybody or anything affected your approach to obstacles in your studio practice?
7. What role do you think conversations with others have in artistic practice
8. Do the methods that you have affect your methods of dealing with the obstacles that you encounter?
9. Do you think art starts with a blank canvas?
10. Do you think that the artist should simply let the artwork speak?
11. Is there a role for psychoanalysis in art practice?
12. How do you think artists call new work?
13. Do you think art can be taught
14. Do you create your own methods or use other peoples approaches
15. Is the obstacle intrinsic to the call to new work?
16. Poiesis is about 'calling into existence that which has not been there before'. Do you think that is possible?

**Can you tell me how you became an artist?**

"Long answer: I don't think I ever thought of anything else. I always used to draw and paint. A serious reply to that in a way is I have often talked about this with a couple of friends of mine, especially with one other girl; we came to the conclusion that it's a lottery of why we become artists. One reason might be people want power; they want to be in the limelight so to speak - centre stage. And the other reason is that people want to hide, want to go where no one else can follow, and I think I am the second. I sort of constructed painting really as a place to go to that was my place."

**Without obstacles there would be no artists. What do you think of this statement?**

"Without obstacles there would be no humanity."

**Thinking back to yourself as a young artist starting out, do you remember the obstacles that you encountered?**

"They are the same obstacles that I encounter now: massive sense of importance of what you are doing with a complete lack of reference as to why you will be doing that. I suppose, essentially, with massive self-doubts based on an absolute belief of being able to do it, so lots of paradoxes really. I went to Walthamstow Art College as it was then doing a foundation course; I was 16 years old. I did two years there. Walthamstow was a very traditional college at that time; you did a lot of life drawing and 3-D compositions, and basically there were a lot of older guys there who had been turned mad by the national service. It was quite great in terms of that, and then I went off to Manchester. I went to Manchester as a way of moving out of home and, at that point, to get out of London. I didn't like Manchester; I spent three years at Manchester really sort of not liking it, just existing, in a serious way under an existential cloud. I was the grumpy person at the end of the bar. And I painted; and at the end, I stopped painting. But by the end, I had actually got into Chelsea post-graduation by some massive fluke - at the end of my time at Manchester I had changed my work, and they didn't like it, and I ended up getting a 2/2. But I had already gotten into Chelsea, so I didn't care. These days, I would probably not get into Chelsea. So I came back to London and did a year at Chelsea, which was good. It was much better and was back into real life."

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles to the advancement of your practice has changed over the years?**

"Yes. In a sense, the more times you do it and get through it the more times you know that there is always a way through it, so the best thing is just to keep going."

**In the whole of your artistic life, what has been your greatest obstacle?**

"My self; what else could it be? I have got passed blaming me mum."

**In your studio practice, has anyone or anything affected your approach to obstacles?**

"That is a difficult one, because my work is always, or most often, autobiographical in a lot of ways - much more so than a lot of peer group work or friends' work. Yes. So lots of people have influenced me; well, lots of people have had an effect on me, but I still seem to have this arrogance to be awkward enough to resist influence."

**What role do you think conversations with others have in your artistic practice?**

"There are very few of them. Artists in my experience don't talk about art in that sort of way. And as you get older, I think the conversation often gets more and more difficult; because in a way, you have been having a conversation with yourself, which is quite difficult for anyone else to join in."

**Do you think art starts with a blank canvas?**

"Literally for me, yes, but I think it sucks up on everything that is around and in you, so it is like detritus all around you."

**Do you think that artists should simply let their artwork speak?**

"Well, it would be certainly refreshing these days. I think in the end that's what they have to do, but you come with a massive amount of knowledge in the boat to any artwork. You don't just stumble across it; so you are bringing all that with you, and that's what it speaks through, that's its language."

**Do you think that there is a role for psychoanalysis in art practice?**

"I say with a big dollop, but I have often kept myself sane making art. I don't believe that psychoanalysis explains or attempts to understand what the creative arts are. It's not a problem to be solved, so it is something that is there; and however you get there, it is to be judged on results."

**How do artists 'call' new work?**

"By using old work. Metamorphosis, I suppose, so it doesn't come out of nothing."

**Do you think art can be taught?**

"Anything can be taught, and it's a question of doing something with it - doing something good with it, worthwhile with it, or interesting with it. You can't teach someone to do anything great with it."

**In your own work, do you create your own methods or other people's approaches?**

"This is now 2,000 years old or 1,500 years old, as a technique. I am not interested in re-inventing it particularly for its own sake, but it is interesting that you are constantly finding for oneself new things to do with it; but they have all been done before, no doubt about it, but that doesn't make it less valid."

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which has not been there before. Do you think that is possible?**

"Well, in that every experience that every human being has is original, unique to that human being, but also has been had by every human being that has ever existed; so yes and no. I don't think you can make something that has never ever existed before. Well, maybe yes you can as maybe no one has painted such a bizarre painting as this one in front of us before; but where it comes from, I don't know. I am now muddling."

## Interview with Cornelia Parker

### **Can you tell me how you became an artist?**

"I had great art teachers at school; I wasn't particularly academic at school, but the people who mentored me the most were two great art teachers, husband and wife, and I was very interested in English literature as well. It appealed to me because it was about freedom, and I didn't know about all the orthodoxies in art, as there is in any other subject, but I just felt it was a free space that you could reinvent yourself. I had spent all my childhood doing hard labor, as we lived on a smallholding, working with my parents, and I spent a lot of time on my own and I spent a lot of time inside my head. It seemed like an extension of that, and I remember being really interested in design and all that, but I had no confidence. So I thought I just wasn't going to be good enough for that, but fine art seemed to be much freer, and I was good at it, so it was the thing that I felt most happy with. Also, I felt it was being a bit rebellious."

### **Without obstacles there would be no artists. What do you think of this statement?**

"Well, it would be great, I think, but everything has become so specialized, and artists have taken on that 'specialism', and it's all very natural and it's part of our make-up to want to make images or to act, sing or dance. I mean all the art forms are kind of there in children, and then it's educated out of us and times become more focused and it's use to society - but it is always questioned, but I think it's our most natural state. So yes, I think everyone has the ability to be an artist."

### **Thinking back to yourself as a young student, do you remember the obstacles you encountered?**

"Yes, with my work. I think, yes definitely. I didn't really understand what making art was about until halfway through my degree. I think I realized it was a much more tougher number than you could ever imagine; I didn't realize it was all about yourself, and I just thought it was about this received idea thing. There was art history out there, and you learnt some technique, you would require it, and then you would be a craftsman or craftswoman. And although I had this notion of freedom, I thought it was equipping myself with some sort of technical framework and, actually, I was useless at that and hated all that, and I thought it was quite deliberate that I had moved from painting halfway through my degree to sculpture where I had missed all the technical processes - so I was avoiding the issue even then. So to me, avoiding the object is trying not to fall into this received idea and this received hole, but I realized that it was very emotionally demanding to be searching through yourself for some kind of way of expressing this non-received idea - also art students, I think, go through a mini sort of nervous breakdown while they are at art schools, because I have taught in art schools for fifteen years so I have noticed it; they don't realize that you have to draw on yourself and you

have to be self-disciplined and self-focused; if you don't do it nobody will do it for you."

**When you switched from painting to sculpture, do you think this was when you started avoiding the object, or had you been avoiding the object always?**

"I have been avoiding the object always, always avoiding the object, but I realized when I started making sculpture it was very important for me to, because I was really interested in real things and not creating illusions and not trying to depict something. And I think that was what I was doing in painting; I was always trying to depict things, and so I realized that that was what I didn't want to do at all. And so the idea in sculpture I could use real things, in for their own physicality and for their own history, was something that gradually dawned on me. It was very liberating that, that all the things we find familiar that seem non-abstract that people can understand, whether it's a tin can that has been squashed on the road or a door that you open and close everyday but it's got little scratches on it because it's made up of the history of the people coming and going through it, that just felt like... or coming through the window and you get all the little dust mites, that seemed to be the stuff that I wanted to deal with. And it took me a long time, and I don't think even at college I managed it. But when I left college, to be able to harness that and to think that this is what I am trying to capture, trying to find the inverse of the monument or trying to find the most unknowable stuff through the most known and knowable stuff, became more and more interesting to me."

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles to the advancement of your practice has changed over the years?**

"I am very weird when I make work; I never really look back on my back issue. I begin again every time which is really exhausting but somehow feels like the most liberating thing, and sometimes I come full circle and sometimes I am touching on something that is near on identical to what I made twenty years ago, but it doesn't really matter, because I have come at it from a different place. But I always assume that my unconscious knows more than my conscious, and so I allow myself to free associate. It's like picking up tiny bits of information along the way, and suddenly it will crystallize into something. I might have an idea to physically do something; like at the moment, I hate doing proposals for people and I very rarely do commissions, but I am doing one for Folkestone. Traditionally in Folkestone, and it's the second one and it's a curated show where 20 international artists have been invited to be in it and you are responding to a place and it's a temporary work, and I decide that I wanted to make a version of the Little Mermaid from Copenhagen. And I have had the notion of the Little Mermaid from Copenhagen in my mind for some time, working with famous monuments twenty or thirty years ago, and the fourth plinth came up and I thought maybe I should put it on that and apply to Copenhagen. But now it's in China and gone off on expo, but I felt because it's just a clichéd object everyone in the world

goes and visits it and it's had its head blown off and it's been covered in graffiti and spawned copies in other countries, and why, what is so special about this thing? So it's a cliché, a clichéd object, so I am at the moment finding the model for the one down in Folkestone, and I wanted someone from Folkestone. I wanted to use a real body, not an idealized, two-thirds perfect model, so I was getting all these images through people sitting in their living room with their cats, posing in their swimming suits, or on their poufee, or in the garden, or on the rocks by the beach - really nice shots of housewives, yoga teachers or whatever pretending to be this legendary figure. And I really love that, and it's great, and I wish I could use them all but I can't. I don't know what I am looking for; I kind of thought I knew, but there has to be a site for digging. You set up a sort of process, and then you dig at that spot, then you - 'de bono' in thinking of where do you dig a hole? - Where do you start digging? - and the idea is just to decide on a site of where you are going to start digging. A lot of art is struggling to find these places to dig."

**In the whole of your artistic life, what has been your greatest obstacle?**

"Well, I think myself. Yes, I think myself is the biggest obstacle, and I think the older I get it's not necessarily easier to make-work. I think I found it easier twenty years ago; and I think now I have got so many holes that I have dug all over the place it's like a very messy football field filled with craters half dug, and I am going to hit the water table soon and it's all going to link up. I think perhaps I dig too many holes; that's my problem. The avoided object - somehow there is always that and that seems to be the over-riding idea. Sometimes in the writings of empty space, Susan Sontag writes about that, people who meditate try to create an empty space, but somehow as you get older it's harder and harder to create that empty space because you have created so many pathways in your brain that somehow the empty, unexcavated bit is hard to find. I think I can think myself into corners, as anyone can I am sure, any writer, musician. And sometimes, so some parts of the work have become very therapeutic, so squashing silver, I am still squashing silver, so now it's like a compulsive behavior thing. It is one of the most enduring relationships I have with squashing things, with squashing silver it, but I try not to analyze my work. I very rarely read about myself; why would I? I very rarely read about art, possibly monographs about artists that I love, but I try not to read current art magazine or current art practice. I read a lot of other things about politics or science; the empty space can get too swallowed up, and I don't want to be too conscious of what is going on in the current art scene because it's not necessary to me at all."

**What role do you think conversations with others have in your artistic practice?**

"Oh huge, I think. I think conversations not about art have a huge place. And I realize that a lot of my art is quite oral, and I am aware that very often I feel inspired during a conversation; it might be the search for the mermaid, or it might be talking to someone who has nothing to do with

my line of artistic practice. So if it is somebody who knows how to melt lead and draw it into wire, I might find myself talking to someone about metallurgy of geology, the properties of materials really; not only that, but chance encounters and conversations you have with someone who might be a tree surgeon. I find myself far more stimulated during a conversation than I would ever have been in a studio; I am not a very studio-orientated artist. I think that what I miss the most from art teaching, which I miss so much, and now I just don't have the time, is the conversations. I would be talking, two or three days a week, all day, about somebody else's artistic problem. And in a way, you were solving a lot of your own by not even focusing on your own; and that was very good, but it was equally very exhausting and just became too much with everything else going on. So really, conversations are very important. The more successful you become as an artist, it's very hard to have those conversations, those kinds of conversations with your peers, and it's just too... I have got lots of friends who are not artists, but they are composers, or dancers or writers; once removed is much more liberating in a way. My husband is an artist, and we live and work in the same building; we talk about art, but talking about art isn't necessarily that useful."

### **Do you think that art starts with a blank canvas?**

"Well, I am not sure - as soon as you have had a thought, it's not blank anymore. It's impossible in a way, for me. Art now starts with the most loaded canvas, with, like, the little mermaid, or the door that has been kicked. So somehow, it is over-full of content somehow can be the blankest canvas. I don't know what the process is really, other than it is a very busy spot; but somehow, because it is you somehow have to hone in on the microscopic bit of it - something like a pinhole made by Charlotte Bronte, just a hole, and somehow the hole, the electron microphotograph of this hole that she made which was very unconscious (she wasn't making it for artistic reasons, it was a by-product), but somehow the hole seemed to (and it was made by her, so the contours of it, what you are looking at, is totally created by her) somehow seems to sum up all the emotional baggage that is attached to her and her family. I don't know; somehow for me all the stuff around the Bronte's, and I love the Bronte's, it is like a big romanticism and a received romanticism; the whole Bronte myth stuff is huge, and somehow taking the humblest thing that she ever did, I can find out more about her - not only her, but romance, or whatever the hole symbolizes for me, or emotional trauma. So that little Bronte hole is one of the things that, well, all I am doing is pointing it out."

### **Do you think the artist should simply let the artwork speak?**

"I am quite happy to let mine speak. Sometimes, occasionally, I have read things about my work and thought, 'Oh, that's nothing to do with it at all; people are projecting onto it'. But in the end, once you have offered, your work is sort of open for interpretation. And I want it to be open to interpretation, and I want it to be open to lots of different

interpretations; so it would be terrible if it all had just the same interpretation. I can offer a tiny bit of insight into what the process was or how I got there. But once the work is made, I can understand something much more from doing it; but I get frightened if I over-analyze my work. I get fed up talking about it, because you think, 'Well, I don't want to close down any reading of it'. If I give a slide show, I will talk only a very small amount about each slide. I don't really want to fill it up with, 'Oh, I was trying to do this,' because I might have been trying to do something completely different from what the work is. I quite like work that is inscrutable. I think Duchamp is one of my favorite artists; a lot has been written about him, but he just abdicated."

### **Do you think there is a role for psychoanalysis in art practice?**

"Yes, I am sure there is. I did think that when I was teaching I felt a bit like a psychoanalyst. I certainly did. Yeah, I think there is room for every kind of activity in art practice, whether it is science or history or geography or astronomy. Art touches on everything, and I think every single person is there. I was reading about Ferran Andria, you know the El Bulli chef, and I saw him speak actually; and he can talk about it scientifically. People said, 'Oh, when are you going to open your restaurant in London, write a cookbook'. It is not about that at all. So, it's trying to analyze each brush stroke as you put it on a canvas. He just wants to create new flavors; it's almost a philosophical thing, and he is an artist as far as I am concerned. So I think there is room for a career in art so there is room for lots of different artists; they are not necessarily making painting or sculpture or whatever. I think the term 'art' is really annoying."

### **How do you think artists 'call' new work?**

"Well, I think some work that is not yet made, there is some work there worrying away wanting to be made. My problem is now - which makes it very difficult to make art - is that I have lots of demands from people or offers to be in shows and create projects and they are all about their agendas. It is very hard to say, 'No, I don't want to do any of that, I am doing this,' because you might not know what the hell you are doing. That's a harder thing, but I have ideas that are brewing away which have not come to the surface. But a conversation might trigger them breaking through, or a request like the mermaid; perhaps this little mermaid wants to come out. Things worry away; then they pop out. But in the end, the only person that can get them out is me; but sometimes, having pressure helps."

### **Poiesis means calling into existence that which was not there before. Do you think that is possible?**

"I think everything has been there before; but I think rather like dark cold matter out in the universe, we know that it exists but we can't see it. And we don't know how to measure it; it needs to be defined or spray some paint on it to see what shape it is. Do you know what I mean? If you could give something intangible a shape - I think it's an Eastern saying about how do you define a hole because a hole is nothing, so you define it by the edge of it. So the Bronte hole is a hole in a piece of paper, a little pin hole, so the hole has a papery edge so the contours of the hole are made by the paper; and the substance of the hole has been made by Charlotte by puncturing the paper, by a pin or needle, which created the space. But what is the hole? I think the Eastern saying is that we are the hole, and we cannot be defined by anything. What we see in the mirror, or how people respond to us, we will never see our faces. So bringing into being that which didn't exist is what I am trying to do, but you have to give it the edge. If it was an embryo firearm, we know what it is going to become; we could fill it in, but it has been stopped. I think that is one of my favorite works, as it has not yet been born but its intention is there."

**That is what I loved about your shed. I can't remember which book it was in, maybe *Perpetual Canon* where he talks about this thing that I really love which is that 'it's on its way'. Philosophically, Gaudier says we are all just on our way and things are just becoming, so when you look at your exploding shed you see that moment of change, you can see it suspended and I personally think, though I don't think you can prove this, that that is Poiesis, but that moment when you can just capture it. But what I have been finding out in this research project is the language in artistic practice is very different to the language of Poiesis in psychoanalytical practice. So within psychoanalytical practice, you can be working with a patient and bring something new into existence by the language and by what is opened up; they have a new feeling that they have not had before. But what I think for us as artists, or what I am trying to see, is that Poiesis is held in perception; you either see it or you don't see it. So one person could say, 'Yes, I think that is Poiesis', or another person could say, 'No, I think that is metamorphosis because there is a bit of old shed there and it's just changed into'. It's a very difficult thing that I am finding - to define in artistic practice, even though I feel as if I can see it.**

"Do you know Duchamp's notion of inframince?"

**No**

"It's very wonderful; it is the difference between something crumpled and something ironed. It's just this slippage between one state and another, and that's very much my territory. So the tarnish is a very infra-mince thing; it's the chemical reaction on the surface of things, and the atmosphere has caused the chemical reaction. It's not really an object, tarnish; it's something that you can get rid of. But the air and the shiny

together make this tarnish combusting, so that's why I like those kinds of things. Liminality? Yes, it is. I try not to be too defined, what it is I am trying to achieve, because I don't really know what I am trying to achieve. But I always try to keep things out of focus for myself; and says with this thing the Folkestone Mermaid, it's a very simple populist idea in a way, but I am hoping through the process, or already, I am finding the secret lives of woman, all those people who could be the model. And I look at all the 40 ladies, and I am wondering how many of them could be the model, because it's a very vulnerable-making thing to sit on a rock naked. In bronze, it's you; I am casting them. The only thing that will be modeled will be their eyes, and perhaps a bit of fish tale if they get a fish tail, so it will be warts and all in a way. It's very courageous and perhaps they don't realize it yet. Perhaps it's finding someone who can cope with that, the physicality of that, because of presenting yourself to the world rather than a representation of yourself to the world is very different. Tilda Swinton in the Glass Box was because she was... she wanted to do that in costume, and I said, 'Well, if you do that then you dress as Snow White'. But then, it's a depiction; it's not representative. It's trying to create an illusion of something, and really so much more interesting is being yourself'. But how much more demanding it was. Perhaps I didn't realize through the process how much I was asking; because she had the original idea to sleep as snow white in a glass coffin, and then it became collaboration. There was all these new collaboration grants with people from different disciplines, so I said, 'Well, I am not interested in the glass coffin and the Snow White. I am interested in the sleeping. So, you can be Snow White.' But somehow by doing that, it made Tilda much more vulnerable. I didn't understand that, and she didn't understand that. It was a much more demanding thing; because I think she is a very great actress, but I think she really is quite a vulnerable person. And so it was a different thing; and so it's interesting, as I have a lot of friends who are actors who can do once removed."

**Can you tell me how you became an artist?**

“Basically through a facility of drawing as a child, encouraging parents as a child and not much option as far as any other subjects evolving at school. Leaving school at an early age at sixteen going straight to Art College, as this was the only thing that was seen that I could be good at. I developed from there really; and I found myself first day, and I felt myself at home, brilliant people explaining brilliant things, and the answers of the art world began and mysteries were unlocked in Lowestoft.”

**Without obstacles there would be no artists. What do you think of this statement?**

“Personally, I would agree. The easier it is for an artist it seems to me a direct correlation with the quality of the art. So I find the limitations, be it processes- based, facility-based, politically-based it all seems to strike interesting chords with art.”

**Thinking back to yourself as a young student starting out, do you remember the obstacles you encountered?**

“As a young student, the main obstacles that I encountered were inherently with myself; to begin with, my lack of belief, confidence, my conservatism through lack of knowledge. My ambitions were lunacies, very small, very limited, because I wasn’t aware of the potential that I had or what could be achieved; and it took many, many years through art college and beyond to slowly incrementally build up ambition. And it is still growing, so the scope of what can be done and what can be achieved, people and places, is forever expanding in my head. So I started expanding from a very conservative base, not a radical base, but from a guy who didn’t understand the scale of the world that he could occupy.”

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles to the advancement of your practice has changed over the years?**

“Yes, I look for them; it’s now getting to the point now that it’s not that you are trying to self-consciously make things difficult for yourself, but you know that you need the grit in the oyster in order to create the pearl. And so for example, I purposely, much to the annoyance of people who work here, don’t make a nice studio for myself. So people have to suffer it; my studio is a sewer. It’s the lowest of the lowest; it’s a hard place. It’s dirty, it’s dusty, it’s dark but out of that I find that it feeds my creative spark. I don’t want it too comfortable; that would kill my art. As a result of that, I have limitations imposed upon me. It comes about through habit and lack of having funds, having these spaces and making the best of them and out of that trying to make beautiful things. And so out of

that, I never think I would have an Anthony Gormley warehouse with 20 assistants. It will always be to do with my immediate surroundings and trying to make sense of it, and if I didn't have that obstacle to confront then I don't know what I would do."

**In the whole of your artistic life, what has been your greatest obstacle?**

"Me! Seriously, I tell you what the biggest obstacle is; it is the class system within the art world. I am a technician, and it has taken people a long time to realize that a technician can be a thinker and a creative; it has taken me many, many years. It started at the RCA when I went to a foundry course alongside a sculpture course with the bright young things, and it was very trendy. They became the YBA's bright intelligent, and from my point of view slightly indulged students, and I was working effectively as the coalman next door; and to have ostensibly a class system set out for me in that way didn't do my confidence any good. To be at the wrong place at the right time; it was not good, but at the same time brilliant because I sort of developed and grew basically to feel out of my time. To deal with the lack of confidence, and to deal with the insecurity based on that experience, took a long time. To not be tempted to join that world and try and talk about language has been very difficult. To hone my own style, skill, aesthetic, school of ideas has been very difficult because mostly it has been about me qualifying myself in the context of feeling or being a second rate citizen; the effect, the British class system, has been the major obstacle in my own self- development and the development of my career as well as my geography."

**Has anybody or anything affected your approach to obstacles in your studio practice?**

"Slowly and incrementally, people have given me confidence in what I am doing. I do consider the whole studio group as a piece of art. I do believe that there is a social dimension to my practice, which is what this is, and I feel passionate about it. So that sort of development, which has come out of necessity, has become a philosophy. So the idea that I needed to share my studio and was forced to share work through the process of my bronze casting, so I needing help so I had to deal, had to share, or showing how to do. So to begin with, it was mediated by other people who were in the world of education, but it has slowly developed in my social world in two spheres. I have a hierarchy of people that come in from the established professional reputation base, as it were from London, who come in and work alongside me or I work with them. Then I have the student world that comes in and assists and helps and takes studio space and learns. So I have these two worlds that I am a part of, and that I am in the middle of, and then there are the established artists who are on the journey with me and that's very important. And each of those has affected my dealing with obstacles, and there are specific people in specific moments when it has clicked. This is more than a shambolic collection of people who don't know where to go, but that it can be a place and it can mean something; it can mean something and have a bigger

picture. So obstacles have been overcome incrementally through that process."

### **What role do you think conversations with others have in artistic practice?**

"Because now in the context of this studio being part of my practice and the people that come in, to help and learn through my practice, the conversations are all relevant now; and the skill has been to be able to talk about my practice without seemingly not talking about myself all the time. In that collaborate aspect and that social notion, talking about work is a far subtler thing than you would imagine. So building a space like this comes out of a shared idea. This space, which is basically a grain silo, has been turned into a little bar, pub, cozy snug; it's got a deck, sofas, iron pillars, has a Raeburn cooker and a settle going around it, and this is a classic example, with one Elgin relief on the wall, cozy lighting, alcohol etc. this is where we meet; this is where we have little parties. Often we meet in here after a bronze pour; we meet and have a little drink, cook up some food. We will often sit here and talk at lunchtime, and in other parts, and discuss events. But my practice and the fact that I need people all the time to help, and the fact that I have made my studio a virtual corridor which people travel, which means that I am disturbed constantly and irritated constantly and stopped from what I am doing constantly which is another obstacle that I have set up myself. So effectively, I have had to make a virtue of every problem that I have got and turn it into a positive rather than be beaten by it. So yesterday, five people got to talk to me in my studio by twelve o'clock, all cutting the DNA of my day up, all of them destroying the thought processes that were taking place, from the banal to the good conversations, from 'Can you pick up the sash windows from down the road?' to 'What are you doing here?' All those conversations have to contribute, otherwise I die; so I have to make them work for me, and it's important that I am out there and open and not in a little box hidden away. So I am happy for all the other artists to be in their little spaces doing what they want to do, but I have to be in the place where they all meet, where they are sociable. And so I get the benefit of everyone's dismissive comments, offhand comments, or unguarded comments; so I have a permanent critical scenario around me which is white noise and which I would be very surprised if many people could handle. But I have had to learn to have it in order to create this social world that I deem important. I can't say no; I want to please everyone, which most probably comes from all that insecurity from years ago and wanting everyone happy and wanting to communicate and seeing life as fun."

### **Do you think that art starts with a blank canvas?**

"I would say that I couldn't envisage a world where there would be a blank canvas. I can't think of a time when I didn't have something in my head, which would lead onto the next thing. There is one moment -

actually I was in India, and I arrived in India in a completely strange world, and I was given a room and it had nothing in it. As a bedroom it had a sofa, a cooker and a fridge and nothing in it. I didn't know what to do, so I sat and stared at blank walls for about a week and was scared, and was very scared, and I thought, 'I don't understand this world, this place, or where I am'. I am in a cell and a white wall to look at, and eventually the white wall became a very stimulating place in my head and became alive; that was a moment when I was really confronted by a blank space, a white space, and I had nothing to offer it. I was about twenty, and all I could do was let the experiences that I was having at that time slowly grow. That gave me a lot of confidence - out of nothing something can come; but the idea of, or the cliché of, the white piece of paper I can't adhere to."

### **Is there a role for psychoanalysis in art practice?**

"I think after all I have been saying, I have to say yes. I can't really get out of that one. I would love to say no; I would love to say no, only because I would be naturally reticent because it blurs into therapy, and I don't really believe in that in a deep sense. I think it works in a superficial sense. I don't think that it works on a deep level, but if Pollock did piss on the floor with his mates - well, after everything said, I can't deny that there is a mental side like screwed up bloke trying to deal with the world."

### **How do artists call new work?**

"Well, I can't talk on a general level. Well I have got this little thing in my head, and the idea is this Sartre said (I read a book once) the imagination is a bad thing; I took it, as ideas are a bad thing. If you understand a cube in your head, you understand the cube completely and there are no surprises in the cube, you can turn it around in your head and it's just a cube and your imagination has seen it and it stops. That is the idea and that is my problem. I have to make something to cause trouble; so I think I want to make a figure, and I can imagine the figure and that's fine. It looks brilliant in my dreams, and I will get up and I know full well, it will die immediately a death immediately I make it. And that is the moment when the thing starts, and that is the moment when I call things. That's why I make so much stuff, because mentally I can't be satisfied. I am suspicious of ideas. So I have to destroy the ideas by making and then the object itself starts to generate its own ideas, it's things; it sucks up and all the white noise starts to come in, to fuck it up, and life starts to take up and it's a chaotic world that slowly constructs this thing and all I have to worry about is me being honest - to think that I am honest and to believe that this is me making this and not another force or another influence whether it be commercial, a bitchy comment, whether it be or something else - but commercialism is the usual worry. The fact that I am making something real and not for a fact that it is proper; so those

are the main concerns, that I am being me. And then you have those tramlines of worrying what type of object you are making - whether it is a sentimental, whether it's a hard grimaced, nasty object and whether it is something honest and mixing the two up and playing around with it. You need to mediate the object as it goes, but that is the way the head deals with the object."

### **Do you think art can be taught?**

"Yes, absolutely. I can only say that I have been through a lifetime of education, the well-known world that I inhabit, educating constantly. Triggers are pulled and lights go on, and I am continually affected by my surroundings and by people; so that is an education, isn't it?"

### **Do you create your own methods or use other people's approaches?**

"I don't have a plan, but I know for a fact of people influencing me here. I, by the process of osmosis, absorb stuff. I like to be a sponge; I like to be a witness to my work, and I like to feel that I am the tuning fork, a filter. The better my hands get the better my brain gets, and my hand-brain coordination gets better the more finally tuned that filter becomes. So the people coming in and out, and the people that I am watching, the life I am leading is slowly channeled more efficiently through this rather haphazard filter that is me. The methodology is not to have a methodology; it is trying to pare down my thinking and me and to be much more of a receptor."

### **Is the obstacle intrinsic to calling new work?**

"Yes, in my case; yes, I am just trying to think how I make things. It's often the stubborn material; it's often not good and often doesn't really get going till I have the first collapse and I had the first disaster. I don't call it obstacle; I call it the beginning of a dialogue. So it's like I ask a question and I get an answer; I don't really think in terms of obstacles. I think in terms of, 'Now we are getting going'. I think, 'Oh, you have answered me now; the cube has gone in my head'. I definitely see it like that; the simplest of things - say the time of year, a wax macquette in the middle of the summer - I will come back the next day and it will have fallen off the bench and be wonky on the floor. So my process at that time is affected by the environment as well as everything else, so I end up often with my figures, losing what I thought I had; but then again the environment, the weather or whatever, has created an obstacle and started a dialogue. All this has to be seen positively otherwise I will be very depressed. So it has to be taken on board and dealt with as a serious part of my process."

### **Poiesis is about calling into existence that which has not been there before. Do you think that is possible?**

"Well yes, everything is possible. Everything in that sense is an idea being thought, or an object being made; both are possible. Do people ever answer no?"

**Can you tell me how you became an artist?**

"I think in the first instance, it was that classic experience of having a really quite inspired art teacher at the secondary school I attended in a very small town in New Zealand - population about 4,000, pretty undistinguished in many ways except the one of which New Zealand is most famous for which is sport; lot of gung-ho activity in that way, and no tradition in fine arts or music or what have you. But in those days, we had a system of training teachers which obliged them, for being funded through their degree to do what was called 'country service'; so this guy Bruce Rennie fetched up as the art teacher, and he was extremely extravagant - had a camp manner and highly theatrical, passionate and utterly shameless in his way of conducting his life, which at that stage was utterly radical and hilarious to absolutely everyone, including myself, as he just erupted onto the scene and didn't seem to care in some way. I think he recognized I had some sort of agility, let's call it agility, for drawing or what have you, and insisted that I take it seriously - invested a great deal of time and anger obliging that. An example of that when *Catcher in the Rye* came out, he came in bearing the first penguin edition and said, 'Go home and read this', just go home, take as long as you like, Just go home!' - fantastic that kind of commitment. So there was a sense of the whole activity of making art, whether it was theatre, poetry etc. They were all the same stuff to him; that sense I picked up on there, not consciously. At that age, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen you are not conscious of these things; you are just pleased to be seen as someone good at something, football or whatever, so that was really, really important that encouragement. The sense of a grown-up, an adult, caring passionately about things like Picasso, Bruegal and all the rest of it, and at the same time kind of expecting you to be, that sense of expectation was incredibly important. The system worked in the way that everyone was obliged to do what was called University Entrance. New Zealand, unlike England where I had gone from before, the expectation was that you would go to university or art school, whereas Dorset where I came from, it was very exceptional in those days for people to get to university. I think there were two or three in my memory that had ever gone on from Swanage that I knew about - so I did the necessary exams and fetched up in Christchurch's School of Art. I would say that the next nine years from there, as I got a scholarship and went to the RCA, were largely about kind of finding, cajoling away to some kind of more secure place to consider myself as an artist. Most of the time, it would seem to me was spent pretending to be an artist one way or another; an awful lot of acting goes on in art schools in early art careers, as you know, and it is an activity where it is quite difficult to distinguish between the two often - and so I think I spent three of the four years I was at Art College destroying things. I never kept anything prior to that time, and so I think this process of growing into an appreciation of the usefulness value of fine art

was a long time coming as far as I was concerned. I was aware that it was important, but I didn't know how to quite make it important; and so that is a second tier of maturing, and the third thing was simply enjoying a modicum of success. It is a kind of affirmation of you haven't set off in entirely the wrong direction, and you begin to have shows and sold the odd pieces of work. The completion of that circle - somebody liked something that I had done, and they hadn't watched it being done, sufficiently to pay a week's salary for it is like a public affirmation - all terribly important. If I am going off the track, stop me.

**Without obstacles there would be no artists. What do you think of this statement?**

"I think that's true."

**Thinking back to yourself as a young student, do you remember the obstacles encountered?**

"Talking about the obstacles encountered - starting off, I think self-confidence played quite a large part, which is where I think the notion of agility is important; I think I mentioned it before, because I was quite agile. I can draw all right, and I have a good eye to know which way up things go and all the rest of it, so that was terribly helpful. I do remember being for a long time being nonplussed - the apparent contortions of finding oneself liking very various things and trying to contain them within the same schema, and that I always found rather difficult. You asked about specific obstacles; there was a degree of self-confidence, but it took me a long time. I was very lucky to have the tutor at the college; there were good tutors all around. I was in Iris Murdoch's tutor group; she was pretty wonderful and introduced us to quite a lot of philosophical ideas. She was absolutely wonderful; and the fact that she was clearly brilliant and famous and she took you seriously, that was a gift - another great gift."

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles to the advancement of your practice has changed over the years?**

"Yes, I think it has. I have grown to understand that there is, this might sound a bit pseudo-ish but please forgive, there is a sort of syntax of... every material has an appropriate syntax, a sort of grammar, and we were all brought up with the notion that somehow that materials were dumb and somehow we imposed determination, will or vision on them and turned them into that vision by some means or another - by hacking away or building them up so that they were all in the service of the goal of that idea. Now in fact, I think that is wrong headed, and I grew to understand that it doesn't work that way. There is a sort of insight occurs when the

materials are in your hand that cannot and could not have been vouchsafed prior to that act of manipulation. Do you see what I mean? This is what I mean by syntax; you can't make a pile of sand except that it will be about sixty degrees and pyramidal in shape. Can't be done, because it is in the nature of sand that it does that; in the same way water pours out flat, you can't make a pile of water either, no matter how hard you try. So it goes. So it was that apprehension, I suppose, of the underlying physical principles that were within materials that for me was a slow growing learning process, and upon which I based the work that I did and do; because it seems to me, that's properly sculptural stuff - stuff that you could do with sculpture that you couldn't do in any other way. There are some people who are quite good at describing their ideas, articulating their ideas, and that's what they should do; and there are some people who are fantastic at rendering a kind of quality through simply the juxtaposition of color, or whatever it is, tone or whatever, and sculpture is just manipulating stuff really, but with appreciation which means choosing something in the light of other choices you could have made. That's the judgment; that's where one's own sensibility gets embodied in the object and the things that you are making, so that's a slow growing insight that sustains."

**In the whole of your artistic life, what has been your greatest obstacle?**

"May I answer it in two parts? Because there is a sort of... there are two things that occur to me. One of the obstacles has been a sort of lack of energy when it comes to that necessary component that the successful execution of artistic life which is to do with all the stuff that surrounds the making process - the hustling, the publicity, the taking the photographs, the writing of the stuff under the photographs I have always found enervating. You do it, but I do find it difficult whereas I know lots of people who are very good at it, for who it's not a problem. But for me, doing a thing like you're doing, a thesis or whatever, I can remember feeling as I was finishing my thesis at the College the sense of relief lives with me now forty years later. So there is that. That was an obstacle; the diaspora of stuff that has to go round or beside the act of making. And the other thing I think is, because I am aware that you can or we all have something inside us verging on the obsession, obsessional really, and one can tap into that fairly adroitly. One can learn to tap into that."

**I think David Sylvester said something like that; he said that the preoccupation was only as good as the obsession in his book on Giacometti?**

"He's absolutely right. Bless his heart. He wasn't a very good teacher, but he was a very good presence at the college. And so I am aware that I am aware if you are prepared single-mindedly, push family and friends out of reach, walk in that sort of and I have never been at all good at that. To say no, to make time, is really difficult. I have been told it's a failing many times, and I can recognize it. I couldn't change, nor do I think I want to change, but from the point of view of being a successful

artist that you do need to have that single-mindedness, and I don't think that I have. I don't have it in abundance that is for sure."

**Has anybody or anything affected your approach to obstacles in your studio practice?**

"Yes. The answer is implied in the last one really. I do know lots of publicly successful artists. I am going to answer this in a very convoluted way. There have been loads of students, for example where you were, and a couple of Turner prize winners and the rest of it, and I recall that kind of they all had a kind of single-mindedness in the way that we are talking about, linked with ambition and, if you like, an appetite for let's call it success but you can call it fame, it doesn't really matter, and so I noted that; and I also noted the kind of often the shallowness that often accompanies that, and that's an effect in reverse. I wouldn't want to be like that. I wouldn't want success at that price, if you see what I mean, and at the same time there are other folk who seem to manage the balancing act pretty successfully. There was a guy called Chris Hayson - he died before you were there - who came from a quarrying family in Dorset, and I was friendly with him before I went to New Zealand, and we simply met up at the college and by chance he had been to Bournemouth Art School. A quarry man's son, but with singularly transparently I think he had the best intellect of anybody I had met - not hugely widely read, but he put the inborn agility to very good use, and that was an education - a real education - and a guy called John Panting, who preceded me by a couple of heads at Central St. Martins who was also at New Zealand and transpires was bi-polar, very prone to huge depressions, basically we spurred each other through college. He was galvanic in many ways; that was hugely important and did have all these other attributes that I am talking about at the moment - the need and the ambition and the appetite - but had such huge talent that it all came together... very singular person. Just been picked up by the Tate, just in the last year, which is great."

**What role do you think conversations with others have in artistic practice?**

"I think it affects in so far as it works by affirmation of ideas; and the received view is that one is either informed of new things one didn't know but also the pattern is confirmed in one's mind through those conversations. Think by position, then the thought 'Well, I don't want to go there too, but I haven't got round to thinking it yet'; or 'I haven't got round to saying it yet'. It is the same sort of quality you get, I find, in say Shakespeare for example. Time and time again you go to a Shakespearean play; you might be perusing the text, but unlikely to be doing these days, and you suddenly think, 'Shit! You got that right. That's Troilus on jealousy', for example. And you think, 'Thank you, Mr. Shakespeare; you did that really well. Now I don't have to do it!' Or Bernini when he came in; Christ that man could carve. What I hadn't appreciated was that it was 1588 when he started; well, that's when he

was born, the tail end of the Renaissance. God! Thank you very much; it is giving me words. I am getting off the subject, but the feeling is very much you know as you acquire a vocabulary, it's not often a conscious word acquisition, it happens according to need; and it becomes incorporated in one's scheme of things, and it gives you a grip on the world and one is terribly conscious at a later date of running into new words, new vocabulary which is potentially useful. And then when you do use that word, you are aware of using it for the first time. I bet you become aware of using a new word for the first time, and there is a feeling that you have been given another little hand, held up the sheer face of experience by virtue of somebody introducing you to it. I get the same feeling looking at Bernini, or looking at some of Cairo's' works, one is granted for a moment - this is a bit of hyperbole - one is granted for a moment to view the world; it is like popping up on someone's shoulders for a moment, and you do see a little bit further, differently, or shining a torch. There are all those sort of analogies."

**Do you think art starts with a blank canvas?**

"No, I think it doesn't; we start from where we are which is not blank."

**Do you think that artists should simply let the artwork speak?**

"No, I don't. I think that was a shibboleth that we were particularly prone too. It arose I think out of the 'truth to materials' dictum which I was brought up on, and you were probably the legatee of, which held sway and holds sway - held sway within the education system for quite a long time and very properly so because it was running counter to what had gone before, but I think that what that led to was a sort of driving with your elbow out of the window, with tough boots on and whistling at girls. I think it is a thoroughly machismo view of sculpture, and basically I think words are used to the very best of one's ability to insinuate themselves within the experience you are trying to describe and every effort should be made to do that appositely and with as much grace and elegance. That's what words are for; it's not to confuse the one for the other because they can be used to obfuscate, blur, as readily as they can be used to clarify - they should be used to clarify."

**Matisse said artists should cut out their tongues whereas Anselm Kieffer is heavily involved with Celan.**

"Ha-ha! You are absolutely right. I think basically you can accompany it (the artwork) to the very best of one's ability, but I suppose the caveat is you don't use the words to make excuses or gloss up. If I had been given £5 for every time that someone has said to me that they were 'interested in raising the question not providing the answer', or 'I like the relationship between the front of the canvas or the side'. And you think 'fuck off' - stories about 'once upon a time, and then and then', it's not about the

narrative thread; you have to be aware that words can be used both ways."

### **Is there a role for psychoanalysis in art practice?**

"At the moment, I find it pretty fascinating as it is undeniably the fact that outsider art and Colin Wilson and all that stuff, Dubuffet, there has been a sense that revelations have occurred through the closer examination of the kind of art that stands outside the current cultural trend, and psychoanalysis has busied itself, concerned itself, with trying to understand more of this and to that extent I think that it is really interesting, very interesting."

### **How do you think artists call new work?**

"I think it's a hackneyed analogy - no it's not, it's actually what happened to me. It was quite straightforward. I can remember as a youngster having a paper round, these are two examples, and I can remember having a paper round and being up very early in the morning on my bike in Dorset at the age of about 11, cycling around, and a particularly cold frosty morning - and at that age, solitarily cycling before anybody is up there was a sense of sort of possessing the world. There was also frost on the trees, and I remember the clarity - seeing the tree against the blue sky, feeling a kind of elation that I was part of that now, and I know with great certainty that image and that feeling found its way into a later piece of sculpture, much later, 1970, which was reflection and stilling and the clarity of the image. So I think what happens is that we consciously and unconsciously - there are some images if you like, let's call them images, some moments, images stay with one just as some memories stay with one, as we don't remember everything, some images stay with you, a reflection in a puddle or whatever it is, and at another time and unbidden one finds a correspondence in another part of one's experience. So correspondence is most probably the key word. Those can be completely disparate experiences, and completely disparate in time, but there is a sense that they begin to inhabit the same space in one's head, or they can be made to inhabit the same space in one's head, and I think that's the beginning of what you are talking about. It sounds like a call. I can remember also going gliding for the first time, and the very few times that I have been gliding a couple of times and being towed up behind a laboring tiger moth. So the thing about gliding is that it is a very efficient machine; it doesn't have to carry the weight of engines or too many people or anything. We think of towing like going along and being hanked around corners, but it is not like that at all. Frequently, the glider is way above the towing plane because it is so much more efficiently released, and the guy behind me said that now we will do a right turn and as you turn you slide your way down. It's not just turning right; it's a long veering sliding movement and that feeling is very powerful and that also

find its way into a piece of sculpture that I made currently. The feeling was sufficiently powerful to stay and found its correspondence in some material that I was handling and twisting, and basically, if I can describe it in a very crude way, you have a vertical thing and it collided into a horizontal thing turned. I do it in the gesture quite naturally; you get what I am getting at in the gesture. It is a kind of affirmation of that feeling, done through pointing a torch; it's like pointing a torch, something comes up and you think 'that's amazing'."

### **Do you think art can be taught?**

"What I think about it is this: I guess that I have had too long in teaching to think that it can't be got at. I know what you are driving at - it is in a sense, if it can be put in any sort of format that can be transferred to somebody else so probably not - but what can be done, you can convey the passion and importance and also give the technical-making tools, so you can convey a great deal. So the essential bit, the true bit of art, is to enable oneself to somewhat vicariously glimpse the world through someone else's eyes and to feel their own position of the world at that moment by contrast or by affirmation. I think you can give all the accoutrements, those can be taught, and most importantly the commitment to the worthwhile-ness of the enterprise can be conveyed through the act of teaching. Teaching itself is probably all that is necessary. The act of being there and trying hard to be there and trying to communicate with someone else is a very significant act, and to do it with sympathy and conviction is a rare gift - not so many people have that."

### **Is the obstacle intrinsic to new work?**

"Like only working with your left hand? Yes, I think it is too well documented to not to be, because one of the big difficulties that really lies behind this question is that we are creatures of habit and we get into the habit of certain images and certain ways of drawing. You only have to look at kids drawing in class; they get good at ballerinas or good at footballers, and that's what they do and they get very skillful at it. But I think there is a pretty clear feeling of excitement when we are breaking new ground internally in terms of making art, when you are touching the edge of something that you are not that sure about, and you are by definition on the edge of what you have not done before; it is a very tangible excitement. I think one feels at that moment, and I think that is a tremendously key situation to be in. One of the most important things as a teacher is to encourage that situation in others and in oneself - of course if you are making a work of art - but to be able to summon it and promote it, that's very much a question of strategy. When you are young, ideas are ten a penny; we will have another good idea tomorrow. In fact, I have learnt that you need to be much more parsimonious about throwing good things away or letting them. It seems to me it's a kind of fuel - that excitement is a kind of fuel; one should kind of string it out as long as possible and make it last, because if you can encourage yourself to making something manifest that wasn't there before, then that

becomes the starting point for the next enterprise and the next and so it goes."

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which has not been there before – do you think that is possible?**

"Yes, I think so; I think it is an incremental process as well as the complete vision. It happens kind of block-by-block, and it is very clear from what we have been saying that there is an aspect to it."

**You have worked for how long at Central St. Martins Teaching? Twenty-five, 26 or 27 years? Was that an obstacle to your own artwork?**

"If I was being cold-blooded and standing outside myself, I would say 'Yes it most probably was', in that I have always found it incredibly difficult to concentrate on one or two things at once, simple-minded. So I still don't believe that I can handle too many things at the same time, although you would argue busy sculpture department you are handling many problems with different students, but that is different. What you are talking about is one's own ambitions and so forth. It is no accident that the last one-man show I had was the year I became a full-time teacher. The second part of your question, which is sort of implied: 'Do you think that you regret it?' I don't think I do really. I had a great deal of fun teaching, and I don't subscribe to the tyranny of every moment not spent thinking about art is a waste of moment. I think that's bullshit, and I think there is an awful lot of neurosis that is driven by that worry and anxiety, driven by that I think; so that is what I think."

## Appendix G: Interviews with Tutors

### Question for Tutors

1. Thinking back to yourself as an art student/graduate – do you remember the obstacles that you encountered and does that experience influence how you work with students to deal with their obstacles today?
2. In your practice as a tutor, which has been the greatest obstacles you have encountered in students work - are these obstacles different from the obstacles you have encountered in your own studio practice. If it is why do you think that is?
3. When working with students how do you help them to work with the obstacles they encounter? Are you aware of using a methodology?
4. Has anybody or anything affected your teaching approach to dealing with obstacles with students? For example PG cert, changes in your own art practice, other tutors?
5. What role if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you ever seen it used?
6. James Elkins author of ' Why painting can't be taught' and Professor of Art History/theory Chicago University argues that art can't be taught. What do you think of this statement?
7. Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not there before and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think poiesis in art practice is possible?

**Thinking back to yourself as an art student/graduate – do you remember the obstacles that you encountered and does that experience influence how you work with students to deal with their obstacles today?**

“Thinking back to my own experience as an art student and also amplifying the students that I teach with, there are two broad - or two places where obstacles might occur when thinking about what ‘stops’ or ‘strikes’ a creative practice. One would be a very practical thing, like time or the other influences one has wrapping around one’s life which can deter you from making work, and one of the most important things an art institution can do is throughout the course of the degree, or with postgraduates, is to say, or make students realize, that everything in a sense is about making art. As in truth, there is no need to and there is no demand for it. It is a personal vocation, it’s not really a career; it’s vocational as a profession. And although there will be moments within an art student’s experience when they will become very close to being a professional, but that idea that it’s a vocation that is something the artist chooses is very important. I suppose one of the other things, or one of the big differences I see, is there was very little commercial art world in the past, so one didn’t really think one was ever going to sell anything; or, if one did think one was going to be in that sort of position, it would be much later in one’s career that one would do that. So perhaps one of the things that I think is different now with the explosion of the art world in the last few years, is now there is an expectation; expectations are high, and I suppose that is one of the things one has to counter. One has to think about and to prepare people for that might happen, but it also might not happen, and how they maintain their practice wherever it might lead, so it gives them kind of inner strength of investigation into what they are doing, and so that is the second thing. You have the first obstacle, which is practical thing, which is ‘why bother to get up in the morning and make any art?’ And the second obstacle is most – well, the chances are that most art has been made already, so you have a feeling of, ‘What can you contribute which is a celebration of past known things?’ Although past known things may be grand and good, they might not be original or have an element of originality in them, and that is a really big problem - so these would be the two areas.”

**In your practice as a tutor, what are the greatest obstacles you encounter in students’ work, and are these obstacles different from the obstacles you encounter in your own studio practice? If they are different, why do you think that is?**

“For myself, obviously, it has in the sense that my practice as an artist, and the thing I am very much interested in, is the kind of legacy or continuation or certain ideas around abstract painting and how it is tied to

models and how it throws modernism into question and where does it lead the language that is tied to it? So for myself, it has taken me a long time to find the parameters of the things that I am interested in. I feel that there is a lot of work that I want to make and a lot of ideas I want to develop. So I think that is a gradual position, and the realization of the things that interest me about work in the studio is to the problem of the legitimacy of the mode of making which might be seen as an art form, or may be seen as legitimate as being very problematic in abstract painting. So by challenging the history and the kind of gender position, this is very important."

**When working with students, how do you help them to work with the obstacles they encounter? Are you aware of using a methodology?**

"The biggest difficulty that any artist has, whether they be a student or not, is to see if the ideas they are communicating are the ideas that people are seeing in their work. If you paint a picture of an airplane and everyone thinks it's a bird, and you really want it to be an airplane, you really have a big problem. It is to do with the responsibility you have with your work to monitor what it does, because it is part of human nature for people to see different things in different things, but one can refine that so that although one might be talking tangentially at times, alluding to things, we might be drawing on different references, it has to be as close an arena to the audience you want and it is the responsibility to what you are making "

**Has anybody or anything affected your teaching approach to dealing with obstacles with students? For example PG Cert, changes in your own art practice, other tutors?**

"I suppose experience is what one of the things an artist is teaching in art school; as an artist bringing other artists in to teach experience as well, experience is one of the things you are interested in – showing students that they may have very different ideas than you do, different generation to who you are and different terms of references than you do. But I think it is very important as a person in a position of teaching art students to show the things that have happened in the past. Inform them in the painting department of painting's recent history, particularly painting history from the 60's onwards, so they feel part of a live debate and dialogue. One of the obstacles that people have is the falling back on known tropes or also carrying off things that they feel are successful - everyone does; if you think you are quite successful and do it again, you won't know where you are pushing the boundaries. It is true when one is making a painting, what might be a huge risk to you might seem very minor to someone else; you think it's an incredible innovation to switch from red to blue, and in fact it's not. So it's finding the boundaries of an individual's practice, informing them of a lot of work that has happened in the past, which they may or may not know about, and also challenging

their ideas as much as possible all the time to question the assumptions that they have.”

**What role if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you seen it used?**

“This is a big question, isn’t it, to do with art and therapy. I suppose, and though I completely recognize the therapeutic method of making, the idea of psychoanalyzing someone through their making seems to me quite problematic at times; and I think it’s much more interesting. Two things are interesting: one is looking at objects that have been made as part of the culture that they come from, and of course you might use psychoanalytical or anthropological understandings to see that on a broader cultural level and an individual level. One of the most interesting exhibitions that I looked at recently is one that John Thompson curated at Whitechapel - an artist curated project - where he was using a lot of work from the Maudesley’s Collection and a lot of work by established artists and making the point that there is no difference.<sup>335</sup> We look at these things together in a sense that things to do with mental health and art in the same way; we all have special needs at special times so looking is important. I think what is brought to the fore is ‘communicating’ with people that you are making objects that are embodying ideas that you have which you are then communicating to other people. They might want to read just as you read a book in different ways you read a painting in different ways - an audience will take different things from it - or a piece of music. What you do is place your work in a context that you hope the readings you adhere to will hold up, but obviously you can’t govern how other people are going to approach the work.”

**James Elkins, author of “Why painting cannot be taught’ and Professor of Art History and Theory at Chicago University, argues that art cannot be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

Well, I completely disagree with it; well James Elkins, I am well aware of his writing. I think that I am much more of the position that, as in any creative discipline, art can be taught, and there is a hunger for people to understand art, not only in art colleges. You have just to go around galleries to see the popularization of contemporary art, and I think that through knowledge and understanding and the looking at things that people get more into it.”

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not there before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think poiesis in art practice is possible?**

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<sup>335</sup> “Inner Worlds Outside” Outsider Artists, Whitechapel Gallery, April 28-June 25, 2006.  
<http://www.whitechapelgaleery.org/exhibitions/inner-worlds-outside>

"I think the idea of calling into existence that which is not there before sounds to me like an act of creation - you have created something that does not exist. The difficulty of that as a concept is that everything, or so many ideas or so many positions, exist already, that really we are rearranging things with positions, ideas, history that have already existed, but we can do that in new ways, which creates a new position. So although I think the idea of something original is very difficult, I think originality can happen through an individual looking in a particular way whether that be through materials, art history or what have you; so that would create a new position."

### **Extra ending remark about the tension between practice and teaching**

"I think that I would go bonkers if I was in the studio all the time making paintings. As I said at the beginning, it is a sort of selfish preoccupation and it is also something you do singularly on your own, testing your own position I suppose, and therefore the dialogue within a studio is great. So I don't find any tension between these two things. There is always a mixture - the amount of time, the energy you are going to put into everything - but as long as you know what one's own motivation is then it's absolutely fine."

**Thinking back to yourself as an art student/graduate - do you remember the obstacles that you encountered, and does that experience influence how you work with students to deal with their obstacles today?**

"I would say yes, but what I remember very quickly is being extremely broke and moving from Brighton to London and not having any infrastructure, having to make connections and links and things, and this is something that I do pass on because it's funny. I was talking to a colleague the other day, we are teaching on the MA and have just come to London for the year, and they don't know what London is like and how hard that it can be; it is easy to forget when London has been your home for 21 years just how cruel this city can be. So having these conversations with students, it is on a sort of pastoral level - not just talking about art practice, but it is this sense of loneliness and not being connected. It never actually stopped me working though; the only time that I didn't work, and that was a period of about 18 months probably about six years after I graduated, both my parents died and about seven other people died around me - my mum and dad, my boss died, friends of friends; it was everywhere. And this was the crisis that I hit, which was why am I doing this, because if mortality is so important and I think I had got to the point where my art practice was disappearing up its own backside. It was getting very expensive, and I was doing stuff for the photographers' gallery; each print I was doing was costing over £1,000 just to print, and I think it was an object lesson that I actually stopped because I had to rethink in time. I stopped working in photography exclusively on the back of that. I simplified what I was doing the work about. If death is surrounding you, then to do anything other than death, then that's what you are thinking about, death and mortality, and that's what you are thinking about your own mortality - that's what stopped me. But it also became a double-edged sword, because it also gave me strength when I started again. So I think that I found alternative strategies on that one, which was my body, was my art work to some extent, forms of reflection and workshops etc. I see students because of this experience as whole people, not just 'you are an artist over there'. You are as a human being very multifaceted, and I am not trained in this, nor am I looking to do this, from them? I am not actually looking for it; it is something that is just there in the background at a semi-conscious level."

**Has your relationship to obstacles changed over the years?**

"Yes, inevitably, because you do get older and wiser in the art practice, because my work has moved into a consisted terrain. So I tend to do commissions for a specific site, and the idea of blockage doesn't really happen because the site is really interesting; you can't just do nothing. What actually happens is that blockages are created in a different way,

because my practice is quite relational, it's generated by conversation, in conversation, and I am writing my PhD at the moment. It is actually, for me, it is the discourse and the conversation that is the project; you do need the notion of a final thing to generate that conversation. I am not really interested in the final product. It is a necessary part of that process, and so those conversations, those stoppages, tend to be with pedantic counsels saying 'I won't give you planning permission'. It tends to be a bureaucratic stoppage, or often there is a lot of technical problem-solving as well. I think the thing about relational practice is a lot of time the artists call themselves project managers, and they are not entirely comfortable with that; but in a sense, the attention to detail is part of that and it's probably why I relish courses, because what I do as an art practitioner is give attention to detail and be a coordinator, so it is about the bigger picture through the different stages of things, so that's developed hand-in-hand with me developing courses I suppose. So I think it is a chicken and egg thing - one informs the other and it goes back and forth, back and forth."

**In your practice as a tutor, what are the greatest obstacles you encounter in students' work, and are these obstacles different from the obstacles you encounter in your own studio practice? If they are different, why do you think that is?**

"Sometimes it's different, and sometimes it's the same. I am running £50,000 budgets; inevitably there are going to be differences as they aren't going to be doing that, so what's stopping them financially be able to afford it or technically problem solving. I can buy that in, so that's different. But I think on a quite fundamental level the notion of time management and the issues about time management, the issues about getting all that together, can be very similar, so we are both struggling as to how to work with the time edge. They have got jobs and they are trying to pull everything together that way, and I am trying to struggle with my life/work thing to produce work. I think what is different is to produce work as you become more confident as yourself as an artist. I don't have that self-doubt about what I am doing so much, and I don't do butterfly. And I have noticed at a BA level when they stop, when they have hit a wall, they will go sideways - they will go over there - whereas I don't have that struggle. My practice is completely out of the notion of production lines, where you have this concept of what you are going to create, you have this blueprint, and you just move towards problem solving on that generator. But what it is with students is that at BA level is that they don't really know what their subject is or what their interests are; they are still developing, and that can go on into the final year for some students. And anybody who as an artist doesn't have that excitement, you just feel incredibly lost - mad; so what students will do is to take one subject area and go somewhere completely new, as actually they can't face the challenge of going over that hurdle and getting interested again, or it is a form of taking responsibility for your own practice and normally that is the biggest problem that I have seen."

**When working with students, how do you help them to work with the obstacles they encounter? Are you aware of using a methodology?**

"I do use a methodology; it is a bit of a tin pot one. I did a very interesting training course some years ago about 'what we know that we know and what we know that we don't know'. I think artists often work in the territory of about revealing cultural agreements that are almost subliminal. If you are born in this country, then there are certain things that you just know. And I think good artists, and I think this is what Cornelia Parker does, hold up the mirror with something you recognize; there is a sort of 'ahaa' moment because of that. So a lot of the time the kind of blind mirror side of things that everybody else knows about you or your practice but the student doesn't know, because they are in the centre of it. That is what we find we do; this is where we find the methodology, strategies with that, from mind maps, and sometimes I suppose it is sort of tough love. We are saying, 'well no'. Also I think that I have been subconsciously doing, and subconsciously the team has been doing this as well, is formalizing and yet not being this hierarchical teacher. For me, being a student doing my PhD is very interesting, and I know what it's like to have that deadline with the 5,000 words - well it's actually like 20,000 these days. I know what that fear is, so it is a non-hierarchical way, non-professorial when dealing with people, and it means you are on an even realm. So it is about empowering the students to take responsibility of themselves, particularly at an MA level. Mind maps I tend to use as a reflective tool, and I recommend that, and maybe with students who I feel are a little bit lazy or they are not facing their fears, I will use visual maps as a tool to do that. In my practice, mind maps are an ongoing way that I over the years; I do a mind map and I will give evidence of that to students - often taught using that whilst stating you don't have to do anything like that, but stating what has worked for me. I think recently with the tough love thing, with an international student her practice using a whole lot of metonyms and metaphors which are really quite impenetrable to the western mind, and with her I sat down and basically said, 'You are making connections with things that I don't understand'. That was a tough love thing: 'this is how it is, and also, please don't take my word for it, ask your peers as well'. So this is where the peer thing comes back in."

**Has anybody or anything affected your teaching approach to dealing with obstacles with students? For example PG Cert, changes in your own art practice, other tutors?**

"I think I am always learning from other people I work with, so I definitely site that. I think, the PG Cert, with the higher education higher academy fellowship and that, was quite good. I realized that the spiral of learning was a stratagem which I had been intuitively using through the years; but you do find yourself returning to conversations but from a different angle, particularly over a one year course like an MA, because MA teaching is completely different from BA teaching. I think a BA teacher would tell you

'Have you thought about apples or pears?' whereas the MA tutor will say 'Hey! There is an orchard over there – go pick', which is to some extent that bigger picture. It's mostly intuition. I have another book to read, not by James Elkins, book which I have on my list to read through the summer about 'you can't teach art', but don't tend to read pedagogic texts because I am a researcher by process and I don't want to be different in that."

**What role, if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you ever seen it used?**

"I think it's a major role, and I think one of its heritages is, along with philosophy, is now regarded as normal territory for the artist, particularly graduate students; it's a rich territory to kind of inspire the practice. It is really quite normal practice to have some sort of understanding as a tutor, something that you can actually talk about with the students as well, because I think Charlotte is someone who, if you talk to her, that is something that she has actually touched on in her practice. I have not seen it used, but I am very up for cross-disciplinary debates. I would really like to bring in a psychologist and talk to the students in a completely different way about art, if we had the money. I have done it with writers so far this year, but I think it would be fantastic."

**James Elkins, author of *Why Art Cannot be Taught* and Professor of Art History/Theory at Chicago University argues that art cannot be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

"I agree. I think art practitioners are coaches. We are like the guys on the bicycles with the runners peddling along; you go on the journey with them, but you can't teach them. You can't teach creativity because everyone has their own way of negotiating, particularly the points where they are stopped, and what stops them is so unique to the individual. This notion that you can apply a formula to delivering outcome is wrong; it's like what I was talking about with art practice - a production line mentality. I can't apply that to my practice, so why would I adopt it for my teaching?"

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not there before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think poiesis in art practice is possible?**

"I do, but I don't think I would actually form it in that way. I have been reading a book called *The Field Guide to Being Lost*<sup>336</sup>, 'lostiness' is part of my PhD, and being lost in the forest and losing things - the forest also because of climate changes. So I was recommended to read that book, and I have done so recently, and I think the notion of 'lostiness' is very important. It is really a very central aspect of creativity, because, again,

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<sup>336</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide of Being Lost* (Canongate Books Ltd, 2006).

it's anti the production line and gaining methodology and it's got a humility to it because it's 'I don't know where I am going'. I think what it does - unless you are lost, how can you be creative? I don't call it Poiesis I call it 'lostiness'. I think it's about separating - about being lost in research - and sometimes you literally lose yourself, well not literally, but you lose yourself in your thoughts and in a sense of time, so my studio is a 250 hectare forest so I literally can lose myself and yes it is about the anxiety that goes with that. This is where we have got an overlap in our interest: why do we get anxious about 'lostiness'? People who can be very calm and relaxed about this lost state and other people it's an anathema - there is a level of control that they deem to be part and parcel of their creative process that if they relinquish it they will lose some of their creativity. The students are becoming more knowing about the level of 'lostiness' and what they have found; it's about becoming, and not about becoming an egotistical thing which of course may be part of it."

**Thinking back to yourself as an art student/graduate – do you remember the obstacles that you encountered and does that experience influence how you work with students to deal with their obstacles today?**

"I think that the main obstacle that I remember lasted about a year and, thinking back to post-graduate work at the Academy Schools, is unusual as it's a three year course and there were a whole lot of issues that I found problematic which was to do with content and to do with language, and these are very normal things that artists have to deal with, and I felt there was inadequate help and tutorial support - particularly my academic tutor who shall remain nameless. I said that I needed to talk about ideas, and she said that she couldn't help me with ideas; ideas were my department that I had to look after. She couldn't discuss them; she could only talk about formal things. So when I think back to that, the first thing I think is that obstruction is a fairly normal process, and what happens in art colleges is that you are constantly asked to reflect upon and confront and reassess everything that you have known, and you are constantly challenged and constantly critiqued and you have to face a whole set of opinions and ideas from a variety of quarters. And in the end, you are the person who has to make sense of all this information and manage it, and there are moments you feel lost or, as you have said, you meet a blockage and first thing to think it is an absolutely normal process of the art college. I think the obstacle is intrinsic to the process; I think it is, and I think knowing that and having experienced that as an art student and having seen my peers at the time go through it.... There was a man who went through a similar thing to me; he was in the year above me at the Royal Academy. He was pretty much a figurative painter, and every painting he made ended up getting greyer and greyer and blacker and blacker. And in the end, they became these grey monochromes, and he painted himself out of making a figurative motif and it took the whole of the second year working his way through it. That student experience has given me a kind of an empathy with my current student issues, and part of what I think is that you have to work your way through something. Looking back, it still seems a slightly naïve comment my tutor made, and I teach mostly post-graduate students so the emphasis is on them being independent and setting an agenda for themselves; so in a sense, there is less pressure on me to be overly didactic in my approach, but I think it is very difficult to leave students with nothing or to say 'that area of your practice I can't go near because that is your responsibility'. Of course, we acknowledge that these students have huge responsibility for their own destiny and their own work; you have to be ready to at least offer support, some insights, some help in different areas."

**In your practice as a tutor, what are the greatest obstacles you encounter in students' work, and are these obstacles different from the obstacles you encounter in your own studio practice? If they are different, why do you think that is?**

"Maybe it just follows on; maybe it's just a simple thing of experience. I also wonder over the years as I have also done some formal teaching development. So last year, I did a post-grad certificate in learning and teaching, which in a sense did at least – the emphasis on the course was not without faults - but it did make you reflect upon your current practice and think carefully about a lot of different areas. I was going to say the major thing about obstacles is sometimes that obstacles change. In your own practice there are very practical and pragmatic things that create obstacles; it's not simply a case of not having creative inspiration, but there are very pragmatic things to do with time. Teaching it causes massive draws upon your time, family, etc. that your time is completely compromised in the studio. And if you have a very studio based practice, something which isn't necessarily reliant on working commissions or projects that are finite and put certain parameters upon the way you work, then managing that can be very difficult and the obstacles they can really take the form of pragmatic things. I think we also see that in relation to the students, because far more I think students are finding their time at college far more complicated. The more they have to pay for, the more that they suddenly find practical things come into play. They may have a part-time job even though they are full time students; there are a whole set of things that come in the way. As far as my own work, it is trying to be organized for the times in which you have the time. I think the curious thing for me is because I teach on a one-year part post grad course and the final exhibition is in September, it means that I am in during the summer and my summers are short. So traditionally, time for the undergraduate students to do their research to make their work is compromised as well; but the demands of the teaching job but there is still a time when you have successive days in the studio, and when that happens it is when ideas begin to occur and you find that during term time actually ideas drop up a little bit. I begin to become far more practical about what I do, and if I set things up before term begins and I have paintings that I pretty much need to do, say three, four, five paintings, so I can work on that. Even though there is still a tremendous amount of decisions that I have to make to make those paintings, the initial ideas are taken. Those ideas might alter, but it is part of dealing with that obstacle is to be organized."

**When working with students, how do you help them to work with the obstacles they encounter? Are you aware of using a methodology?**

"I think one of the things that students struggle with is perhaps the relationship between what they see as the practical side of their work - in trying to create a balance in both those things. At a postgraduate level, we want to see their writing, the theoretical, the way they articulate themselves – you want to see that their writing and their studio work do the same thing but in different forms; so we want to see that they are articulating the same concerns that they are grappling with in the studio. So there is not only a thing of organizing your time to try and conflate

what often seems to be different practices and bring them together, and this can cause great anxiety and great obstacles particularly in the studio work. I think there was an interesting, but I thought quite misjudged, edition of *Imagine* with Alan Yenta on play last night; the premise of the show was supposed to be about play, which I think has some interest to you, and they were essentially talking about how play, and the influence of play, and how the play of childhood can influence the work the artist later does in life and how we might draw on that experience. Unfortunately, it broke down very quickly it seemed to me, and they interviewed artists whose work might talk about childhood but weren't talking about playing but the different aspects of childhoods, so perhaps a trauma in childhood. But they did talk to Michael Rose, the children's writer, and he was talking about play in the most, in a form and he was talking about the area of discovery - discovery through making and reflection. So this is obviously something we should encourage our students to do: to think of making as a form of discovery, but also that critical reflection is an important thing. I suppose to conflate that sort of approach to practice and to what they often see as a very different approach and the very different skills that are required in form of their reading, textural research is very difficult and what happens to students who stop working in the studio and it causes tremendous blockages."

**Has anybody or anything affected your teaching approach to dealing with obstacles with students? For example PG cert, changes in your own art practice, other tutors?**

"I think I approach my work slightly differently to the pervading academic model, and I think this is because I worked for many years before I entered academia and perhaps a cautious interest in what research might mean as far as art practice. In many ways, I don't think I research. I think I just discover things through that process of making and reflection and consolidation and that most probably is research, but to call it research in a very organized sense it might be slightly misguided. There is a methodology there, but I don't think it is particularly strict and formalized. So there is a methodology and it may be more than possible to work it out, but I think the encouragement to postgraduate students is that methodology should be much more stated, formalized and transparent. There are a whole set of things that you do, asking students to go and do something else - even the idea of going to have a pizza and a beer and watching a film - and you were talking about John Virtue before we started about making life difficult for himself, restrictions, parameters on his practice. It sort of chimed with me when you said he would work in black and white. It is something that I found myself saying to students quite often. My specialization is in painting; painters have huge problems between transcribing, translating the work or the initial ideas that might have manifested themselves in drawings, to very simple things that you have to reduce the complexities - the issues that painting throws up for example, particularly using ink on paper - by taking the pressure off yourself. I need to use that support which might be a very expensively made stretcher; so there is something about the immediacy

of drawing that frees things up - looking to ink because it replicated the flow of paint, but it reduced the decision-making terms of color - the immediacy that comes and the lack of preciousness. I think I can work through ideas that the stuff has to be a finished work; I think there is a tremendous pressure students put on themselves to make every work a finished piece. And this balance between trying to remind students this idea of play, or discovery, or fun should still occur within art school, and that there is still a methodology there - there is still something that is tested to find out things with aims and objectives. I am trying to think of a case that has an outcome instead of a case that is still ongoing. I have a student right now who is heading towards the last few months of her course, and I think she has got a general idea of what she wants to work with, a figure, but really the emphasis of her investigation is a little misplaced; she seems to be putting a lot of emphasis on the relationship between drawing and painting as a kind of means of expression and probably not enough on subject and motif. So part of our discussion is about trying to align and calibrate the aims of her project but also to try and find a way to stop her feeling so anxious about the outcome of this PhD. So some of those things that I describe, the simple pragmatic things of changing medium and the importance of every single decision, definitely came into play, and it is also very useful to think of something quite outside the discipline - it might be another artist, a film or something that can open up ideas and help, but a different sort of emphasis on the aims of her investigation."

**What role, if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you ever seen it used?**

Passed on.

**James Elkins, author of 'Why Art Cannot be taught' and Professor of Art History/Theory at Chicago University argues that art can't be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

"It has some validity, but it begs a lot of questions of what teaching is. It would be an interesting question to challenge. You only have to look at Goldsmiths. For example, I read something in Frieze a couple of years ago; it was one of those Frieze specials on teaching, and it talked about the impact of conceptual artists on art schools in the 1960's - particularly thinking about Cal Arts in California, looking at teachers like John Baldesaro - and was really trying to make an argument for the rise of the critique, and how that in a sense had come out of their art practices, and it seemed a very cogent argument to make. And I think there has been tremendous changes in Art Schools since the 1960's, and it seems strange that Elkins stops at Bauhaus. I think the simplest way to talk about it is to look at the way we talk to MA applicants; they are the people that make decisions their area of interest, their projects they set agendas and that the college and its workshops and tutors and their peers and this is the most important aspect of this, with their immediate

colleagues other things that will help challenge and critique and support their own investigation and in a sense depends what teaching is. Teaching means encouraging self-awareness to stretch themselves to reassess what they do, then that probably can be taught; it probably works best when it is not too didactic."

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not they're before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think poiesis in art practice is possible?**

"Well I think this relationship between obstruction and creating the new - there is a relationship, there is definitely a relationship - and I guess it's wondering what happens in that first moment of obstruction: what was there before and what happens during? Reflection is a very powerful thing because it can take place when you are not fully aware. In a sense, you are not sitting down in a very methodological way - reflection takes place as people say 'sleeping on something'. Things can be revealed when you take an artwork from one location and place it in another context; surprising things about your work are suddenly revealed to you. Obstruction in a sense means that you can have a moment, which can do as for me that lasts a whole year, when you are allowing things to percolate. And I would say even recently in my own practice, I think from about 2004 - 2006, it was about two-and-a-half years, I made about three paintings and a 2 and a half period of obstruction and part of that obstruction was pragmatic; it was definitely the result of a pause in my practice and a kind of dissatisfaction, feeling that some alterations had to be made. I think that what happened is I carried on making paintings but very, very slowly, and part of that was a loss of belief in what I was doing and dissatisfaction, and it was probably a lack of confidence. But during that period, things were occurring that I would like to do - not outstandingly different things to what I was doing before - enough to change the subject of the work or re-direct the subject of the work, but also change the scale and the medium - not a lot but enough to make a difference. And I think in the end it was a pragmatic thing which I was heading towards unlocking - to be able to act to make new work. I think in the end it is because I applied for internal research funding from Wimbledon School of Art and got some money and went out and bought some materials and something as simple as that was - right now I can make stuff - that was probably the catalyst for the active change. But I think those two-and-a-half years was a mixture of very consciously knowing that some things had to change and probably a lot of unconscious processing and coming to terms, and I could make decisions and so I think obstructions take different forms and different things happen during those times, and I suppose you might be finding out about is a moment of crisis? When I talked about the pragmatic things, it's also just the fact that you are working ideas one quite often in a public sense and to be reasonably successful it's when work gets out into the world; sometimes it's not received particularly well and then and then that moment it's a bit like when a student that's preparing work for an assessment or critique they are given short thrift - so they think, 'Oh

God, how do I process that? How do I deal with that, with this feedback? What do I do with it?’

Thinking back to that experience of college - in a sense, I did make quite a lot of work that year at college (referring to when he had an obstruction with his supervisor) and the work wasn't terrible work; it just had lots of problems, for example conceptually it was fairly thin. It was a thought at that point, which might as well have something to do with the environment at the time of the Royal Academy Schools which place a lot of emphasis upon the studio, the practice, and very little on theory and other such things. The idea was you worked through problems through those moments - through making; eventually, it was either a case that things would come out of that process or that it still acted as a kind of almost a process of meditation - that process we talked about in the unconscious. I said the world percolation, meditation - or whatever it is you use - those you still make work to enable you to, and I think it's also that thing about confidence, realizing sometimes that it enables you to, and sometimes it takes a while to be able to say 'I am ready to do this'."

**Thinking back to yourself as an art student/graduate – do you remember the obstacles that you encountered and does that experience influence how you work with students to deal with their obstacles today?**

“Thinking about this notion of obstacles, there are all sorts of obstacles. The first that comes to mind is that of confidence: confidence being an obstacle. And that is something that I observe and recognize in my students, and I think quite often when I was a student there was a sense of a group of much more academically higher-achieving students, in terms of how they would engage with text their abilities with written work would be a whole lot stronger than mine, and that would tend to knock my confidence. Even though I would be coming up with some really original, innovative work in my studio space which other students were influenced by, I still felt a lack of the intellectualization of art and that was a big obstacle and it is still a problem for me now. I have recognized with my students even though there is definitely a need to intellectualize we have to find out about our context. We have to site our practice; we have to understand our references. I personally feel a lot of that is quite intuitive; once you have started looking at art you start to sense and obviously comes from looking at art for a long time, researching art and being aware of what’s going on. But I have noticed with some students that there are some real intuitive makers that come onto the degree course, and you know that they have something the way they approach their work, quite special, but if you pitch them towards more intellectual students, they lose confidence, they can’t speak in presentations, they lose their footing and some of those students have definitely gone on to be the most original and innovative students. There was one student who literally was paralyzed in the face of doing a presentation and he felt like a complete fraud. He would talk in quite a basic way - an incredible amount of perception about his work, but it would be hard for him to frame it and contextualize it and intellectualize what he was doing; but what he was making was sublime - maybe what you are talking about at the bottom, this wringing something out of nowhere. I had this conversation with him and was able to say, Look,’ and give him examples of artists who aren’t that brilliant about talking about things or intellectualizing their practice, but they make hugely innovative work and you don’t have to be an intellectual to make incredible work. You have to trust that and gain belief, and that student definitely went on to make incredibly outstanding and original work for his degree show and did really well. He has had a lot of interest in the art world and gained confidence. So I really relate to that kind of student, even though because I am older now and all the shows I have seen I have picked up a big knowledge of historical and contemporary art, but it has come through my own research, my own practice. It wasn’t just going to read stuff just for the sake of it. I was never that sort of artist; my work was always something about whatever I make is always something connected to me at some level - maybe level that I am not aware of. I am not saying that related to that example of that student, but I suppose the obstacle I had maybe I didn’t have the

sort of tutors that could recognize that strength in me. I think at that time, if I can say, it was quite middle-aged men that had been quite high movers in the art world at their time, that really didn't understand this absolutely weird stuff I was making and I didn't understand it either. I didn't have a support mechanism to reflect that this was just pouring out of me this work. I didn't know where it was coming from. I now see work that really connects to that experimental stuff that I did as a degree student, and I had a complete lack of support and lack of understanding from the intention, invention and play I was engaging with.

Today you have a whole range of different practitioners, this was a college outside London, and actually there were only the visiting artists from London that saved me in a way. Funnily enough this conversation we were having about art therapy - I wanted to become an art therapist at that point and a visiting artist said to me, 'I think your work is really too strong to make that decision right now. You really have to go for it with your practice,' and really recommended that I do an MA; none of these other tutors picked me up as one of those start students. I didn't fit into the box - the intellectual box. It was obvious I was dedicated; I didn't fit the picture of what was expected of me.

I think the obstacles that I experience in my practice now are different. I create obstacles for a start. I set a very tight set of requirements that I am working towards. So I create obstacles, and there is a lot of resistance, pain and I don't make it easy for myself. It's like setting tasks that have to be completed but are quite painful; it's like a fairy tale; it's like Cinderella separating the two grains apart. I can't believe what I am doing has any worth for me and it's been extremely painful; so there is always an element of pain in the making of what I do - frustration and angst and difficulty - and I would say that I set up a lot of obstacles even to sitting down and making a work. I will procrastinate to work myself into frenzy so that when I sit down to make I am panic-stricken. A friend of mine who is a writer works in exactly the same way. It is reassuring, as he is a most accomplished writer, and I always beat myself up and think I am a lazy awful, but with long discussions with this writer who does exactly the same thing I have realized that it is part of the process. It is an incredible, painful intensity; it almost has to be ripped out of me what I am making, and I find that strangely interesting. If I am too aware I can't do it; if I am analyzing it's not going to happen. It's as if I have to be in a compromised situation to do it. I like to be very private. I suppose the thing that I find that there are certain obstacles that I actually create, there is this resistance I create, but I find there are other obstacles that I prefer not to have. So although I am incredibly passionate about teaching, I feel very dedicated to that creating a balance between those two areas of practice very difficult, so I really do have to shut myself away and go a bit mental. I have to go down into myself and go quite chaotic and then come out of it; it's almost like coming out of a storm. I come back to life again. I have to be in this quite strange place. So it is strange to say that as I don't sit around and say I consciously have to get to that place. You asking me is making me aware of what actually happens."

**In your practice as a tutor, what are the greatest obstacles you encounter in students' work, and are these obstacles different from the obstacles you encounter in your own studio practice? If they are different, why do you think that is?**

"I think one of the greatest obstacles I encounter with students' work is to convey the point that there are different stages in practice; you can't really generalize as I think these obstacles change. If we are talking about a degree course, I think those obstacles change during those three years and there are different types of obstacle. I would say confidence is a huge obstacle, to get someone to believe actually. I think when people are pitting themselves against each other on a course there is a healthy competitive spirit. I think as young artists evolve, everybody is evolving at a different rate. It can be these model students that seem to be getting it right, and I am always concerned to support those students that are struggling; it is very important to make those students aware who are struggling that maybe their time is to come, so as not to lose faith in what they are doing. This is very important. I think it's important to be very supportive. Maybe another obstacle besides self-esteem and self-confidence is just to get them to get down to making work. I think that can be quite a big obstacle, just getting on with it; that they have just become so overwhelmed. When you are on a foundation course, a whole world of language opens up to you - a huge explosion of creativity then when you start to analyze and contextualize, read about your area of research, it refines and allows you to develop your work, build your own personal language, but it also can conflict with that openness, the openness to creativity, and I think that's quite a big obstacle. I would say that's an obstacle; I experience as well. Sometimes I feel something amazing it makes me want to make-work; other artists' work makes me want to make-work. It gets me excited if I see some amazing drawings; I just want to get on and do it. Sometimes it can be quite off-putting - just how on earth would you put something that big together? How would you get the resources together?

**Has anybody or anything affected your teaching approach to dealing with obstacles with students? For example PG cert, changes in your own art practice, other tutors?**

"I am currently doing a PGCE Cert. Actually undertaking the PG Cert and becoming a student again is getting me to think very much what it is like to be on the receiving end of information, and how one absorbs information and what do you actually understand. That's really affecting my approach. Definitely wanting to find different avenues for communicating about subjects or information, it's just come really apparent to me that ideas and information doesn't really get absorbed. You think you have clearly said something - the recipient may not understand it. I have understood, doing this PG cert that you really do have to find another avenue, because people aren't really always switched on. They might be there having a meeting, but they might be thinking of something else and not absorbing what you are saying; so, that's become

really important to me and being a student to me. I am snooping around on blackboard as a student myself and in the past not seen anything to be relevant. I would be emailing, having meetings; but now as a student I am now going into information for my course, so to recap on things or there are text or papers, so that sort of thing, just having different sorts of resources to turn to, that has been a really important one. Also what I am thinking about for my PG Cert, what it's like to come onto a degree course, what it's like to feel isolated and how group dynamics work. I want to work with groups that I understand that peer learning is important; historically you can see that groups and movements of artists have really influenced each other, and it is the most important form of teaching is the peer learning, group dynamics, that is something that I have definitely learnt from my PG Cert. I want to do more with that so people sustain themselves – so it's like you are creating a model of what it is like in the real world as much as possible. People come to art school and then they leave and it's impossible, so one of my aims on the PG Cert is to very much to make this interconnected environment: students supporting each other and communicating as much as possible, getting people to come into the studio and be together and to realize that is their greatest resource."

**What role, if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you ever seen it used?**

"Interesting one, historically in academia psychoanalysis was pushed to one side" it wasn't really present. And then I think in the 70's, they got a bit worried and they got a bit more touchy feely and in bed some psychoanalytical approaches to teaching, and then I think now they are not sure where they are. The systems of how we are meant to do things, disclosure and all sorts of thing, you have to be careful with dealing with people, so I think we are in tricky territory. I would say my approach has changed a lot in terms of my relationship to my way. I might relate to a student because I might say that in my early days of teaching I would encourage students to be much more open with me, but now I think you are much more aware you have got to be referring people to the right place. I definitely make myself available if someone wants to talk about something to do with his or her psychological state. Just definitely aware of supporting someone in the right direction – so you keep what is academic separate. I have seen that is quite an important thing, because if you get too muddled I think it can be problematic for the student's academic journey. I think there is another way of thinking about psychoanalysis in art, not just this exchange but how somebody is supported in a healthy way. I think there are many students whose practice is informed by psychoanalysis – students will definitely go quite deeply into researching psychoanalysis, and they will start to contextualize which area of psychoanalysis is relevant to them because it is so broad, but definitely I have seen lots of examples of needing that as part of their research to develop their practice."

**James Elkins, author of 'Why Art cannot be taught' and professor of Art History/Theory at Chicago University argues that art can't be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

"In 2000 I went to meet Louise Bourgeois, and I went to one of her salons and I showed her my drawings. And she asked me about my teaching, and she said, as she was quite confrontational as she was, and she said, 'What do you teach? How do you teach?' She was obviously being quite provocative – the idea of 'teaching' art - and I explained a couple of projects I had been doing with some foundation students, and one of the project's title was 'Isolation and Claustrophobia.' So the foundation I have taught for a number of years is a bit of a joke with the other tutors; what goes on in that class is quite strange because my practice is informed from a deeply psychoanalytical base. The projects I teach and my approach to teaching is always from that angle so that is my area of interest. If I am talking to a student not engaged in that area, I am going to be relating from my position because that is my area of practice; but I said to Louise Bourgeois I was doing this project and the title was 'Isolation and Claustrophobia', and she was very keen to hear about that project. And I spoke about where that project came from which was a subject within my own practice; that content is within her practice as well. My partner also teaches art and is an artist - often says to me that art students should be stuck in a room and left and no one should speak to them, then come out after three years and see what's happened. I think it's a really difficult question. I don't think we can teach art; we can only be there to support the journey and think we are there equals really. I don't see myself as the instructor above a student. Attending alongside a journey or investigation. I wouldn't say I am teaching. I am in some ways teaching, but I don't think I can teach a person to make art; only they can teach themselves. I can support them, almost like having a plant creating the right soil; to encourage a plant to grow you have to be fertilizing, supporting that growth somehow. I don't think you can teach an artist to become an artist. That is most probably quite contentious."

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not there before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think Poiesis in art practice is possible?**

"I think all these questions are very difficult. If you are going to talk about making an art work and calling into existence that which is not there before, nothing is ever going to be completely unique without reference points. I think you can bring into existence something was not there for you before. I think there is the possibility of being able to draw something out of yourself and reveal it that you weren't aware of but is completely new to you. I think there is going to be lots and lots of references, links with the collective unconscious connected to anything you draw from yourself. When you look at an artist and their practice, quite often what an artist is doing is going over and over the same issue again and again; whatever form it will take, it will take a variety of forms. Artists usually have just this one subject. So it's very hard for me in a

way to say 'Yes you are bringing something into existence that was not there before' in terms of a subject, but in terms of a form I think you can. I think in terms of a subject you can't, but in terms of a form you can. That is for me what's really exciting about making art: the possibility to come across something that we haven't seen before. Isn't that the aim of us as artists to try and make that thing that hasn't been seen before? Then we are really doing something quite interesting. I know that's my aim. It's very difficult when dealing with ideas and material. We are recycling the human condition; as far as I am concerned the same set of things are going on. Thinking about art language there are only so many movements, possible mixtures of contradictions and areas of concepts. I suppose now artist always try to bring them from whatever approach they are coming from whether it's a deeply personal psychological practice, and I don't mean a therapeutic practice when I say that, thinking about someone like Louise Bourgeois who had this extraordinary knowledge of historical and contemporary art and psychoanalysis; she was incredibly well-versed in all those areas and was able to go deep within herself and brought forth these very deeply unconscious objects. I suppose that's what I am interested in and that is calling into existence that which was not there before as a form but not as a subject."

## Appendix H: Interviews with Students

### Questions for Students.

1. As a student in Art College what obstacles (if any) have you encountered?
2. Do you think your relationship to obstacles has changed during the course of the time you have been at Art College?
3. Are the obstacles you have encountered as a student been helped by the guidance given to you by a teacher? Can you give an example of this?
4. What role if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you had experience of this?
5. James Elkins author of "Why Painting cannot be taught and professor art history/theory in Chicago argues that art cannot be taught. What do you think of this statement?
6. Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not they're before and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think Poiesis in art practice is possible?

Student Interview by author, (anonymized) Royal Festival Hall, London,  
14.10.2011

**As a student in Art College, what obstacles (if any) have you encountered?**

"And these can be any obstacles? Ok well there are practical things like a lack of space; there are things to do with inadequate number of tutors, not very regular meetings with tutors. A sort of sense of disorganization, I would say quite strongly about the way the course is organized. I would say they are the admin areas but obviously they lead onto other problems but those were the main general things."

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles has changed during the course of the time you have been at Art College?**

"The obstacles didn't change, but did I change? Well I suppose you have to adapt to it. I think having come to fine art education quite late in life, having been a career person before and a senior manager in organizations obviously I come with a difference experience and expectation of how things are organized. So When I did my first degree which I graduated from in 2002 I found the same thing there so I suppose it wasn't a surprise that when I went on to further study, so I was mentally prepared for it, but it doesn't make it any easier, there are still obstacles that cause me frustration."

**Have there been obstacles you have encountered as a student that have been helped by the guidance given to you by a teacher? Can you give an example of this?**

"No, I think no, the obstacles that I have outlined, obviously what I haven't talked about if your question is intended to embrace things like obstacles in terms of one's own art practice, I suppose I don't interpret that as an obstacle but as an inadequacy on my own part. I think of obstacles as something that has been put there by someone else rather than something that is within me."

**What role, if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you had experience of this?**

"It is there and I think it is all pervading particularly when I did my first degree I found this surprising having come from the field of learning disability and mental health. I found it quite interesting that so much interest was put on Freudian practice when for most practical purposes is that we have moved on. I suppose I just had to accept it, it's not been an area that interests me and my art is more concerned with real life politics."

**James Elkins author of *Why Painting Can't be taught* and Professor of Art History/Theory in Chicago argues that art cannot be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

"Well I wish I had read the book, I have been looking at it for years and thought I must buy that book and never got round to it. Do I think? Well this is very controversial – you can't be taught how to be an artist, but obviously there are things that can be taught that will give you some tools, so you can start on the road, it's a balance between those craft skills which can be taught to some extent or certainly a way at looking at things can be taught and pointed out and then it's up to the individual what they make of those tools – so that's a yes and no answer – there are elements that can be taught but you can't be taught to be an artist."

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not there before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think Poiesis in art practice is possible?**

"I think of art practice doing exactly that, that is bringing into existence that which was not there before. In other words, I think one of the important roles of art is to show people something that they haven't seen before or to get people to look at things in a different way. We are all striving for that, but in our darker moments we know really it's very difficult to create something new, and we all strive for it and that's good."

Student Interview (anonymized) London, Royal Festival, 14 October 2011.

**As a student in Art College, what obstacles (if any) have you encountered?**

"I encountered staff problems, I think mainly it was staff that were not really available, you were very much left to get on with what you were doing. I didn't have a space problem because I was working from home. The first year I lived in Cambridge and I travelled to London and spent a night or two and in a way that was a problem as well, travelling to and from and also I am not always sure it's to do with the tutors because I know I also encountered knowing where I wanted to go in art and nobody actually being able to answer that question for me and nor should they – so there was the travelling and there was my own personal direction and I think there was a lack of tutors and I think that got worse in the second year there was less and less so ."

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles has changed during the course of the time you have been at Art College?**

"Certainly on the course I developed a sense of humor which seemed to help a bit. They (the tutors) were quite critical, fine, I think the biggest obstacle I had then was having a sense of humor and staying on course and not being swayed from something I went there to do which was painting and they would have liked me to make a dull video or something like that. I decided in my own mind that painting in itself will take a life time to learn, so it's not that I don't want to do other things. Now my coping mechanism is really about meeting other artists, talking about insecurities and talking about what I feel, and being able to talk about the insecurities that are part and parcel of the job."

**Have there been obstacles you have encountered as a student that have been helped by the guidance given to you by a teacher? Can you give an example of this?**

"Yes, yes, I can Geraint Evans was incredibly helpful. I think unlike other people helped me, so if I did feel very lost or there was even a problem that was a personal problem or a dip or a lull in my confidence, he did help me and I could call on him, he would be there, I would say probably not outside of college hours but certainly he would say " Well, look I have ten minutes " – so yes I found him very helpful."

**What role, if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you had experience of this?**

"I have had personal psychoanalysis as you know, no I would say that they are aware that the students go through dips and lulls and happiness with something that they have done, I would say I am not sure I was

consciously aware if they were supporting me through this time I suppose if I was failing and I really was going to drop out they would have done something but I guess the whole course in a way is part of psychology, it's testing you, its testing you internally and externally, and I am sure the tutors are aware of how the students will be going through those crisis at certain periods and I bet it's pretty predictable as well,"

**James Elkins, author of Why Painting cannot be taught and Professor Of Art History/Theory in Chicago argues that art cannot be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

"I think that you can be taught the skills, I think you can be taught the thought processes, I think you can't be taught to push those boundaries and look for something else and look in a creative and open way I don't think you can be taught that I think it is entirely up to the individual but it's good to have art colleges in place for anybody who wants to go."

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not they're before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think poiesis in art practice is possible?**

"Well personally I think I called into existence that which was not there before in the sense that my education as a child was pretty disruptive and I knew it was up to me to put into place, so in that sense yes. If we think that we can create anything new maybe we can for us, but almost as soon as something is new its old – by definition of by the moment it has been created that's yesterday so the future is something else. I think it's worth trying!"

Student interview by author, (anonymized), London, October 27<sup>th</sup> 2010

**As a student in Art College what obstacles (if any) have you encountered?**

"For me personally, I think the obstacle that I encountered which is that the notion of Art Education in the MA situation is specifically about a research question, which to me I found is a kind of too narrow and doesn't allow for artists and practitioners who have quite a disparate praxis; that notion of narrowness, or narrowing down what the research question is, that was one of the biggest obstacles for me."

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles has changed during the course of the time you have been at Art College?**

"I think it has, and I think it arrived quite late in the day and a kind of realization of perhaps that whilst fighting against that obstacle and wanting to remain disparate through the essay, once I had finished the essay, the final draft, although I hated what I had done, I realized that when I had gotten to the end I had a quite relevant research question. The promise to myself has been that I will use the research that's there and rewrite the essay to the research question that has been unearthed. Whether I do that or not, I don't know."

**Have there been obstacles you have encountered as a student that have been helped by the guidance given to you by a teacher? Can you give an example of this?**

"No I don't think that there has been; they have been through the result of 'doing', and I would make the argument to the 'powers that be' that what might be more useful is that there is a trouble in doing part-time MA over two years – that the first task that you have is to do a 1,000 word introduction to your essay, second one is a 2,000 word overview of the essay and the last one is 5,000 word. I think that if you are learning by 'doing', as I do, then those first and second ones should not be there, and it should be closer to 3,000 or 4,000 and just be done because that way you are going to know more about what it is. I think for me personally, the other two were more like false starts learning by doing. I don't know, there is another kind of factor in this in that the person who was the tutor, Christine Hat, in level one was unable through ill health wasn't able to attend in the second year; so where there might have been that sort of help in the second year became quite disparate for me and for other people too."

**What role, if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you had experience of this?**

"My only brief experience of this is when you and Malcolm were talking, and I am not sure I truly understand psychoanalysis. I think there is a

notion there that there is history to learn from on a basic level. It's very problematic; on a personal level, psychoanalysis crosses my mind thinking of the broader notion of loss in the work and melancholy. Then I think, or I remember when I came in to... I am not sure this is answering your question directly, but I will go with this. That first essay question was about taxonomy and collections, and having done a little bit of research on the origin of collections, yes the cabinet of curiosity, a lot of these cabinets began to be formed, with me, through the migrations that were happening. So from East India, the Dutch sail ships would be going out into other places and would be bringing back different artifacts from the world. But for also those that started collecting there was a guy called John De Berry who was known to have one of the first collections - what one would call a proper collection - and it was documented that it was through the loss of his wife and the loss of his father. That one of the main kind of motives for his collection was this kind of notion or mourning, through this mourning, this was a kind of transference of, and I remember thinking at the time that if I were to go with this collection then I would want some psychoanalysis; that was what I wanted to really go with. It makes a link, and I don't know why other people said, 'Oh no, no, no, you don't need to do that'. So there were two points: no you don't need to do that because you can look at other artists, this was a peer group and so they were saying, 'No you don't need to do that', but there was almost as if there was a kind of backing of this. If I could have afforded psychoanalysis and I could have afforded it at that time, I would have done it. Unwittingly or not, or whether it may or not be there, there is some connection there in a roundabout way."

**James Elkins, author of *Why Painting Cannot be taught* and Professor of Art History/Theory in Chicago argues that art cannot be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

"Well, I would be out of a job. I think it's a difficult one because one would have to define what art is on one level. But I think primarily, okay, art may not be able to be taught, but the quality of art can be taught. So the way of constructing language around it to engage with art can be taught, so that's what we do. It's trying to develop that sort of language. There is a different level; there is a different opinion and partly subjective, but otherwise one could quite easily argue that there is a quality issue that for a lot of people without having any art education, that's not for everyone, but for a lot of people - let me put it another way. You can see people's art getting better through art education. So I don't think that's an accident."

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not there before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think poiesis in art practice is possible?**

"I don't know the answer to that question; can you repeat it again? I buy into the idea of obstruction enabling you to create something new, and I

think as a practitioner and an artist finding the time to be stuck is really important and these moments of feeling stuck and finding something else through - it is a form of obstruction; it's allowing things to not be plane sailing. To me, it's a kind of series of revelations and I think that is one of the really interesting things about the MA. I remember writing in my diary that it was really like there were these veneers or cataracts. I had this with the collection actually; there was this really anally-retentive holding onto a kind of order of these objects, that they must all be dated and there is this inventory and this is how it must be. But I can't remember - it was a project here in one of the rooms, and I set it up and somehow, I can't remember exactly, but I was twiddling my thumbs and being really frustrated. I can't think of exactly how to define the obstruction but actually of just letting go of all of that, and it was a huge thing - this cataract being lifted - and I do remember conversations with Christine Hat, and you sometimes have this plane sailing and then all of a sudden someone says to you, 'It doesn't have to be like that'. And I don't know why we don't manage to say this to ourselves and take things on board, but all of a sudden you notice that there is this kind of - that where we are going has these self-imposed barriers; either you can think of it as a barrier or a cataract, and all of a sudden the barrier goes. I don't know if that answers the question, maybe in a little way."

Student Interview by author (anonymized) at Chelsea College of Art 30  
September 2011

**As a student in Art College, what obstacles (if any) have you encountered?**

"I think the term obstacles for me probably relates more to life than to practice. The thing with obstacles at college is they are often to do, or are related to, things that are outside college. So any difficulties I have experienced in my practice have been directly related to the difficulties I have had in my life, so I think the two things are totally intertwined. So for me, having things like an economically viable practice, that kind of thing, so if I don't have a lot of money to make things I put the boundary in myself; I create the obstacle that I will make work that will not cost any money and that will be part of my ethical practice. So I think the two things work together. But in terms of sort of being a student and studying, the thing I think I found most difficult was the ongoing end point, knowing eventually study will end and this will have to continue, and actually that looming in the background becomes an ultimate obstacle for me."

**Do you think your relationship to obstacles has changed during the course of the time you have been at Art College?**

"Probably not. I think pretty much the obstacles for me are constant. They have always been the same because they are related to life more so than to practice; they come from issues to do with money or location. So no, they have remained the same. I think so. Problems of practice have been knowing the safe things that I slip into in methods of working, knowing when not to do that. Generally, though, they have remained the same."

**Have there been obstacles you have encountered as a student that have been helped by the guidance given to you by a teacher? Can you give an example of this?**

"Perhaps in some ways - I think it is more identifying them. I think I have always felt as an art student there is a lot of scrabbling around in the dark. I think the role of a guidance element is having a tutor that shines a light on something that is quite obvious and you go, 'Oh, phh, yes it's that!' So when you are caught in your own work, it's hard to see the wood for the trees."

**What role, if any, do you think psychoanalysis has in art colleges today? Have you had experience of this?**

"I have had none; I don't think it has come up. I have been at three different art colleges, many different backgrounds, and it has not come up once. I don't think so, not until I met with you and Malcolm and it was funny the interesting thing about the talk you both gave was us all sitting there going, 'Hmm, how is it that we have not talked about this before?' I think how has this not come up? In art practice over the last ten years that I have related to, kind of memory or nostalgia, lots of artists having these practices that explore their own practice within their own historical narrative and even then it didn't crop up. I think that's quite surprising really, when people aren't really looking for methods or different ways of thinking about this. The same kind of thing using interdisciplinary activities, and I went into interdisciplinary colleges as well and went on good interdisciplinary courses, and I think it's like interviewing philosophers - they have a massive role in influencing artists and art practice. There is definitely some stitching up to be done."

**James Elkins, author of Why Painting Cannot be taught and Professor of Art History/Theory in Chicago argues that art cannot be taught. What do you think of this statement?**

"I think it's too black and white actually; I believe in a propensity or a drive towards something, so you have an innate feeling or attachment to something that grows later on. So for me, being an artist is like that; anything you become good at is because of that drive towards it, instead of being naturally good at something. Saying art can't be taught doesn't identify the different components of being an artist that are related to skill and thinking around practice and the social relationship we have to other artists other concepts and movements - so it doesn't really fit my vocabulary.

**Poiesis is about calling into existence that which was not there before, and this PhD project examines the role obstruction has in creating the new. Do you think poiesis in art practice is possible?**

"I think in my understanding of this it has to be possible. I think most of the time I think thinking about my own work is about, you know, about identifying something that is new frameworks, or new combinations of different ideas and different practices, so to say it's not possible would be un-empathetic to the way my own practice is. I think it must be, but I have a limited understanding of this area."

# **Appendix I: Additional Information for Student Interviews**



**INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS  
Wimbledon College of Art Research House**

**PhD Researcher Catherine Clancy  
Supervisor Dr. Malcolm Quinn**

## **INTERVIEWS ON POEISIS AND OBSTRUCTION**

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH PROJECT**

**The aim of these interviews are two fold, to investigate more fully the relationship of obstruction and poesis through interview and to see what are the differences/similarities between art practice and clinical psychoanalytical practice. It should be stated that there is no penalty for not taking part in this research project for students. Any students wishing to attend need to be self-selective and there are no compulsory elements for attendance to the interviews in this PhD project.**

## CONSENT FORM

- PROJECT TITLE 'Poiesis and Obstruction' PhD Research Project.  
PhD Question: "Is there a methodology to challenge obstruction which in turn enables artists to call new work?"
- INVITATION: You are being invited to take part in a research project through self-selection. Before you decide to take part in the interviews it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the attached information sheet carefully and discuss with others if you wish. Please ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.
- ACTIVITY CONSENT: I understand that I have given my consent for the following to take place. That I agree to be interviewed by Catherine Clancy PhD Research Student as part of her PhD Research Project. Catherine Clancy will conduct the interviews.
- DATA CONSENT: I understand that I have given approval for my personal data drawn from the interviews to be used and published in the PhD thesis of Catherine Clancy and that Catherine Clancy may retain the copyright for future publication of collected data if she so wishes. The Data will be kept on audio files with an encryption key. I give my consent on the understanding that all data will be kept in accordance with the data protection act and anonymized in any publication adhering to Data Protection Act (1998)
- STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING: I have read the information sheet of this research project on 'Poiesis and Obstruction', which I have been asked to take part in and have been given a copy of this information sheet to keep.
- RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL: Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the interviews at any time without disadvantage to myself and without having to give a reason.
- CONSENT: I hereby fully and freely consent to participation in this research study project on 'Poiesis and Obstruction' and the interview procedure has been fully explained to me.

STUDENTS NAME  
BLOCK CAPITALS

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STUDENTS SIGNATURE  
DATE

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TAMIKO O'BRIEN  
BLOCK CAPITALS

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TAMIKO O'BRIEN  
SUPERVISOR'S  
SIGNATURE DATE

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RESEARCHERS NAME  
BLOCK CAPITALS

-----

RESEARCHERS SIGNATURE  
DATE

-----

Catherine Clancy  
PhD Research Student  
WCA

A duplicate signed copy of this consent form will be given to me for my own record.

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