

**Time to think: Fostering critical and creative thinking through a practice-based investigation of the effects of time and space in the field of art education**

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Visual Art (Art Education) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University



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## **Declaration**

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April 2022

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## **Abstract**

Throughout my own experience as an artist, I have found the relations between time, space, matter and self to be fascinating subjects. The effort of understanding the impact these notions have on our behaviours led me to think of these influences in a manner that enables critical and creative thinking within the context of art and art education.

My research investigated the cognitive effects of time and space to explore new ways of understanding and viewing, using observation and awareness as a means of adopting critical and creative thoughts embodied in visual creations. We occupy space and time, and understand these notions through personal relations, but we do not always understand the impact they have on our behaviours and emotions. To some degree, we are all products of our environment. During the course of my postgraduate studies in Art Education, I was introduced to qualitative and post-qualitative research methods situated around a materialist perspective of being. With the use of these mixed methods I conducted research that aimed at discovering the possibilities of becoming aware of the intra-active agencies between human and non-human entities, and to reflect on the processes and happenings throughout.

The research was conducted through a case study during the course of three weeks at a high school situated in the Western Cape with 21 Grade 11 learners. The aim of the research was to explore how the act of creating art can be used as a medium for critical, creative and reflective thinking. My focus was on shifting the understanding of art beyond the 'realistic', direct copying of life method of creating art that is commonly found in school curricula. From a materialist perspective, our current education system fails to recognise the impact of our own experiences and lived realities on understanding and developing new ways of knowing.

By allowing learners to become part of a materialist perspective of mind, body and matter through art, I explored the possibilities of how they were able to become more aware of these interrelations and, in turn, develop a better sense of self. The conclusions of the findings suggest that high school learners have the critical and creative means to think of and with mind, body and matter to develop a greater understanding of themselves in relation to their surroundings. They also suggest the importance of art as a medium for learning to help develop the necessary critical, creative and reflective thinking processes for acquiring a better understanding of a given phenomenon. Art creates moments for self-discovery, self-reflection and self-inquiry that help individuals grow. Not only can learners achieve personal

development through the act of creating, but they are also able to better understand the dynamics of instances that surround them.

## Opsomming

In my eie ervaring as kunstenaar vind ek die verhoudings tussen tyd, ruimte, materie en self fassinerende onderwerpe. In 'n poging om die impak van hierdie idees op ons gedrag te verstaan, het ek aan hierdie invloede begin dink op 'n manier wat kritiese en kreatiewe denke in die konteks van kuns en kunsopvoeding moontlik maak.

My navorsing het 'n ondersoek behels na die kognitiewe effekte van tyd en ruimte om nuwe maniere van begrip en kyk te verken deur gebruik te maak van waarneming en bewustheid as 'n manier om kritiese en kreatiewe gedagtes vergestalt in visuele skeppings aan te neem. Ons neem ruimte en tyd in beslag, en verstaan hierdie idees deur persoonlike verhoudings, maar ons verstaan nie altyd die impak wat dit op ons gedrag en emosies het nie. In 'n mate is ons almal produkte van ons omgewing. Gedurende my nagraadse studie in kunsopvoeding is ek bekendgestel aan kwalitatiewe en post-kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes rakende 'n materialistiese perspektief van bestaan. Met behulp van hierdie gemengde metodes het ek navorsing uitgevoer met die doel om die moontlikhede van bewuswording van die intra-aktiewe agentskappe tussen menslike en nie-menslike entiteite te ontdek, en oor die prosesse en gebeurtenisse na te dink.

Die navorsing is uitgevoer deur middel van 'n gevallestudie oor drie weke by 'n hoërskool in die Wes-Kaap met 21 Graad 11-leerders. Die doel van die navorsing was om te ondersoek hoe die kunstelike proses van skepping gebruik kan word as 'n medium vir kritiese, kreatiewe en besinnende denke. My fokus was daarop om die begrip van kuns te verskuif van die 'realistiese', direkte nabootsing van die lewe wat algemeen in skoolleerplanne voorkom. Vanuit 'n materialistiese perspektief gee ons huidige onderwysstelsel nie erkenning aan die impak van ons eie ervarings en geleefde realiteite op die begrip en ontwikkeling van nuwe maniere om te weet nie.

Deur leerders toe te laat om deel te word van 'n materialistiese perspektief van verstand, liggaam en materie deur middel van kuns het ek ondersoek hoe hulle meer bewus kon word van hierdie onderlinge verwantskappe, en sodoende 'n beter selfgevoel kon ontwikkel. Die gevolgtrekkings van die bevindinge dui daarop dat hoërskoolleerders die kritiese en kreatiewe middele het om van en met die verstand, liggaam en materie te dink om beter begrip van hulself in verhouding tot hul omgewing te ontwikkel. Dit dui ook op die belangrikheid van kuns as 'n leermedium om die nodige kritiese, kreatiewe en besinnende denkprosesse te ontwikkel om beter begrip van 'n gegewe verskynsel te ontwikkel. Kuns skep oomblikke van selfontdekking,

selfbesinning en selfondersoek wat individue help groei. Kuns help leerders nie net om persoonlike ontwikkeling te bereik deur te skep nie, maar ook om die dinamika van gebeurtenisse wat hulle omring beter te verstaan.

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## **Chapter 1: Orientation to the study**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Life is a collection of experiences formed by our interactions with our environment. It is a process that is shaped by culture, language, beliefs, values and the distinctive features we consider as individuality (Eisner, 2002:1). Our experiences shape the way in which we think about and formulate understandings of the unknown. There is a constant interchange in knowledge happening between ourselves and the world around us. The ability to experience the world is biologically embedded in our nature and we use this as a means of learning (Eisner, 2002:2). We are biologically inclined to search for new ways of understanding, and in turn developing our own sense of self.

The lived experiences of things and people that surround us provide us with glimpses of having a past purpose, of which we are aware, that we use to create a new sense of becoming. Our past is constantly juxtaposed with the future to better understand the significance of our own experiences of being. Our daily interactions, both conscious and unconscious, shape our identity and future self. These interactions shaped my interest as researcher in developing a learning experience that utilises conscious observations towards a critical and creative thought process, not only by means of creating art, but also by understanding that learning takes place beyond the educational environment – lifelong learning that fosters an ongoing process aimed at the pursuit of knowledge.

As both artist and educator, enabling a consciousness that fosters critical and creative thinking in an educational environment, my research focused attention on using learners' existing experiences and understanding of things to help formulate new ways of knowing and understanding their own sense of self. Situating their own experiences in relation to their learning environment, my research focused on enhancing their personal and learning development. Lifelong learning helps not only to develop learners' own sense of self and enhance their learning production, but also to formulate skills and introduce knowledge that helps create active citizens in society.

From a materialist perspective, knowledge is derived from the act of making and uses all human senses (Barret & Bolt, 2007:1). Our sensory system therefore becomes a way in which we pursue our own development – we learn to see, hear and differentiate between the different tastes, sounds and visual imagery by means of recognition and recalling (Eisner, 2002:2). Our quest for knowledge is a result of gaining control over social and natural realities – to

qualitatively interpret and understand such realities and transform our consciousness of it in order to develop our own sense of self (Sullivan, 2005:95–96). Art functions through our sensory systems and helps to develop our imaginative abilities, providing a road towards a qualitative experience and an exploration towards the capabilities of our own imagination (Eisner, 2002:4). Art conceptualises our understanding of things beyond the capabilities of the traditional notions of learning.

My research investigated the cognitive effects of time and space to explore new ways of understanding and viewing using observation and awareness as a means of adopting critical and creative thoughts embodied in visual creations. We occupy space and time, and understand these notions through personal relations, but we do not always understand the impact they have on our behaviours and emotions. To some degree, we are all products of our environment. By formulating a better understanding of the impact of these influences, we can utilise these relations to create more productive and active citizens. My research both discusses and questions own production of knowledge in order to become more aware of the changes, manifested with each interaction, in oneself and to create new ways of understanding not only our own behaviours, but also the things that surround us. According to Robin Nelson (2013:56–57), the subjective nature of ‘embodied’ knowledge can be understood through an ‘enactive perception’ within the context of phenomenology, drawing on the relation between the physical and mental state of an individual. In order to gain more insight into the field of behavioural changes, I drew upon multiple fields, including the theories of neuroscientists, architects, physicists and theorists who conducted similar research. These theories served as a theoretical grounding for the research topic and strengthened my findings. The data were collected through a phenomenological perspective of 21 participating Grade 11 high school learners by formulating practical lessons of making art. The works of art that were made during the period of the study as well as my own observations and informal discussions served as data.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

Recalling my own experiences in high school, I now understand that I had little understanding of the role of art. I remember that creating art was almost mechanical, with no sense of critical and creative engagement with the subject matter. It was only through my experience of obtaining my degree in Fine Art when I started understanding the primary role of art and how it can be utilised to convey various meanings and reflect on one’s own sense of self. I found myself through the development of my practice as artist.

During my postgraduate studies, I convinced myself that reflecting my research in a high school setting where learners might have similar unknown thoughts on the role of art and art education may be a worthwhile topic for research. The potential of a high school setting was not confined to one singular focus towards developing art-making skills, but also included meaningful interpretations, discussions and art making.

My intention for the study was to create a means of understanding how art and the creating of art can be utilised as a tool for generating new forms of knowledge and expressing one's own sense of self. As I became more knowledgeable about my own praxis as artist, I understood the critical importance of using both my intellectual and my imaginative capacities through the act of making to better understand the world around me. My praxis, as artist, is subject to the notion of space-time and the possibilities it holds for our own experiences as beings – the interrelation between self and matter.

This study focused on using my experiences through education to foster critical and creative thinking through an intrapersonal pedagogy, situated around becoming more aware of oneself and the spaces that surround us. With the making of art as a guide for the process, learners were invited to express themselves through their own perspective, thereby fostering a stronger sense of self.

### **1.3 Contextualising the study**

Within the South African context, learning institutions were historically utilised as a means of enforcing division and repression, grounded on policies of trusteeship, non-equality and segregation (Weldon, 2010:354). Racial imperatives were deeply embedded within the South African institutional processes of apartheid states, and are still, even during social cohesion amidst the democracy post-apartheid, racially wired (Thaver & Thaver, 2010:49). Therefore, all learning institutions, after apartheid, can and ought to be actively engaged with social transformation and the development of self.

Transformation in relation to South African higher education institutions can be seen as an attempt to dismantle the racial discrimination of apartheid, moving towards a more inclusive, deracialised and democratic social order (Thaver & Thaver, 2010:55). The White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage of 1996 was a product of its time and was constructed during a particular period of South African history.<sup>1</sup> It served South Africans well as a policy paper, but

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<sup>1</sup> The White Paper was constructed after the demise of the apartheid regime.

it also came with limitations. The building of an all-inclusive society was the imperative national goal of the White Paper of 1996, yet discrimination and exclusion still need to be examined and dealt with today. It was not able to fully address a system that favoured Western learning over indigenous knowledge. The exclusion of non-Western knowledge in learning institutions in South Africa is still apparent, and demises the concept of truth as subjective to one's reality. Knowledge is not fixed and transcribed to a given set of standards, and each individual has his or her own sense of understanding in terms of his or her own lived realities, which should be taken into account.

According to the revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage of 2017, full participation of all members of society must be equality maintained by preserving and developing the necessary conditions and promoting the same opportunities for maximum growth – regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, nationality, political affiliations, status or birth (South African Government, 2017:55). Only then will citizens be able to fully participate in the common good of society. The present study was conducted at a public high school situated in the Western Cape with a multicultural and diverse socio-economic population regarding both learners and educators.<sup>2</sup> The high school is a bilingual learning institution that offers learning in both Afrikaans and English. Conducting the study in a multicultural setting allowed for a more rich, diverse range of possibilities and findings.

Post-apartheid South Africa is characterised by both cultural diversity and economic inequality, stemming from racial inequality (Seekings, 2008:5). Transformation in post-apartheid South Africa aims at dismantling all forms of social and economic inequalities, or any act of discrimination in the public and private spheres of society. The racial transformation serves as a means of creating an equal platform for all individuals, especially with regard to institutions – both students and administrators are perceived to be more equally divided and given equal opportunities (Vale & Jacklin, 2009:238). The challenge when collective multicultural spaces exist is to renounce notions of cultural groups as literal entities, while remaining discerning towards all characteristics and customs of each individual's reality (Erasmus, 2009:46).

Art education should support opportunities for making, performing and presenting, and should place value on the multiple expressions of South African cultural heritage to bring awareness of the right of all citizens to participate fully in contributing to and benefiting from an all-inclusive South African culture (South African Government, 1996:20). Notably, it must entail

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<sup>2</sup> See Table 3.1.

an integrated developmental approach that strives for innovative, creative and critical thinking as a means of shaping, challenging, affirming and exploring personal and social relationships as well as developing both a personal and a community-based identity (South African Government, 1996:20).

Collectively, multicultural spaces such as learning institutions enable individuals to question their own social practices in relation to others and promote transformation, rather than implying different 'racial' groups living among one another (Erasmus, 2009:46). Each interaction between different identities allows one to question not only those identities different from their own, but also their own sense of self. Critical self-reflection is therefore essential for South Africa's success as a nation – investing time, energy and attention to convey its promise of freedom in reality (Ramphela, 2001:15).

The connection between art and education is fundamental in terms of how learners understand and think. As art functions through and facilitates a process of dialect and narrative of personal reflection, it becomes important to understand the potential it has in learning processes. Learners are not passive subjects, but active agents who partake in the development of their own lives, realities and the world around them (James & Prout, 1990:8). It is therefore imperative to support this active agency in promoting learners' own development of self. Through art and art education, learners can be given opportunities to express their own thoughts and ideas from multiple perspectives. It contributes to self-discovery and understanding of our surroundings, both human and non-human, and the happenings throughout. Art is therefore an essential element for all forms of becoming. It can be seen as a tool that connects the interrelations between mind, body and matter, creating a means of actively seeking new ways of sense making. From a materialist perspective, art education can serve to foster a more democratic state of being and contributes towards promoting a general betterment of society.

In my own experience, the learning curricula of schools are often one-sided conversations in which learners only take in information through memorisation, without fully understanding the whole context. Learning should not merely promote memory skills, but also actively seek to challenge and promote critical thinking skills. Fostering critical and creative processes of thinking in art education might help develop learners' capabilities of understanding in other ways beyond the traditional Cartesian modes used in schools globally.

Learning is an important tool in fostering and bringing forth different forms of knowledge in relation to each learner's perspective (Gardner, 1999). Integrating different art methods can

help foster confidence in learners' capabilities and improve their cognition. To fully understand the role of learning and development of knowledge in terms of each particular perspective of learners, the current traditional styles of learning in school curricula need to be addressed and transformed. Educators should act as guides towards the quest for knowledge and discovery, giving learners a platform for thinking, addressing their realities and allowing them to thrive on their set of skills.

The most notable assumptions of any form of transformation are enacted through a conscious movement from exclusivity towards a more inclusive existence (Oloyede, 2009:430). Yet, it seems as though transformation, especially regarding public learning institutions, only focuses on the thought or concept, rendering many individuals unable to access and deliver learning opportunities to their communities (Enslin, 2003:80–81; Ramphele, 2001:12). This is evident in the current climate of the Covid-19 pandemic. The divide in access to equal learning opportunities in relation to the different socio-economic backgrounds of individuals has been increasingly brought forward by the continuous lockdown protocols. Learners from more wealthy backgrounds were granted more opportunities to access the necessary learning tools, such as online learning and digital platforms, to which learners from rural, poorer communities had no means of gaining access. The vast unequal treatment and access to the needed tools to ensure continued education for learners left learners from poor communities with little to no prospect of developing the necessary skills. Learners need the necessary tools to exercise their talents, foster development and strive to become active democratic citizens in society (South African Government, 2017:55). There has been little effort in the attempt at recognising the impact of poor investment in human development and effectively changing the unequal conditions (Ramphele, 2001:12). As such, my research took place in a space that gave each learner equal opportunity and access needed to complete the tasks in the most effective way they could. Learners were granted printed documents, daily lessons in class and workshops that provided them with the necessary materials to complete each task given.

The conditions of change are not the only characteristic on which transformation should focus; so too are the actions and interactions within the transformative state of change (Oloyede, 2009:430). There is therefore a gap between applying theory both in and outside of higher education institutions, which fails in terms of progressing transformative policies and practices. In order for transformation to occur, both institutions and individuals have to apply certain practices in their everyday life – only then will transformation truly be able to succeed in its policy and apply a more equal right to all forms of identity. Transformation, when there is a

truly diverse production of knowledge, power and representation, is applied to allow equal opportunities for all forms of gender, race and social classes.

#### **1.4 Problem statement**

The spaces with which we surround ourselves fascinate and captivate us. We experience space beyond our five bodily senses and allow all our organisms to work as one whole system that resonates with the qualities that surround us (Robinson & Pallasmaa, 2015). Understanding the impact of time and space in relation to how individuals project themselves became apparent in my research. If we are to understand the role of critical and creative thinking in a learning environment, the role of both time and space should be carefully observed and questioned. Throughout my research I focused my attention on how learners interacted with their learning environment; not only on how they utilised their own spatial awareness, but also how these changes can be used to introduce more critical approaches to learning and understanding. To fully understand the role of creating art as a tool for producing knowledge, my observations had a broad approach to instances of both external and internal relations. Notable discussions on identity of self, critical and creative thinking, changes in behaviour and thoughts led my research inquiry.

#### **1.5 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study was to investigate how the act of making art in a learning environment can be utilised towards both critical and creative thinking. Furthermore, my research focused on the relations between time, space and self – how these instances can generate new understanding of things. We are all living in our own realities and understand things in relation to our own experiences and memories.

The aim of the research, conducted with a sample of 21 Grade 11 Visual Arts learners, was to investigate in which ways learners could develop the necessary critical skills through both the act of creating art and art education, involving a process of continuous drawing lessons to enhance their hand-eye coordination skills, and observation and thinking process, and examining their use of both technical and creative artistic skills. My observations as researcher included examining their behaviours in each activity, how they were able to critically discuss and interpret the given practical assessment for the semester mark and how they were able to perceive and develop new forms of knowledge.

My aim with questioning the possibilities in generating art as a means of understanding the impact of time and space, and utilising the visual codes in relation to their behaviours, was not

only to produce a better sense of their own self, but also to form critical thinkers and introduce a means of lifelong learning.

## **1.6 Research questions**

The main question that led my research was formulated as follows: How can art, as an active experience, provoke critical and creative awareness between subject and the embodied changes of time, space and matter within the mind of an individual?

The research sub-questions were the following:

- What effects do these embodied changes have on the role of art and education?
- How can art, as an educational tool, be used to develop the necessary skills in situating a critical awareness of the habits, perspectives and embodiment of both conscious and subconscious behaviours?
- How can art impose both critical and creative thought and introduce lifelong learning?
- How can the act of making give a better understanding of self?
- How is the development of learners' critical thinking skills apparent in their art making, artworks and statements?

## **1.7 Study objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

- investigate how the act of making art contributes to creating new knowledge by fostering critical and creative thinking;
- investigate the role of time and space in the behaviour and mindset of learners through practical drawing lessons;
- analyse the perspectives and reactions of each learner in relation to each activity and informal discussion and what they revealed through inductive content analysis;
- identify how art can be utilised to create a better sense of self and effectively contribute towards lifelong learning by allowing learners to freely explore their own reflective thinking in terms of their positionality as artists; and
- explore new ways of viewing and observing through visual perception by introducing art lessons that shift away from the realistic approaches of art commonly found in schools and allow learners to reflect on their own perceptions.

The research was conducted through the act of creating art in a learning environment to both challenge and inspire learners to engage with any given subject matter critically and creatively. The learners were given a practical assessment that exposed their own thinking and imaginative

capacities to not only create a body of work that was aesthetically innovative, but also to justify their choices and theme through critical discussions. The learners were enabled to attain new ways of understanding how art functions to produce knowledge in innovative ways and heighten their awareness of the influences of their surroundings. The learners were all given the opportunity to assess their work and how they felt about the activities and discussions during the process of conducting my research.

## **1.8 Overview of the research methodology**

Our subjective experiences are processes and activities within our brain that base present scenarios in relation to past experiences and anticipations towards the possibilities of the future – being specific and having no effect on the world around us (Rovelli, 2018; The Royal Institution, 2018). The world cannot change according to our brain, but our perceptions have the possibility of creating new ways of understanding and changing the way in which we view things within our own realities. The means through which individuals interact and create understandings in relation to their surroundings first influenced my research. Through past experiences, we can understand and comprehend the unknown. As critical-reflective thinking allows individuals to consider past experiences and knowledge that they have yet to understand in full realisation, they are able to expand their own sense of self and become more aware of new ways of viewing the world around them.

My research therefore focused on critical and creative thinking in terms of both theory and practice<sup>3</sup> and how these notions can be fostered to fully understand and utilise the way in which learners understand their own sense of self and the world around them. The object of phenomena is subject to a vast number of philosophical theories. Within this study, phenomena within the field of agential realism were used to investigate the impact of an artistic practice through a mixed methodology<sup>4</sup> as a means of becoming more aware of the impact that time and space have on an individual – both physically and mentally. By formulating a phenomenological approach to my praxis, I questioned the possibilities of generating art as a tool for lifelong learning.

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<sup>3</sup> In terms of praxis, it followed a method of interpretation and reinterpretation. The learners were studied based on both their observations and their behaviours, followed by how they were able to interpret existing materials and form new ways of understanding their own spaces they enter, specifically within the classroom – rethinking pre-existing materials to expose their banality or function within a system of control and being able to rethink these influences in their own creative process of authenticity.

<sup>4</sup> I focused mainly on qualitative and post-qualitative methods through a mixed-methodology approach.

The research design comprised a qualitative case study that drew on elements of post-qualitative research, involving 21 Grade 11 learners from a high school in the Western Cape, my *alma mater*. Data consisted of the interactions between the learners and the work they created, informal discussions, photographs of the work created and material used as well as my own thoughts and observations of their behaviours throughout the course of the study. The analysis of the data focused on the interrelationships between learner and teacher, learner and material, and the mental and physical space to which each learner was subjected – becoming critically aware of the embodied internalisation and behaviours throughout each act of making. Data confidentiality was maintained through an anonymous numeral system. All participants as well as their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) signed a consent form and were informed of the details of the research as well as their option to be excluded from the recorded research at no detriment to themselves. All artworks created by learners were kept in their own possession and digital presentations were made that consisted of their process, drawings made during each lesson and any relevant writings they used to explain their final work. Apart from the learners having access to their physical works created, the art teachers at the school, my supervisors and I also had access to these digital presentations. Any digital format was safely stored on an external hard drive and laptop to which only I had access. Any written records of informal discussions or notes made during the duration of the study were kept locked in a drawer, or when in use, were in my possession at all times. The written data were kept safe and access was only given to my supervisors and participants who requested to see the data. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) as well as the high school.

A more detailed discussion of the methodologies used is given in Chapter 4.

### **1.9 Boundaries and limitations**

Given the nature of this research and the research question, the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown protocols of space and isolation had an impact on the research study. Space became much more enclosed, being desirable and/or disruptive for many individuals.<sup>5</sup> The daily schedules of learners and educators were disrupted, and learners had to become more self-sufficient. Adapting to change had various impacts on their willingness to complete and partake in prescribed school curricula from their home, instead of being placed in an educational setting

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<sup>5</sup> Learners were forced to work from home, a space that is filled with various distractions and other limitations that make learning difficult. Some learners also lived in challenging circumstances and struggled to devote the necessary time to learning due to their living limitations.

where they had less autonomy in their participation. As such, the relevance of the effect of Covid-19 on the data or the work created by individuals was considered. My research was also limited in terms of time as a result. I had less time to implement the necessary practical lessons, as the learners only had one class every second day. I conducted my practical lessons over a period of three weeks. It should also be noted that the given research and data collection were completed for the purpose of a mini-thesis and could only take place within a limited timeframe due to the small scope of this study.

After my initial time at the school, I was asked by the school to further my stay as assistant educator to help with theoretical and practical lessons for Grade 8 to 12 learners. The extra time allowed me to form a better relation in terms of whether the participants of my study continued with the knowledge and processes they learned throughout. During my research, physical contact was not allowed and social distancing had to be maintained at all times. The participants and I also had to wear masks for the duration of school time, and this limited my observation of their behaviours and facial expressions. Furthermore, the necessary measures of the WCED and the high school were consistently acted upon to ensure that all participants were safely engaging in the class environment. The learners also presented some limitations in terms of their attendance of each lesson. As a result, the participants who were in full attendance received greater focus in terms of assessing the data captured.

## **1.10 Structure of the thesis**

The following section introduces the structure of the thesis and a brief overview of each chapter.

### **Chapter 1: Orientation to the study**

In the introductory chapter, the research was introduced, along with background context, the problem statement, the research methodology, the research design as well as the limitations of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework**

This chapter includes an overview of the important literature and theories that were used for this study. Main theories by philosophers, physicists, architects and theorists within the field of time, space and memory were explored. Also included are theories of critical, creative and reflective thinking and the role of art as medium for learning.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the design of my research and the approach to conducting my research. It also includes the sampling, selection and analysis of data, as well as the ethical considerations and validity of my research.

#### **Chapter 4: Data and discussion**

In this chapter, a broader analysis of the data collected from conducting my research in the educational field is presented and discussed.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusion and implications**

This chapter provides a discussion of the impact and relevance of my findings and whether the research conducted within my praxis was relevant. This chapter also includes suggestions and critique.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the main theoretical framework that supported my research. Theories of time, space and memory are used to discuss the relevance of one's own subjective reality and how these relations can be utilised to foster critical and creative thinking. By offering a method of realisation, or awareness, through the practice of art in education, this chapter focuses on the relationship between mind and memory in relation to time and space by means of producing new forms of knowledge and attempting to understand the subconscious changes apparent within.

### **2.2 Experiencing time, space and place**

Spaces are filled with experiences, memories and thoughts. In every space we occupy, we give some notion of ourselves over to the space, and in return, we are able to create new meanings of our own sense of self and our reality (Solnit, 2001:13). There is a dualistic relationship between our mind and space, where one constantly affects the other, and vice versa. Our own thoughts and behaviours give meaning to and arise from our surroundings. We are, in some sense, products of our environment, just as our environments are shaped by our own thoughts. Rovelli (2018:175) describes it as follows:

We are time. We are this space, this clearing opened by the traces of memory inside the connections between our neurons. We are memory. We are nostalgia. The clearing that is opened up in this way, by memory and by anticipation, is time: a source of anguish sometimes, but in the end a tremendous gift.

Life is a multiplicity of acts, happenings and encounters (Pearson, 1999). Our lives are constantly shaped by our surroundings and give meaning to our own realities. Just like our surrounding spaces, our mind is filled with past experiences and memories that shape our very being. To fully understand how our experiences shape our own sense of self, we must question our realities. These realities are, in some sense, shaped by the very passing of time and the spaces we enter. Throughout the following sections, I discuss the concepts of time, space and memory and their relevance to becoming more aware.

### 2.2.1 Time in relation to space

The concept of time has been a mystery for centuries and has sparked the curiosity of many scholars. It is not something we necessarily need. It is nothing, but at the same time there is nothing else – it is everywhere and within everything (Rovelli, 2018). According to Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli (2018), time is not a singular entity. Time moves, and as we move, we expose ourselves to new happenings.

We understand the concept of time as being a measurement of change.<sup>6</sup> It is an ongoing sequence of events that occur – ordered through the past, present and future. The past is fixed in certainty, whereas the future holds endless possibilities. Yet, its very existence is merely a thought unfolded by past revelations – something that we invent within our mind to give meaning to the continuous flux in which we find ourselves (Rovelli, 2018).

Why are we able to recall the past, but have no understanding of what the future holds? What does it mean to say that time passes? (Rovelli, 2018). We cannot see time, yet its existence shapes the fundamental aspects of our daily lives. Our reality is based on the movement in which time exists. Each movement is relative to its own time. Just as time is not a singular event, we know that reality differs from person to person. We live in different times, think differently, act differently – all in accordance with our own lived experiences and memories.

Lived realities are expressions of the flows of energies and experiences – a process of collecting information and knowledge through complex systems that happen within the passing of time (Braidotti, 2016:24). Everything constantly changes with the passing of time. Both time and space merge with our thoughts, emotions and self, altering each instance (Shepherd, 2011:8). Every life is embedded with a collection of experiences based on each action and decision we make.

Rovelli (2018) states that the biggest contribution to our understanding of time is through emotion. In this sense, time and the way in which we come to understand our mind have similar properties – both drawing from lived experiences. Our emotions have a substantial influence on the cognitive processes we draw upon – our reasoning, perceptions, memories and learning the way we solve problems. As a result, we must consider the implications of time in the way we are able to process information and convey meaning. Time, arguably, becomes the source of all forms of knowledge.

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<sup>6</sup> We measure physical change through the order of time – instruments such as clocks, hourglasses and stopwatches – to the very passing of the sun, such as with calendars.

On a basic level, we all have different ideas when we think of time. This is true for most instances in our lives. Our prejudices of time are based on multiple preconceived ideas on a rudimentary level (Rovelli, 1991:453). We come to understand time as a linear notion, but it is far more complex. It is a multi-layered structure that involves our whole human subjectivity (Rovelli, 2018). Understanding this, time being a complex web of effects layered by a vast network of forms, we can understand how time functions in our mind, and in effect, our own sense of self (The Royal Institution, 2018).

### **2.2.2 Spatial awareness**

Spaces are physical manifestations of lived experiences, bound together by the order of time. Just as time forms part of how we experience reality, spaces have similar properties in terms of our behaviours, emotions and being. Spaces we occupy infiltrate our very being. We form part of their very existence, situating our own sense of self onto every entered space, while each space simultaneously affects our own preconceived perceptions and thoughts.

We are constantly surrounded by spaces, both known and unknown. Each space we enter is different, acts differently and forms different mindsets. Intimate spaces, or spaces that we constantly enter, are embedded with memories and lived moments in time (Bachelard, 1969:5). We use our pre-existing knowledge to formulate a deeper understanding of how these spaces function in our lives. Every experience of a given space therefore becomes part of a multi-layered process that involves our own mindset – using both conscious and subconscious reactions of our mind. Our experiences are formed by cause and effect – constantly reacting to and shaping every instance to which we are visually succumbed. Our experiences are a result of our own perceptions and memories, formed by our thoughts and imagination (Bachelard, 1969:5).

### **2.3 Mind and memory**

Memories are collections of thoughts, emotions, lived experiences and knowledge we have accumulated through the passing of time. We use memories to understand how change manifests in both ourselves and the world around us. Each moment of our lives is stored in our brain and is used to make sense of things happening. There is a constant action and reaction happening between all matters that shape the fundamental aspect of our understanding of all things (Rodowick, 1997:28). Our lives are maps shaped by every instance and memory – from the banal to the phenomenal (Hooks, 2009:5). According to Karen Barad (2007:xi), “[m]emory does not reside in the folds of individual brains; rather, memory is the enfoldings of space-

time-matter written into the universe, or better, the enfolded articulations of the universe in its mattering”.

The lived experiences of other beings or objects provide us with glimpses of a past purpose, of which we are aware, that we use to create a new sense of becoming. Our own lives are constantly shaped by recollecting memories and past experiences to become more aware of what we call ‘now’. According to Barad (2007:xi), memory is not merely a record or recollection of our past, but what she calls ‘intra-actions’ – extended entanglements of past and future happenings that we constantly experience and reconfigure. Our lived experiences form part of our being and cannot be erased. We are our past, as much as we try to give meaning to the now and change our future possibilities. Memories are not fixed in repetition – we continuously restructure our memories through the passing of time (Seremetakis, 1994). We use them as tools for learning and making sense of things happening in the present. With each passing moment, we gain new experiences to use for future possibilities. We grow, we develop and change ourselves in time and through our own mindfulness of what the future may hold.

Instances are bound together to create meaning, drawing from one another and giving new understandings of their nature. Our mind is filled with memories and knowledge that forms meaning to everything that surrounds us. There is a clear synchronicity as we observe things and our surroundings, between our mind, time and space (Von Franz, 1980). The meanings we embed into things and events are drawn from our realities and have various ways in which they can be understood. An example I often use is to think of any given colour, such as red. My own idea of what red looks like differs from that of someone else. This is how our mind functions. We constantly shape our surroundings through our own lived experiences and make sense of things by delving deep into our conscious and subconsciousness. Greene (1988:20) defines consciousness as follows:

Consciousness, it so happens, involves the capacity to pose questions to the world, to reflect on what is presented in experience. It is not to be understood as an interiority. Embodied, thrusting into the lived and perceived, it opens out to the common.

Spaces use all our bodily senses. Every aspect of and within space influences our mind to form a lived experience. This phenomenological approach to a given space probed the assumption that a space is more than just a “background for the gaze of a viewer” (Creswell, 2007:12–13).<sup>7</sup> Our experience of space is not merely a process of taking in the visual aesthetics of the things

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<sup>7</sup> We create spaces in relation to our senses and needs. Its existence is created by our own desires.

with which we are confronted, but also how we encounter these aesthetics in relation to our mind and body, and utilise them as a condition of things (Pallasma, 2006). Our consciousness constitutes multiple interpretations and realities based on our own attempts to understand what might, should and has yet to be (Greene, 1988:21). Our consciousness is therefore grounded on the intra-actions between our own being in relation to every happening we encounter, including all interactions, between human and non-human matter, as well as our surrounding spaces. It provides us with the possibilities of thinking beyond that what we already know and to explore the realms of the unknown.

Spaces flow into one another, like water moves through a river, and form a path towards discovering and experiences a vast number of variable perspectives and knowledge embedded in their nature. Through a phenomenological perspective, the subjectivity of “embodied knowledge” can be understood through the conceptual and physical relations of an enactive perception (Nelson, 2013:56). Spaces affect our being just as much as we try to shape its existence. Meaning is created through them and within them. As such, past experiences and memories, subjected to space and object, become valuable resources for pedagogical experiences of learning beyond the visible (Davies & Gannon, 2009).<sup>8</sup> My interest in the role of subject-object relations is formulated around not just how they matter, but also why they matter, shifting the focus from what we understand under the notion of time and space within our own sense of self towards a deeper knowledge of what effects they have within our own subjectivity. Our understanding of the world is merely a premise of our mind’s ability to make sense of things and formulate new knowledge of the unknown.

With every process of obtaining new knowledge there is emotion. Emotions have a strong influence on the cognitive processes of humans (Robinson & Pallasmaa, 2015). Our perceptions, reasoning and learning all function through emotional aspects. Emotions can have a great impact on how knowledge is developed and understood and play a crucial role in connecting our lives with the world around us (Robinson & Pallasmaa, 2015). Similarly, our understanding of the world is based on how we interact and perceive the complex systems of time and space.<sup>9</sup> As we come to understand the nature of how these systems work, we can be more aware, and by doing so, situate our own lived realities towards becoming better individuals. Hooks (2009:5) explains as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> Experience is central to growth and functions as an educative medium (Eisner, 2002:3).

<sup>9</sup> Our awareness of these changes and interactions between mind and space can arguably alter our experiences of situating new knowledge.

We are born and have our being in a place of memory. We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering. Memories offer us a world where there is no death, where we are sustained by rituals of regard and recollection.

## **2.4 Learning to think**

According to Psychology professor Douglas Heath (1999:53), if individuals become more aware of themselves and their own identity through lifelong learning, they are more able to know what they can and cannot do well – to achieve a positive self-confidence, self-esteem and self-command. By reflecting on both inner and outer relations of self and one's surroundings, one can develop a stronger sense of self and expand one's own knowledge. Learners need to develop intrapersonal skills to transform themselves towards becoming active citizens in a democratic society. Being able to critically assess and expand one's production of knowledge gives a means towards being more successful in life – gaining trust in one's own reality and abilities. Our abilities to use critical, reflective and creative processes of thinking towards our realities enable us to become more conscious and explore learning narratives that help shape our understanding of things.

### **2.4.1 Critical thinking**

Critical thinking generally assumes a premise of being able to question everything and see things from multiple perspectives. As we question our own beliefs based on our experiences as human beings, we constantly refer to statements of “who, what, where, when and why”. Critical thinking shapes our thinking. We think of what we are thinking about. This is what makes critical thinking different from other forms of thinking. It functions within our conscious and subconscious mind to create meaning of things that often seem beyond our capabilities as human beings. It involves a metacognitive activity that is a way of being (Moon, 2008:56).<sup>10</sup>

It is a thought process that lives within us and is used to help us grow. Critically thinking of a particular happening, we try to expose its very nature and go beyond the visible – to see its reason for being (Freire & Shor, 1987:13). This, for Freire, is the act of knowing, not a mere transfer of knowledge or a mere technique for learning the text (Freire & Shor, 1987:13). Critical thinking functions as a mirror to our own thoughts in relation to our surroundings. It is

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<sup>10</sup> As humans, we formulate our understanding of things through lived experiences. Our experiences shape the way we think of and with our surroundings. These interactions are based on our beliefs and assumptions of the world surrounding us.

how we experience happenings and interpret them to create and transform our own understanding (McLaren, 1995:254).

Motivations towards thinking critically have become an essential tool for lifelong learning and effectively becoming active citizens in a democracy (Eisner, 2002). Critical thinking is a process that functions through reflective skills and both observing and evaluating ideas and thoughts on a particular notion. Through critical thinking we foster lifelong learning capabilities that help us create a better understanding. Learning to think critically subtly shifts our aims from pure knowledge towards a broader spectrum of our own thoughts and actions – engaging in a reflective thinking process that enables both learning and developing valuable knowledge within a practice (Lyons, 2010:6).

#### **2.4.2 Reflective thinking**

Critical reflection can be understood through various perspectives, depending on the ideology of the viewer. According to Nona Lyons (2010:224), critical reflection is shaped through happenings created by discrepancies within our own perspective on life. Its point of departure begins with some unknown conflict within our lives. This conflict brings forth an awareness of our own position in life and as we attempt to solve or create meaning of it, we use a process of what we call ‘reflective thinking’. During this process of inquiry, we situate alternative perspectives of thought and actions, based on our own assumptions, to create meaning and develop a deeper understanding of our lived experiences (Lyons, 2010:224).

As we experience life, we constantly reflect on each happening and event. It is a continuous cycle that shapes our understanding of reality and function through informed actions. These informed actions situate all happenings towards a critical inquiry to anticipate the consequences of possible outcomes – being both cognitive and behavioural (Lyons, 2010:224).

One manner in which critical reflection can be understood is through the concept of dialectic thinking in which we continuously explore the interrelationships between general rules and contextual judgements (Basseches, 1986:2005). This general form of reasoning realises the potential and possibilities of reflecting on our own realities. Every happening has the possibility to shape our understanding and help develop our own reality towards becoming active knowledge-seekers. We learn through reflecting, and as we continuously reflect, we grow. Critical reflection offers opportunities to seek new ways of understanding life’s contextual contradictions and uncertainties (Lyons, 2010:225).

Critical reflection offers a means to creative development (Lyons, 2010:225). As we reflect on our lived experiences, we become more aware of and attentive to the importance of finding meaning and creating order in the uncertainties that unfold (Lyons, 2010:225). This self-awareness helps us to develop our own sense of self. As we become more critical in observing our own realities, we can strive to learn from them. Becoming critically reflective is becoming itself. It is an act of development – a continuous exploration that furthers our own capabilities and means within our lives. We must continuously strive towards this development to understand the ambiguities of life's uncertainties. That is the goal for human achievement: continuous lifelong learning.

### **2.4.3 Creative thinking**

All individuals have some form of creativity; however, some are more successful in utilising these abilities than others. We use our imagination to create and think of and through certain processes to help us develop a better understanding of a given instance. According to Howard Gardner (1993:35), creativity is marked by posing and solving questions frequently and in a novel manner. Individuals who are deemed creative not only exhibit some form of making, but also use their creative abilities to draw on their own pre-existing knowledge and create new, novel ways of understanding a given phenomenon.

Piaget also places much emphasis on the necessity of creativity within human development (Palmer, 2001:42). We use creative thinking through strategic models that help us to develop the necessary skills to discover and solve particular inquiries – expressing our own discoveries through our intellectual and imaginative capacities. Imagination is, to some degree, the core function of creative thinking. It is this act that differentiates creative thinking from any other thinking process.

Imagination functions by creating mental images of unknown instances, absent from our senses and the now, and being able to bring these ideas forth into reality (Efland, 2002:133). It functions by using a collection of thoughts and ideas from lived experiences and creatively externalising them. Creative thinking creates new perspectives on our own lived experiences and utilises them for forming or acknowledging new knowledge.

Creativity and action have the potential to lead individuals to think and re-think the systems of collective notion (Palmer, 2001:42). This act of constant questioning and contemplation is how we develop. Creative thinking allows us to not only give meaning to our own lived experiences, but also to think beyond the traditional notions of education systems. It helps us to formulate

different ways of understanding and applying critical thinking skills in a reflective manner. Our creative abilities foster new knowledge through a system of critically thinking, observing, contemplating, discovering and making. Our interconnected being with the world and our surroundings fosters creativity (Gardner, 1993:41).<sup>11</sup>

Through the years, art has been used to facilitate personal reflections and connections. Each moment of creating and each distinctive choice imposes often deeper meaning than consciously understood. Creative thinking uses visualisation to help convey thoughts or ideas that cannot be seen (Gardner, 1993). There is a dynamic relationship between our thoughts and judgements that occurs with the process of creative thinking within the making of art. We use our thoughts, ponder over ideas and lose ourselves in the vast wonderings of the world to make, create and represent some narrative of our own experiences of life. The means in which art is used to share personal feelings and/or convey a personal message can help foster a critical consciousness of life and finding a better sense of self.

## **2.5 Art as a tool for learning**

The following section discusses how art can contribute as a tool of lifelong learning. It furthermore discusses art, and art education, from a materialist perspective and the role of identity in education from both learner and educator.

### **2.5.1 Praxis as pedagogy**

Praxis is often associated with the arts, and the endless possibilities and alternatives of viewing things as they could be— existing in an individual's imagination (Allsup, 2003:157). It is a human activity that centres the relationship between action and possibility, combining reflections on things with action to imagine and act upon possible alternatives (Allsup, 2003:157).<sup>12</sup>

Freire suggests that praxis is non-neutral and occurs with the rejection of the traditional view of separating abstracted learning from real life (Allsup, 2003:158).<sup>13</sup> Praxis therefore combines the experiences and knowledge of real life within a learning environment to formulate new possible ways of seeing and reflecting on theories and cultural instances within society (Allsup, 2003:158).

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<sup>11</sup> Our surroundings are shaped by our thoughts and vice versa. We use these thoughts, in turn, in a creative manner to understand the nature of being.

<sup>12</sup> Action requires inaction – reflecting, thinking, perceiving, conceptualising and connecting.

<sup>13</sup> Praxis transcends the traditional institutional form of education as a capitalist status privilege that aims at human emancipation, self-realisation and subjectification (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2005:213).

For Freire, culture<sup>14</sup> and transformational practice cannot be separated and should be engaged from an objective distance (in Allsup, 2003:158). Considering every lived experience and how it functions through both thinking of and creating art as an educative tool helps us to understand knowledge better. Every individual engages with reality in different ways, and gains new perspectives based on these circumstances.<sup>15</sup> Utilising pre-existing knowledge through practice-based learning helps both educators and learners to understand themselves in relation to their surroundings.

The task of a pedagogy is to construct a praxis for educators, more complex than ‘teaching’ – integrating the practice of particular curricular content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, methods and purpose, which come together in the realities of the experiences in the classroom (McLaren, 1995:34).<sup>16</sup> Praxis, in terms of pedagogy, assembles different views of an educator’s work within an institutional context, specifying what knowledge is most important, what it means to know something and how individuals construct their identities in relation to others and their social environment (McLaren, 1995:34). Through praxis as pedagogy, an act of meaning making can be used that fosters both critical and creative thinking towards life, self and others.

Traditionally, learning institutions produce and perpetuate knowledge that serves as a silencing agent – relegating legitimacy to the abstract reality developed by politically prescribed knowledge, rather than towards the actual lived experiences that shape an individual’s knowledge (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2005:220). Learners are often seen as mechanisms that merely take in knowledge subscribed to them without considering the realities in which they live, and fail to recognise that each learner thinks and acts differently.

Praxis, similar to art, acts through transforming the ordinary or traditional views of things by being more conscious of the dialect between an individual’s objectification of and action upon the world (Allsup, 2003:159).<sup>17</sup> It becomes a critical reflection upon one’s own sense of reality,

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<sup>14</sup> Culture is defined as a repository of beliefs, ideals and customs that is used to inculcate, teach or build (Allsup, 2003:162). It informs us of ‘the other’ by situating certain ideals, beliefs and ways of living apart from the rest, creating communities within society (Allsup, 2003:162).

<sup>15</sup> According to Freire, our consciousness of, and acts upon, reality, which cannot be separated from transformation within praxis (Allsup, 2003:162).

<sup>16</sup> This engagement is action-based as well as epistemological – an attempt to understand the object or notion in relation to others (Allsup, 2003:159).

<sup>17</sup> In order for praxis to be transformational, reality must be understood as an easily influenced notion, in constant flux, which should not be solipsistically interpreted (Allsup, 2003:162).

engaging with all forms of lived, felt, viewed, sensuous and practical experiences (Allsup, 2003:159). Praxis enables a consciousness of the changing dynamics of social relations and gives meaning to the lived experiences of a learner. In this sense, our thoughts and actions become notions that can dismantle the unitary fixity of social life and resist the assertion of homogeneity of the social and public sphere (McLaren, 1995:23).<sup>18</sup> Through praxis as pedagogy, learners can better understand themselves and their surroundings and effectively improve the outcome of lifelong learning.

## **2.5.2 Art education through intra-actions and intrapersonal reflection**

### ***2.5.2.1 Intra-actions and new-materialist perspectives***

As humans we are constantly learning and making. We experience life through intra-actions between ourselves and our surroundings. Learning through and within space becomes part of ways in which we discover and develop our own knowledge. According to Barad (2007), individuals are not separate from things – they are interconnected through intra-actions that shape the way we come to understand ourselves and our surroundings.

Our realities are based on dynamic processes of intra-active agencies, determined by causal structures with defined limitations, effects and meanings that shape our own behaviours (Barad, 2007:140). Our lived experiences form part of a dynamic structure that constantly shapes the way we process information. We understand through our surroundings and within our own reality. There is a continuous flow of agency between causal events in the world and ourselves that takes place in the notions of space and time (Barad, 2007:140).

We know our world exists through the corporeal intentionality of our lived bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:387). As such, we constantly form intra-actions between ourselves and the world around us. These intra-actions form a deeper understanding of how reality functions. The constant interchanging of material and self binds us to spaces we inhabit and subconsciously create variable perspectives based on these relations. These perspectives are perceived through and of the body, beyond the trajectories of vision, in which all human sensations are acted upon (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:208).

All forms of matter exist through the interchanging of knowledge. As humans, we are not separate from things – how we understand ourselves, in relation to others, are events and happenings, created by our interactions with everything that surrounds us (Hickey-Moody &

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<sup>18</sup> According to Marx, humanity and the concurrent questions of what it means to be human are found in labour, and human activity- in practice. (Allsup, 2003:159).

Page, 2015:2). These actions are subjective in nature, as they are formed through our senses – body-events that combine our senses, self and the world to create new meaning (Manning, 2009:212). Our thoughts of things are products of every lived experience and intra-action with matter; matter being agentic in nature – continuously shifting in form and meaning as time passes (Coole & Frost, 2010). It is becoming. As time passes, the very nature of matter changes with it, and so does our understanding. This is what life is. It is the interrelations between human and non-human matter (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2015:2). Just as we create meaning from matter, its existence is also subject to our lives. We are entangled in the development and formation of both being and knowing (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2015:4).

To be aware of something is to know of its existence as well as our own. Each instance creates new meaning and is used to understand not only the very thing itself, but also the things we have yet to discover. All forms of knowledge are derived from past experiences. Materialism recognises this network of phenomena shaped by intra-actions between humans and material (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2015:4). Each lived experience shapes our understanding of things we do not know. We constantly analyse the world around us through our own perceptions, emotions and thoughts.

Art functions in a similar manner. We use our thoughts and experiences in a creative manner to make sense of a particular concept or to convey a certain meaning. It is a way of thinking already in action (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2015:1). Meaning is created by shifting our understanding from subject and object to their entanglement with the self – activating them as they activate us (Taguchi, 2012). This active experience of subject-object relations forms new meaning in which every lived experience is different in nature. We never experience sameness of events or happening, as new meaning is conveyed with each moment or occurrence in time. Each moment in time affects our own being and creates new forms of understandings. Every creation is a result of our own thought process. We make use of pre-existing things, happenings and knowledge and change their form to something new. Every creation is a recreation. Art conceptualises and visualises change. Through change, we are able to create new knowledge and learn through and within our lived experiences as human beings.

### ***2.5.2.2 Intrapersonal reflections***

Art that portrays a personal reflection gives learners the opportunity to explore and understand their own sense of self and the world around them (Wilson & Wilson, 2009:110). Art creates moments for self-discovery, self-reflection and self-inquiry that help individuals grow. Not

only can learners achieve personal development through the act of creating, but they are also able to better understand the dynamics of instances that surround them. In terms of the work created, individuals can show dimensions in their work without consciously being aware. In many cases, artworks manifest a subconscious thought or idea that the artists have yet to discover themselves.

Nelson (2013:40) states that recontextualising existing notions and things from their familiar associations alters one's perspective of the thing itself – manifesting a state of becomingness through visual perceptions. This combination of both creative and critical thinking poses a state of becomingness that gives individuals a better understanding of their own sense of self, giving meaning to unknown instances. The narratives created through art in relation to place and surrounding spaces have a big impact on the way in which individuals understand and create meaning of their lives. Meaning is created by a personal reflection on one's own reality through stories or visual narratives – using memories and past experiences to help us understand the nature of being (Kellman, 1999:40).

### **2.5.3 Identity and self**

Our self-identity is based on perception – how we see ourselves in relation to how others see us. It is an accumulation of multiple factors that can be represented through notions such as personality traits and interests, as well as more inclusive categories such as race, language, gender, nationality, political affiliations or religious beliefs (Perumal, 2016:746). Individuals' beliefs and experiences are formulated by their perceptions of their surroundings and influence various choices in their lives. This principle would suggest how important learning becomes in relation to an individual's identity.

Identity connects individuals to one another and the spaces they occupy. Knowing ourselves and our identity allows us to develop empathy for other individuals and similarly, to relate more to their identity – enabling a more interpersonal connection between individuals. Empathy is ultimately developed through the perspective of others through our own sense of being – formulating a better sense of the individual's sense of self. Arguably, emotions and identity are somewhat interconnected. The ways in which we think, see, experience and react are all emotive aspects that both shape and become formed by our identity.

Identity of self in relation to that of others is of vital importance to not only create a space that allowed me, as educator, to become more aware of my own sense of being, but also to understand the notion of difference through awareness, tolerance and acceptance by

formulating a public service for other individuals while simultaneously developing my own sense of self, as explained by Skerrett (2008:144). Exploring the notion of identity develops an awareness of one's place in a broader context – both global and communal. Often, identity is a reflection of individuals situating themselves within a notion of interrelation and belonging.

Through a phenomenological point of view, lived experiences become central in understanding identity (Yip, 2007:286). Past experiences are used in the present to create a conscious awareness of one's own perspective in relation to context and object (Yip, 2007:287). This consciousness of one's surroundings formulates an interplay between internal and external subjectivity – what one sees in relation to what is experienced (Jaspers, 1963:58). We perceive any given knowledge through our own sense of being. Karl Jaspers (1963:60) suggests that our understanding of things is formulated by sensation, space and time, and the act of perception. We situate these notions in context to fully grasp the uncertainty of the unknown to formulate our own sense of self. Similarly, we use these self-awareness methods for understanding our own identity in relation to past experiences and knowledges.

John Dewey states that lived experiences should become the focus of any learning experience, shifting away from the traditional ties to beliefs, power relations and histories embedded (in Lyons, 2010:10). When one understands that learning should be based on the lived experiences and real set of circumstances of learners, one becomes more aware of how knowledge is experienced from each individual perspective.

Education focuses on cultivating critical thinking, reflecting on given circumstances and applying or conducting thoughts in viable research (Dewey, 1933:78). Empathetically, education therefore becomes an intellectual formation of in-depth, detailed habits of thinking – connecting reflective thinking with morality and aesthetic concerns to situate a conscious understanding of any given subject (Dewey, 1933:78).

Identity formulates an understanding of oneself in an environment where the function is to educate and help develop the identities of other individuals. The role of educator, according to Skerrett (2008:144), not only provides an awareness of identity, but also serves as a public service to others. Education therefore becomes an experience or a relationship between educator and learner, where the dialect between self and individual becomes self-evident, formulating an awareness of one in relation to the other (Yip, 2007:287).

There are many well-established frameworks and theories that offer insight into the social, political and economic relationships between lived identities within the education profession.

The identity of an educator is a notion that is in constant flux – constantly changing and evolving as they are confronted with a multitude of identities and knowledges within the field of education. Dewey (1933:35) states that “[w]hile we cannot learn or be taught to think, we do have to learn how to think well, especially how to acquire the general habits of reflecting”.

The role of educator lies not in merely applying knowledge, but also in developing the knowledge of learners (Lyons, 2010:15). Within the role of art educator, knowledge is practised through creating and developing new forms of understanding – seemingly helping to develop an awareness of one’s understanding of the unknown. By developing a structured framework of both theory and practice, education can be used to formulate a consciousness of the things that shape our lives and the ability of transforming that reality (Lyons, 2010:16).

The multiplicity of identity provides a tool of morality in developing a better understanding of oneself and others, where the role of educator seemingly helps develop and formulate a consciousness of one’s sense of self. Awareness of the discomforts and implications of education and the role of the educator generates alternative forms of teaching – where both profession and emotion form a relationship in better understanding through compassion, empathy, tolerance and empowerment (Zembylas, 2010:715).

## **2.6 Synthesis**

In this chapter I explored the notions of time, space and mind in relation to our own sense of being. It is apparent that our behaviours are often a result of these notions. We use past experiences and memories to help understand how these influences are shaped. I furthermore discussed the possibilities of utilising the consciousness of change through critical and creative thinking in one’s own art praxis and fostering lifelong learning. The role of intra-actions and intrapersonal reflections was introduced in terms of lived experiences and compared to art and creating. Lastly, I discussed the importance of identity in understanding ourselves in relation to our surroundings and other beings. In the following chapter, the methodology utilised throughout the study is discussed.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The study intended to identify the way participating learners were able to become more critically aware of their surroundings and question the role of space, time and memory in relation to learning. This was done through the act of making art and having informal discussions on relevant issues pertaining to their work and the role of art and art education. The study further explored how learners were able to use art as an active tool in critical and creative thinking that contributes to reflective and lifelong learning. The idea that these notions become more conscious towards self, life and learning creates the potential for a positive transformation that enables learners to question everyday happenings and actively partake in seeking new ways of knowing.

In this chapter, the research design and methodology that were used in the study are discussed, along with the reason for the different sample selections and how data were collected, followed by an analysis of the data collected and a discussion of the validity and trustworthiness of the research.

### **3.2 Research approach and paradigm**

#### **3.2.1 Research approach**

This research on the behavioural effects of time and space in relation to critical and creative thinking was conducted through a qualitative approach, drawing on elements of post-qualitative research related to Barad's concept of agential realism. Often, we fail to think beyond that which is considered the norm. Our thinking and doing are most often influenced by traditions, which we then use to understand and describe unknown or new instances – in which we separate ourselves from subject-object relations (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013:630). Yet, determining the object of knowledge is not always as straightforward as we think. Nothing is fixed; everything is in constant flux – as time moves, things change and gain new meaning. As researcher, there is always an underlying presumption of one's own attachment to qualitative research being real, when in fact all things, to some degree, are made up (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013:631).

Through a qualitative approach, the research investigated the lived experiences of individuals and how they come to understand their own reality – from both human and non-human interactions (see Phothongsunan, 2010:1). Qualitative research relies on a naturalistic approach to any form of human communication in which the complexities in the social world cannot be reduced to a small number of variables (Phothongsunan, 2010:4). Time changes things, and through a qualitative approach, the research does not assume any given truth to be definite, but as a product of the specific instance that resulted through a combination of interactions between space, things and other human beings.

Approaching the research through combining elements of qualitative and post-qualitative research allowed me as researcher to think beyond the narrow elements found in qualitative research. The ethical charge of post-qualitative research is being able to question these attachments that keep us from thinking and living differently. Thinking differently changes being – which was, perhaps, always already different all along – and that is the goal of post-qualitative research (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013:630–631). It is not so much about finding a means or truth, but rather about gaining a perspective that allows us to think and observe differently, becoming more aware of the constant changes within and throughout ourselves and our surroundings.

Focusing on the lived experiences of individuals in terms of their perceived ideas of their own sense of self is situated under a phenomenological approach – aimed towards exploring, explaining and analysing these lived experiences (Patton, 2002:104). Each experience of the participants was analysed as a distinctive expression and observed to identify both similarities and differences in the way they experienced the practical workshops conducted (see Marshall & Rossman, 2016:18). Using a post-qualitative method in the research process allowed more openness towards engaging in creating works of art that functioned to help learners think more critically of each happening during the process of making. Giving the learners autonomy in their own thoughts and engagement with the research allowed a more spontaneous and imaginative reasoning that goes beyond the traditional conforms of art as a school subject. It allowed the learners to openly question notions of self and give their own interpretations through visual narratives. Agential realism was the link between theory and practice in my study. It formulated a means of utilising existing theories on the given subject in terms of practice, namely art and art education, from a materialist perspective.

In terms of agential realism, Barad (2007:49) suggests that our thoughts, observations and knowledge that we study as a result of a series of subconscious actions exist through an intra-

active relation between subject and object. This form of intra-action can be described as ‘a mutual constitution of entangled agency’, where nothing exists apart from the other (Barad, 2007; Shotter, 2014:306). Within the intra-action of two subjects, agency is generated from within, and adapts to the environment to which it is succumbed (Barad, 2007; Meleau-Ponty, 1964:93; Shotter, 2014:306). Agential realism proposes ways of understanding agencies of observation in the interconnectivity of everything that surrounds us and suggests that all things are connected.<sup>19</sup> Barad (2007:135) explains this as follows: “When one is able to formulate an observation of the relation between subject and object, one dismantles that which is included and excluded from that which is considered temporarily to gain more insight into the observed.”

Agential realism enables one to establish phenomena and notably form relevance to embodied concepts and ideas (Barad, 2007:139). As such, it helps formulate a deeper understanding of things that seemingly go unnoticed and rethinks of resolving, or understanding the relationship we form with our surroundings and becoming more aware of the ways in which they take place. Once we better understand the subject-object relation and how it manifests within our behaviours, we can formulate a deeper knowledge of our own sense of self and take into account how we enact in relation to material and space (Shotter, 2014:318).

Post-qualitative research can be regarded as a “methodology-to-come” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013:635). In other words, it is that which cannot be described in the contemporary textbook notions, but rather questions all forms of knowledge that is defined. It is a compilation of “a thousand tiny methodologies” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013:635). It critiques representational knowledge and/or logic. All things are in-becoming, both human and non-human, including systems of thought and language. Things constantly change with the passing of time. Therefore, post-qualitative research, in relation to qualitative research, allows us to reimagine the analysis of data and theory, and unfolds through intra-actions and lived experiences.

### **3.2.2 Research design**

Research in terms of a post-qualitative method follows a concept of becoming, constantly shifting and changing – in which there is no “is”, but a multiplicity of “ands” (Kerasovitis, 2020:58). Rather than using normative research designs and coding data, I focused on “thinking

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<sup>19</sup> In terms of agential realism, the act of making art and the materials and methods used can be seen as active agents that help us think of the artwork beyond the physical outcome, but through the process and the meaning of each happening and material. It develops a consciousness of mind, body and matter.

with theory”, as Alecia Jackson and Liza Mazzei (2013) state, to form a more critical approach to the given phenomenon. We are assemblages, non-stable entities that cannot be separated from one another and our surroundings and happenings (Braidotti, 2016:26). Throughout the course of conducting my research, I let the study take place naturally and used a design that fitted best according to the participation of participants.

Situating phenomena under a post-qualitative approach implies no direct validity, but rather seeks to question existing thoughts on the phenomenon. Its approach is fluid, adapting to happenings and changing form throughout the process of inquiry. It is decentred from the traditional theory-based power relations in which the given theory is placed under definite truths. Nothing is fixed, everything is constantly changing and adapting.<sup>20</sup>

What the core of post-qualitative allows for is the ability to assume a post-structuralist perspective, to concede that all is connected and in flux. Post-structural paradigms argue that there is no truth, only mere perspectives that differ and change in relation to everything that surrounds it. It takes into account all forms of meaning production (Hall, 1992, cited in Barker and Galasinski, 2001). Post-structuralism brings forth questions of how we understand self and how power relations of knowledge change and adapt to time, space and the different social, political and cultural contexts. It produces meaning that is fluid. We cannot merely conclude that any theory or understanding is truthful in nature. All forms of knowledge are subject to change. We are reminded that the founding principle of post-structuralism is questioning, its main asset the ability to speak “doubt to power” (Hallgarten, 2011:235). This doubt must spread to all directions, even the ones that support it. When theory becomes canonised, the effect is that it obscures parts of reality.

During the course of conducting my research, I found a case<sup>21</sup> study to be the most efficient strategy to integrate all the components of the findings in a logical way. A case study is a detailed, intensive analysis of a single case – primarily focused on the complexities and nature of the given case in question (Bryman, 2012:66). It is not a methodological choice, but rather a choice of what is to be studied – in which choice is assumed to be deciding on a phenomenon and turning it into a case of something to be followed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:354). By

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<sup>20</sup> If we are merely presuming circumstances to be true, we fail to recognise the interchangeability of valuable measures. Post-qualitative research does not limit the theory and findings of data. It is designed to question and place doubt on any fixed notion and allows further exploration of a given phenomenon.

<sup>21</sup> The term ‘case’ identifies the study with a particular location and functions by intensively investigating the setting, such as a community or organisation (Bryman, 2012:67). Therefore, the case is noted as an object of interest in its own right, and the researcher aims to provide an in-depth examination of it.

conducting a case study through a post-qualitative lens, I was able to integrate a variety of perspectives and unique features, as explained by Bryman (2012:69).<sup>22</sup>

By utilising a case study design, I was able to ask questions as to why and how the particular case was relevant and in what context it fit. It functions in significantly different variations in which all have their own set of principles which they follow (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:342). A case study also allowed me, as researcher, to not generalise and deduce any outcome or differences of approaches that may have undermined the outcome of the research. Case studies are dependent on the research itself, and follow methods according to the needs of the research and the factors that influence it – these factors are not conclusive; they deal with the specific case and therefore require techniques and processes that adapt to the nature of the study.<sup>23</sup> Throughout my research, I was able to adapt the research process to the participation of the learners and their interactions in the workshops. It allowed me to find the best possible outcomes in terms of the given phenomenon by having a variety of learners actively partaking in each workshop.<sup>24</sup>

As researcher, I explored and dealt with things both real and constructed – unclear realities with complex properties that have holistic elements made up from complex configurations that intersect their environment and create intercommunication boundaries (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014:155, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:342). The central issue for me was utilising the findings to generate a quality of theory that supports the reasoning discussed in Chapter 2 (see Bryman, 2012:71). Throughout my research, I focused on letting the research play out in terms of the participants' perspectives and engagement – understanding their own individuality and sense of self in relation to the theoretical discussions in Chapter 2, as well as the physical manifestations<sup>25</sup> of their own thoughts.

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<sup>22</sup> Case studies can entail both quantitative and qualitative research, but are primarily used in favour of qualitative methods, such as interviews or participant observation (Bryman, 2012:68). As a result of their explicit focus on context and interactions that happen over an extensive period, qualitative researchers often favour case studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:19). When the research strategy is qualitative, it takes on an inductive approach to the relations between the theory and the research (Bryman, 2012:69).

<sup>23</sup> All case study research is therefore a means to address the dialect that lies at the heart of understanding – an ongoing investigation to refine theory as a means of better understanding the empirical (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:354). Notably, case study research favours depth and intensity within its exploration between case and context (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:19).

<sup>24</sup> It is important for case studies to not delude the fact that they simply consist of one representation of a certain class of objects (Bryman, 2012:70). Case study research often entails a number of cases to strengthen the research. Throughout my research, I used both qualitative and post-qualitative research to understand a multitude of perspectives of the given phenomenon. Allowing multiple varieties throughout the research gave me, as researcher, a more diverse range of perspectives to work with, without narrowing down the outcomes to a generalised assumption.

<sup>25</sup> The physical manifestations are noted to be written words, drawings, behaviours and conversations.

The study was completed over a period of three weeks.<sup>26</sup> During the first three weeks, the participants were introduced to drawing workshops and a practical task that asked of them to create a body of work with the theme “Self-reflective self-portrait”, which included a final artwork and visual diary that mapped their thought process. After the completion of their task, I continued my stay purely by observing and assisting with both theoretical and practical lessons when needed.

The class was split into two groups (A and B), and each group attended every second day (Day 1: Group A, Day 2: Group B, Day 3: Group A, etc.) for one period<sup>27</sup> of the day. On the first day for each group, the participants were handed a course layout and brief containing all the relevant information and requirements. This included both the practical workshop activities and their topic for the term. The learners were given the opportunity to pose any questions or uncertainties in relation to their role and requirements for each activity.

During the first two days (Days 1–4), the learners were introduced to a figure study course. Due to Covid-19 regulations, I was unable to bring an external model for the lesson and used myself for the purpose of the study. The learners were given the task to draw the model in different timeframes; with each pose, time was minimised. They started with 20-minute drawings and ended with three-second drawings. The aim of the given lesson was to see how much information they were able to process and convey in a given timeframe. In the beginning, the learners were hesitant and continuously became more frustrated as each timeframe seemingly became less.

During the following days (Days 5–12), the learners were asked to bring any object of their choice to class that they could carry and found intriguing to their senses. The given object was then used as a still life, during which they were introduced to blind and semi-blind contour drawings. Blind contour drawing is drawn from pure observation without looking away from the object or lifting one’s hand from the page – drawing an object from one continuous line. It is a slow process that involves close observation and awareness. Semi-blind contour drawings are similar, but give the learner the opportunity to look at their drawing, but not being able to draw while they are looking at what they have drawn. One of the challenges during this process was keeping the learners from looking at their work and not trying to make the drawing look

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<sup>26</sup> The study took place during the last two weeks of the first term (9–23 April) and the first week of the second term (3–10 May). Thereafter I continued my stay as purely assisting and observing the progress of all classes (Grade 8–12).

<sup>27</sup> A period is either 41, 45 or 48 minutes, depending on the day.

realistic. For this reason, I also included drawing portraits of their peers. The learners were grouped in pairs and had to draw each other. This was done to give the learners the authority in ensuring that their peers did not look down at their drawings.

During the course of the workshops, the learners were given an overview of the practical task, which included a discussion of possible narratives they could follow and a PowerPoint presentation with artists and artworks that I found relevant to the brief. Although the practical had a name, the narrative was kept open to interpretation. The learners were given the opportunity to immerse themselves and their ideas in the topic. They were able to address the topic however they saw fit within the parameters of the brief. Allowing a broad spectrum of perspectives and ideas gave them the opportunity to discuss and create in terms of their own identity.

The following days (Day 12+) included bringing their thought process and three preliminary ideas for a final task – artists or art movements with which they resonated and reference pictures that inspired them. They worked on their final task both at home and in class. Each learner had to present their preliminary work in a one-on-one conversation, where they described what they wished to create and any struggles they faced. We would then critically engage with the work to find plausible solutions and I would give names of artists and artworks that had similar approaches for them to look at. At the end of the study, each participant handed in a PowerPoint presentation that comprised their drawings made during each workshop, a visual diary, artist statements and their final artwork(s).

Each workshop allowed me to observe how learners were able to critically and creatively engage with their surroundings and the given object in specific timeframes. By manipulating the amount of time for each drawing, learners had to use their cognitive abilities as much as possible to visualise what they saw and thought in terms of their own reality. The gesture drawing workshop gave insight into their awareness of passing moments and their surroundings. It also provided me as researcher better insight into their hand-eye coordination and their drawing abilities. The blind and semi-blind workshops were conducted as a means of critically and creatively reflecting that which they see, without seeing the lines they were drawing. Not only did the workshops provide insight into their observational and concentration skills, but they also removed any sense of realism. They provided an equal platform in which

learners were able to purely draw and reflect without the pressure of it having to look realistic.<sup>28</sup> The final practical was done in accordance with the guidelines of the WCED and high school art practical assessments.<sup>29</sup> The given title, “Self-reflective self-portrait”, was only used as a general guideline for learners to create a non-conventional self-portrait – a self-study in retrospect, in which learners had to critically and creatively reflect on their own sense of self through creating an artwork. No limitations were placed on the learners as to what they were allowed to convey and reflect. This enabled me as researcher to understand their thoughts and understandings better in terms of their reality. The practical tasks were all kept as simple as possible to be as undistruptive to their current state as possible and for the learners to be able to understand what was expected. As minors, I did not want to create a study in which they were unsure of the processes. This ensured that the captured data were more dense, rich and relatable.

### **3.3 Sample selection and data collection**

The following section discusses the sample selection of participants, as well as the data captured. It furthermore discusses the ethical considerations in terms of the research conducted, the analysis of data and the validity and trustworthiness of the research.

#### **3.3.1 Sample selection**

The sample of participants in this study was chosen through a non-probability sampling method. Non-probability sampling does not give equal chance for all participants to be used in the research – participants are specifically chosen in terms of given circumstances (Bryman, 2012:184). This method allowed me to choose participants who attended and engaged fully in the study. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some participants were not in attendance and had to isolate at home. As a result, not all participants were able to attend all workshops and discussions, which limited their contribution towards the study. Table 3.1 shows the sample of participants who took part in the study.

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<sup>28</sup> According to the learners and my own insight from past experiences and observing the general outlook of the art classes, there was much emphasis on having the artworks look as real to life as possible. For them, the more lifelike an artwork is, the better. It is this presumption that I wanted to remove.

<sup>29</sup> Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, schools had little time to cover the prescribed coursework of the curriculum. As such, I was asked to create a practical task that could also be used as a practical assessment task, so that it could be used for marking. At the end of the task, I gave each learner a critical assessment of their work in terms of their creativity, skills and the concept of their work. This was also given to the teachers as a guideline for marking their work. According to the art teacher, they were very impressed with the outcome, and the marks of most of the learners improved.

**Table 3.1: Sample of participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Language</b>
Participant 1	17	Female	Coloured	English
Participant 2	17	Female	Coloured	English
Participant 3	16	Female	Coloured	English
Participant 4	16	Female	Black	English
Participant 5	18	Male	Black	IsiXhosa/English
Participant 6	16	Male	Coloured	English
Participant 7	16	Female	Coloured	English
Participant 8	17	Male	White	Afrikaans
Participant 9	17	Male	White	Afrikaans
Participant 10	16	Male	Coloured	English
Participant 11	16	Non-binary	Coloured	English
Participant 12	16	Female	Black	IsiXhosa/English
Participant 13	16	Non-binary	White	Afrikaans
Participant 14	16	Female	White	Afrikaans
Participant 15	16	Female	Coloured	English
Participant 16	17	Female	Coloured	English
Participant 17	16	Male	Coloured	English
Participant 18	17	Male	Coloured	English
Participant 19	17	Male	Coloured	English
Participant 20	17	Male	Coloured	English
Participant 21	16	Female	Coloured	English

### 3.3.2 Data capturing

The data captured during the course of the research included written notes on observations as well as open-ended discussions that took place throughout each workshop.<sup>30</sup> The learners were

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<sup>30</sup> Through observation, I was able to gather data about how the participants naturally responded, reacted and made meaning out of their own experiences (see Starks & Trinidad, 2007:1375). In terms of phenomenology, observations of lived experiences of time and space provide clues of how learners embody meaning, which further strengthened my findings (see Starks & Trinidad, 2007:1375).

encouraged to constantly question and reflect on both the process of the study and their own findings. The physical work each participant made during the research was also captured, including a visual diary, written statements and artworks.

The study was conducted with 21 Grade 11 Visual Arts learners from a high school in the Western Cape. The Grade 11 learners were chosen because they were not only the most diverse group of Visual Arts learners, but, according to the head of department (HOD) art teacher, also showed great potential, but lacked critical engagement and discipline in creating work. These learners had less engagement with visual art than any other year prior to them due to the school closure during lockdown. According to the HOD art teacher, these learners needed more help in both their technical ability and their thought processes. It was a means of enabling them to become better in their craft and their ability to critically engage in theory and practice. My intention for the study was to have a three-week workshop, but upon request from the principal and art teachers, I was asked to extend my work and continue my stay for two terms. Not only was this beneficial for assisting the art department in the school, but it also enabled me to see whether the participants continued to utilise their learning experiences from partaking in the study. The learners were encouraged to have discussions throughout the duration of the study and to give their personal reflections on the happenings throughout.

### **3.3.3 Ethical considerations**

Seeing as the learners were minors, each participant was given a consent form that they and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) had to sign.<sup>31</sup> Each participant was assigned a number based on a random selection, e.g. Participant 1, to ensure confidentiality. All forms of data collected, such as written notes of discussions and observations made, were kept in a locked drawer in my room, to which only I had access, and, upon request, my supervisor and the participants. All digital formats of the data were stored on an external hard drive and kept in a locked drawer in my room. Seeing as the research took place during school hours, in the place of their daily art period, the works made during the research were known to participants as well as their art teachers. All learners were given the opportunity to use paper and drawing materials provided by me. The artworks made were kept in their own possession or stored safely in a drawer designated for Grade 11 artworks in the art class. All interactions and workshop took place under the supervision of the art teachers to ensure that all ethical measures were met, and participants could withdraw from the study if they chose to do so. All forms of communication

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<sup>31</sup> See Addendum C

were in English, by agreement with the participants, seeing as the majority of the learners were English and the rest could all understand and communicate in English. During one-on-one discussions, the learners had the opportunity to discuss their work in either English or Afrikaans, being the two academic languages used in the given school. The school councillor was also contacted and agreed to assist with any emotional upset that the study could entail; as the learners were minors, I was advised to provide the necessary guidance for such cases. In the end, no learner felt a need for the assistance of the councillor.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

Post-qualitative research brings forth notions of a pedagogy that is centred around both human and non-human actants – using affect and abjection in relation to the flows, movements and paths of a situated methodology (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013:632). Situating the methodology around this becomingness allowed me to be more aware of the agential features of both human and non-human actants. Post-qualitative research rethinks the way in which we think of and analyse data – not being something out there that can be gathered or collected. It is part of a whole system of self and everything surrounding the given phenomenon. It encourages one to move beyond simple interpretation and escaping binaries towards “continuums and multiplicities”, posing new ways of thinking (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013:639).

My focus was on the interrelationships between learner and teacher, learner and material, both the mental and the physical space each learner experiences, and becoming critically aware of the embodied internalisation and behaviours throughout each act of making. The experiences of each learner were analysed through my own perspective in relation to their reaction towards the study and their perspective by means of open-ended discussions, creating art and writing statements on their work. As such, an inductive analysis<sup>32</sup> was used to situate and determine the findings throughout the research.<sup>33</sup>

The research introduced a materialistic form of thinking – between human life and non-human matter – and questioned the relationship between the two.<sup>34</sup> Artists are critical and creative

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<sup>32</sup> With an inductive analysis towards approaching the relationship between theory and research, theory is noted to be the outcome of the research – developed by creating reason out of observations (Bryman, 2012:26).

<sup>33</sup> The findings included observations, written notes on their ideas, drawings, a final artwork, visual diaries and informal discussions.

<sup>34</sup> I had little discussions with participants about materialism, as I felt the concept might have been too difficult for minors to grasp and did not want to influence the outcome of the research. Instead, I focused on having the research happen spontaneously, letting the natural state of being in relation to a materialistic form of thinking take place. However, during the introduction of the research, I briefly discussed how each of us experiences space and matter in different ways – how they can influence our own thinking of and about things. I gave an example of how we act differently according to physical spaces we enter. We all have some form of influence in

thinkers who pose questions, experiment and investigate – making new discoveries along the way. Minors, specifically learners who have Visual Arts as subject in their school curriculum, similarly use their notions to create their works of art, without being fully aware.<sup>35</sup> Materialism suggests that individuals should inquire contemplative speculation, grounded in a relational ethics towards the materiality of things (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016). Using these concepts in their own artistic practice and methods of making – thinking about their space in new ways – created a space that allowed the participants to creatively and critically situate themselves within a broader spectrum, beyond the limitations of a traditional learning space. The means of how they observed their surroundings in new ways also opened further inquiries into their identity and power relations between human and non-human (see Hood & Kraehe, 2017:33).

By acknowledging the creative personalities of all notions, both human and non-human things, as well as the relation between the two, art making served to form a field of enquiry towards processes that included observing and developing their consciousness in which the given phenomenon became more visible in its manifestation in their lived experiences. In my research, with its critical focus on objects and making, and the creative, imaginative forms of inquiry within the field of art and art education, the phenomena served to contribute to both the theory and the practice of the participants – an enlightenment of consciousness in relation to each participant’s surroundings (see Hood & Kraehe, 2017:38).

### **3.5 Validity and trustworthiness**

Due to the nature in which post-qualitative research captures data, I am hesitant to subscribe to a definite set of principles and ideas on how the research findings are valid. Post-qualitative research is not focused on subscribing a definite answer to a question, but rather aims to open new possibilities and question existing truths. One has no clear structure, no appointed path to follow. Being a methodology described as ‘in-becoming’, there is no direct answer or solution to the research. The research is used as a means of creating a space for thinking differently and

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relation to a given space or matter. Each physical matter by which we are surrounded has some form of influence in our mind – learners somewhat agreed and gave their own examples of how they acted differently in terms of their surroundings, e.g. going to school vs. being at home or in a mall, a religious setting, etc. They somewhat grasped the basic notions of the philosophical understanding behind the concept of materialism without expanding the broad spectrum that may have confused them.

<sup>35</sup> Through the act of making, artists use matter and material to convey particular meanings, thoughts and emotions. Modern art utilises this and expands certain ideologies and ideas of artists through materials, creating meaning through the material used and conveyed in their creations. In many cases, art is created spontaneously, in a moment in time, in which artists are able to express their thoughts. This is what is meant by ‘unconsciously’ – the act of choosing a particular material or subject matter without necessarily realising the dimensions in which they work together. Only in the end does it become apparent that the choices during the process of creating were interconnected – mind and matter becoming influenced by each other to convey meaning.

offering new ways of understanding – making it relevant in engaging with challenges that go beyond the capacities of scientific methods. Yet, even among all the unknown routes, knowledge is produced and made valuable through a clearly structured text.

Throughout my research, I achieved constant active participation and engagement from the learners. I obtained the necessary consent from the school, art teachers, learners and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to ensure that the study was conducted under ethical and credible circumstances. I made use of open-ended discussions, practical lessons and observations to expand the findings to multiple perspectives and views. As researcher, I was constantly aware of any happenings within the limited timeframe of the study and remained aware of the possibilities of each participant's role. This was done by comparing my own thoughts and insights to the perspectives of each participant and their own comments and written statements on their work. In other words, I utilised multiple methods to gain multiple perspectives and ways of thinking and seeing the research.

Although my findings did not conform to a specific structure, they aimed to propose new ways of thinking and to open up possibilities without recommending a specific route to follow. However, this was never the purpose. The text is not finite and is never fully understood. How could it? Rather, my goal was to resist conventional methods, and I aimed to formulate ideas, thoughts and suppositions of my research that allowed one to question. With questioning there is substance, and that is the goal of any inquiry.

### **3.6 Synthesis**

This chapter discussed the methodology and approach to the sampling, collection and analysis of the data gathered in the study. The chapter discussed my use of a qualitative research approach through a post-qualitative lens in order to remove any limitations and open new possibilities beyond the capabilities of qualitative research. The data collected and analysed were situated to be truth and were meant to become new ways of understanding the role of creating art in developing an awareness of our own being in relation to our surroundings. The following chapter discusses the data collected from the given participants throughout the course of the study.

## **Chapter 4: Data and discussion**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This study investigated the behavioural effects of space, time and self through the act of making art. Workshops were conducted with Grade 11 high school learners during their art periods for a duration of three weeks, during which they were given several drawing tasks as well as a final theme for creating a work of art in terms of their own ideas. This chapter presents the data collected from the study in relation to the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2.

Throughout the study, the learners were introduced to new ways of observational drawings that focused on improving both their technical skill and their ability to critically observe their surroundings. Each workshop presented new ways of learning how to think creatively and critically about creating art. My intention with each workshop was to create a space in which the learners could use time, space and their surroundings in a productive manner and develop an increased consciousness about their ability of taking in new knowledge and changing it in relation to their perspectives. The learners were also given a practical task in which they were given the opportunity to create a body of work in terms of how they identify themselves. The final project was aimed at helping learners to foster the necessary critical, creative and reflective thinking skills in relation to their own sense of self through art. The final project included a visual diary of their ideas, process and development towards creating the final artwork, including reference pictures, written notes, drawings and a mind map.

Throughout the study, the data were collected in terms of unstructured, informal discussions, my observations and the physical artworks of each learner. The following sections discuss the data in terms of each workshop and the findings relevant to the study.

### **4.2 Presentation and discussion of the findings**

The following section briefly introduces the participants, and discusses the findings of the research conducted.

#### **4.2.1 Introduction to the participants**

On the first day, the learners entered the class with much confusion as to who I was, why I was there and what was going to happen. I could see the anticipation growing in their eyes. Each learner was given an assigned seat and handed a page containing information on what the next three weeks would entail. There was a visible silence and fear as they read through the page.

One learner tilted his back in despair, while others started scratching their heads trying to make sense of what it was they were going to do. The unknown of what the study entailed created a space of confusion, anticipation, excitement and despair. While their art teachers started formally introducing me and explained why I was there, some learners became less anticipated and more excited. While formally introducing myself and what the workshops entailed, I noticed the learners losing some interest. Their bodies became more relaxed and their eyes started wandering across the filled spaces of the classroom as if this was their first time encountering the space. I saw one learner (Participant 1) from the corner of my eye lifting her hand with delight, exclaiming: “Sir, it says here that we have to do a blind and semi-blind contour drawing. What is that?”

As soon as the learners noticed an engagement from their peer, their attention shifted back to the discussion. As I further explained each workshop and how it would work and gave examples of each drawing technique, most learners began listening actively. More questions were raised as time passed. They wanted to know more. The more questions they asked, the more each learner engaged and focused their attention on the discussion. Some of the questions they asked included the following:

Participant 1: “Should we bring along our own materials?”

Participant 21: “It says here we must bring along an object. What type of object?”

Participant 3: “Will this be homework?”

Participant 1: “Can you please show us the examples again tomorrow when we start the lesson, just so that we have a better sense of how the technique works?”

Participant 8: “The one drawing seems very complicated. I don’t understand. What if we draw more realistic? Is that still part of the lesson?”

Participant 5: “What if we can’t get it right?”

Participant 1: “Sir, is this all we must for the term? Is Sir going to be with us for the whole term?”

The act of posing questions such as those above marks that the learners were seeking to know more. They wanted to engage with the process. However, it must be stated that not all learners were as excited. Some learners seemed to become lost in their own mind space. Right at the back of the class, two participants were more interested in their own engagement and did not always pay attention to what was discussed.

During the introduction, the learners also questioned my own work as an artist. I gave them a brief overview of my praxis as artist and reciprocated the question back to them as to why they valued art as a medium.

Participant 2 stated: “I find art to be my safe space. Whenever I get bored, or when I have too much time on my hands, I always like to draw. It’s comforting.” Participant 1 agreed and stated: “I think it’s about being able to express myself. No other subject allows me to do that.” Participant 1 continued by stating the importance of art:

*Art is important because it helps us to think creatively! It’s an expression! I’d like to think that art has helped me grow as a person. We learn so much from art. It captures our imagination. Sometimes when I look at other artworks, I see myself. I love that art is able to connect us.*

In terms of the importance of art and why they chose art subject, other learners also had a positive response. Some of the remarks included the following: “Like in theory lessons when we learn about the history of art. Those are all moments captured. We learn a lot by studying art. Like Da Vinci and Van Gogh” (Participant 3); “For me it’s about the emotion. Like [Participant 3] named Van Gogh. I love his work. I think that his colours are so rich and expressive. I wish I could do that” (Participant 4); “But that’s why we have art. To learn and become better” (Participant 3); “I always saw the other learners’ artworks on the walls, and I wanted to be able to do that” (Participant 2); and “I just didn’t like any of the other choices, but so far I’ve really enjoyed it, especially the practical. I’m not the best in drawing, but I do enjoy it” (Participant 18).

For the learners, art in general gave them a creative outlet. Most learners agreed that being able to creatively express themselves and learning the technical skills of creating art were what led them to choosing art as a subject.

The learners were greatly engaged in informal discussions. They enjoyed being able to talk with one another, instead of just listening and responding to what I had to say. They had very interesting discussions on the importance of art and why they chose art as subject. The overall agreement for most learners was that art fosters a creative thinking process that helps them to convey particular ideas and emotions in a manner different to other learning processes.

In the end of the lesson, the art teacher asked the learners whether they were excited. There was somewhat of a silence, followed by a mumbling, nervous “Yes”. One learner (Participant

2) then loudly stated: “Yes mam, we finally we get to have drawing lessons! But I’m also a bit nervous. What if we don’t get it right?”

During this introduction I realised the importance of asking questions. The learners seemed more interested in the things they did not know than that of which they already had a pre-existing understanding. The unknown sparked a curiosity within most learners and created an atmosphere in which they could discover and gain insight into things to which they have not been exposed. Their overall engagement portrayed a level of comfort towards me as researcher, the study and their art periods. This forms part of what Lyons (2010:31) states in terms of both educator and researcher being able to connect, read and assess information to gain as much accurate insight into the research as possible. Every action became important in understanding the whole – every question, remark, movement, expression. As stated by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1981:567): “What determines our judgement, our concepts and reactions, is not what one man is doing now, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see an action.”

#### **4.2.2 Intra-active agency: A new materialist perspective**

The data developed an understanding of the relations between the intra-active agencies and happenings throughout the research, consisting of a variety of practical tasks that helped formulate a materialist perspective of the role of mind, body and matter in which learners developed their own perspectives through actively engaging with the process of creating and thinking of and about their artistic process. Our ability to create and recreate meaning is what makes us human (Freire, 1970:89). Through a continuous exploration, observation, struggle and discussion of and within time, space and matter, knowledge is produced; this is, according to Freire, how we are able to better not only our own self, but also the world in which we live (1970:89).

The interrelational nature of matter and the body-mind, beyond the dualistic Cartesian thinking,<sup>36</sup> supports the notion that bodies are endowed with agency (Hickey-Moody, Palmer & Sayers, 2016:214). The dualistic nature of learning institutions has, throughout the years, developed a hierarchical structure of removing one’s own perspectives from the production of knowledge. Through this materialist perspective, the hierarchical structures that place mind over matter within learning curricula can be confronted and dismantled – becoming part of and

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<sup>36</sup> Developed by French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist Rene Descartes (1993:10), Cartesian thinking holds a rational position of the mind, separate from the corporeal body and matter.

entangled with matter through intra-actions (Sehgal, 2014:189). Art functions in this manner. As we take in new instances and develop our own understanding of things that surround us, we create meaning by becoming part of the space itself. Yet, our striving towards meaning making is never fully complete. This is due to the nature of time. As time moves, things change, and we adapt our understandings in relation to these happenings. As such, it is important to remember that study data are never fully complete, and could, in future reference, change as a result of happenings through the passing of time.

#### **4.2.2.1 Mind and memory**

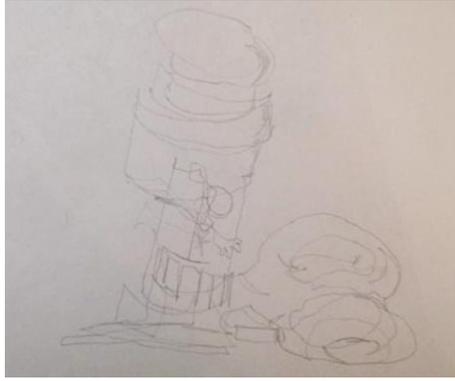
Throughout conducting the research, the role of the mind and sensory experience in relation to understanding the lived experiences became visible. Yet, even though being aware, somehow not being fully aware also became apparent. There were moments that truly gave forth an understanding of the role of our senses. Yet, in all the processes, these instances every so often became lost in the happenings. I had to become more aware of my own consciousness and abilities to observe the relational agencies and happenings throughout each workshop.

During the semi-blind drawing workshop, the learners were asked to bring along any object of their choice. I also provided a bag of apples for learners who failed to bring along an object of their own. Each learner was asked to draw the given object through a semi-blind contour drawing, as seen in figures 4.1 to 4.4.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of the workshop was for the learners to critically observe their reference and attempt to draw it in relation to their eye movement. I wanted the learners to become more aware of their objects, beyond the visible – understanding the interwoven relationship between object, self and our senses. As the learners viewed the object, their hands moved in response.<sup>38</sup> I was told that the learners have had an introduction to the particular drawing method prior to the workshop.

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<sup>37</sup> Semi-blind contour drawings are drawn with a single line, in which the artist draws the contours. The artist is not allowed to look at his or her work while drawing, but can stop every now and then, look at the work, without moving or lifting his or her hand, and look back at the reference to continue drawing.

<sup>38</sup> It is a slow, continuous process; the point being that the drawing should be done as slowly as possible to keep the eye synchronicity as close as possible.



**Figure 4.1: Participant 3, semi-blind contour (Pritt and scissors), pencil on paper**



**Figure 4.2: Participant 5, semi-blind contour (apple), pen on paper**

While observing the class, I noticed that the learners were passive, quiet and focused on their objects. There was no talking throughout. The learners seemed to be critically engaged with the process of observing and reflecting on what was in front of them. Their bodies were still; their hands moved slowly. The only noise apparent was the clock ticking in the background.

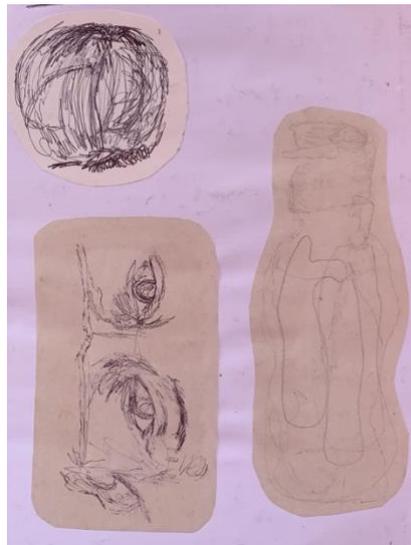
During the drawing process, one learner lost focus, lifted her hand, forgot where she was and became overwrought. She did not know what to do next. She felt like she had lost the purpose. I went over, looked at her drawing – her water bottle in front of her – and told her not to worry. “Just begin again. You’re making good progress”. She was not happy to start over, but that was a good starting point for me to talk about ‘failure’. We learn by making mistakes. That is how we grow. As long as you keep on moving, you are making progress.

Another learner seemed to draw much faster than the rest. I noticed she was not really observing the object, merely drawing for the sake of drawing. Her hand had been lifted numerous times, of which she was not aware until I mentioned her drawing is too fast. I wanted her to keep her eyes in synchronicity with her hands. As the eye follows each contour, shade and plane, the hand mimics. These approaches to thinking of right versus wrong, failure versus accomplishment, are in contrast to the learning through art that I brought forth. Although the

drawing methods had clear directions to follow, I tried to keep it as open-ended as possible to allow the learners to realise their creative potential.



**Figure 4.3: Participant 20, collection of figure study, semi-blind and blind drawings, pencil on paper**



**Figure 4.4: Participant 15, collection of figure study, semi-blind and blind drawings, pencil on paper**

In relation to the contour drawings, the learners were much more intuitive in terms of using more than their visual senses. They began to feel their objects, making meaning through touch – noticing the texture and planes beyond the visible. This, I would argue, was due to the nature of restricting their ability to see what they were drawing. Somehow, touch was used to fill the gap that they were used to. This, I would argue, links to the notions of agential becomingness – in which matter and mind are interwoven to make meaning of a given instance. This agential

intra-actions between human and non-human relations bring forth a critical awareness of our surroundings. It allows us, as individuals, to become aware of the wholeness of everything we are confronted with and live in. It brings forth an awareness of our experiences of reality and the possibilities of these intra-active agencies of mind, body and matter. This awareness shapes an understanding beyond the traditional sense of Cartesian thinking and helps us to form an understanding of the interconnections between ourselves and our surroundings (Hickey-Moody *et al.*, 2016:214). The manner in which our senses are used to create meaning of the intra-active agencies allowed the learners to situate a better sense of their surroundings and effectively reflect their own perspectives.

The overall impression by learners was generally positive. One learner (Participant 7) stated she felt it was very tiring. She tried to be as slow as possible. Some other comments were as follows: “It’s much different than the previous drawing class. I felt like I was almost daydreaming” (Participant 2); “Not as intense as the previous class, but still quite difficult to keep concentration” (Participant 15); “I enjoyed it. It was like meditating” (Participant 20); and “It’s different. My drawing looks nothing like my object” (Participant 5).

The overall project seemed to be successful in terms of getting the learners to be more critically observant. It used a completely different approach as opposed to the first workshop. It focused on training the hand to move with the eye and draw what was in front of them. The end result was not aimed at giving an accurate portrayal of the object. This would be somewhat impossible given the fact that the technique limited their ability to see exactly what they draw – rather it aimed at bringing a consciousness to the object. This consciousness of their surroundings – what their eye observes – is, according to Eisner (2002:2), a means of creating an awareness through their senses, helping us learn in the process of creating art. Our senses play a significant role in our process of learning. Helping learners to situate this means through the process of creating art not only helps their technical abilities, but also allows their own level of awareness to become more apparent.

#### **4.2.2.2 Time space and matter**

In relation to the previous section, which discussed the agential agencies of space, mind and matter, one can consider that these shifting relations of matter not only transforms our understanding of things, but that these external forces are also shaped by our own interactions (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013:125).

This, then, proposes that the nature of time is more directly related to our own lived experiences and perspectives. Our realities are based on how matter and mind manifests within the passing of time. We interact with these notions to create knowledge and understand the complexities of our lived realities. We experience time as a continuous flow of change – where the past is different from the future and the present is merely an instance of being in-between these fixed notions and becoming possibilities (Rovelli, 2018). By using our bodily senses, we come to realise how our mind functions to make sense of these happenings. We culminate knowledge from our sensory experiences to think and rethink and experiencing specific events at a given moment (Rovelli, 2018). According to Dewey (1933), our lived realities are direct experiences through our senses to think of, and make sense of the mysteries of the world.

During the first workshop, the gesture drawing, the anticipation of the learners was obvious. Some seemed to be very nervous, while others were calm and ready. For the workshop, I used myself as model.<sup>39</sup> The act of gestural mark making relates greatly to the concept of embodiment. In relation to drawing from life, embodied mark making is integral to both the body that it reflects and the body that produces it, where one cannot be separated from one's creation (Roberts & Riley, 2012:65). In this manner, I became part of the data, as much as the participants and the happenings that occurred. I stood on a desk in front of the class and posed in different positions; with each shifting of position, the timeframe grew shorter and the learners had less time to draw what was in front of them. We started with an interval of 10 minutes and progressively ended with one-second intervals.<sup>40</sup>

In the first interval, the learners became dramatically silent. They concentrated intensely on the subject. Their level of awareness of what was happening intensified as the lesson progressed. With each interval cut shorter, the learners became more energetic, frantic and often disheartened with the lack of information they were able to put onto paper. They wanted to achieve excellence according to what they thought a drawing should look like – not thinking in terms of the scenario.<sup>41</sup> There were quite a few nervous laughs throughout the lessons.

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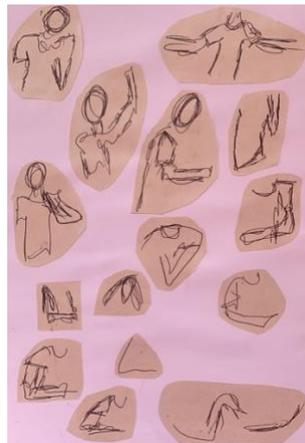
<sup>39</sup> Using myself as model allowed me to become with the data, intertwining with one another and bringing forth possibilities and reproducing knowledge in which the research, participant and researcher are all part of the intra-active processes of thinking, reflecting and understanding (see Jackson & Mazzei, 2013:10).

<sup>40</sup> The learners were not told beforehand how many intervals there would be and to what extent the time would be cut short. We had a vast number of intervals: 10 minutes, 5 minutes, 3 minutes, 2 minutes, 1 minute 30 seconds, 1 minute, 30 seconds, 20 seconds, 15 seconds, 10 seconds, 5 seconds, 3 seconds, 2 seconds and 1 second.

<sup>41</sup> This directly links to the Cartesian thinking learners are subjected to in schools, where they are taught right from wrong. It is through these workshops that I focused on dismantling these notions to create an active experience that shifts their thinking towards a more honest, natural state. As researcher, I did not want the

As seen in figures 4.5 to 4.14, the amount of information depended on their ability to use time, their hands and eye coordination together. This was somewhat difficult for them to do. Throughout the lesson I gave some words of encouragement and stated that if they struggled, it was better to focus on one given area at a time. This helped some learners, and as they continued, many focused their aim on a particular placement of the body.

Each passing moment, with every interval, I changed positions. Principles of embodied cognition suggest that incorporating gestural movements is beneficial to learning (Barsalou, 2008; Glenburg, 2008; Wilson, 2003). Movement, as well as physical activities, including the act of gesture drawings, is an essential factor in intellectual growth in which the knowledge produced becomes dependent on the perceptions of our surroundings (Montessori, 1966:36). Through movement, or intra-actions, we are confronted with external realities and as a result, we gain new insights and ideas (Montessori, 1966:36).



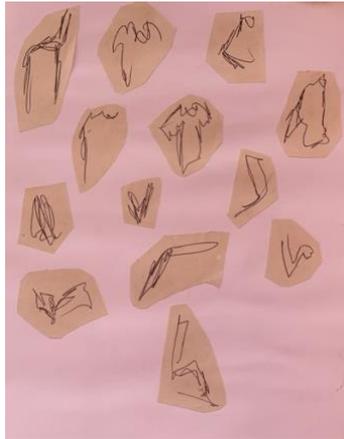
**Figure 4.5: Participant 15, figure study (5 minutes, 1 second), pen on paper**



**Figure 4.6: Participant 15, figure study (5 minutes, 3 seconds), pen on paper**

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learners to think in terms of ‘getting it right’, but rather to reflect on their own relationship between space, time and matter.

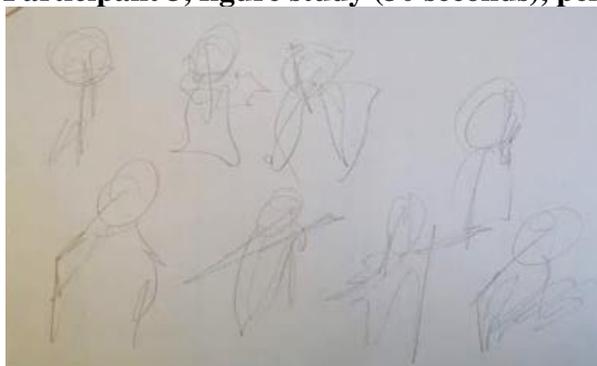


**Figure 4.7: Participant 15, figure study (1 minute, 1 second), pen on paper**

On the second day of the workshop, the learners were much less anxious. They knew what to do, how to do it and what the overall requirements were. Participant 1 said that she felt the lessons were “fun and exciting”. Others agreed, with some hesitant, such as Participant 6, who stated: “Its nerve-wracking, [laughs] but I like it!” As time passed, they gained more insight and as a result, their behaviours changed – becoming more confident and excited for each day and activity.



**Figure 4.8: Participant 3, figure study (5 minutes), pencil on paper**  
**Figure 4.9: Participant 3, figure study (30 seconds), pencil on paper**

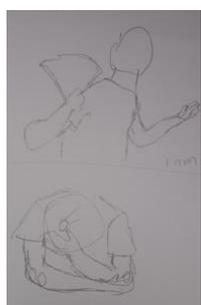


**Figure 4.10: Participant 3, figure study (5 seconds), pencil on paper**

During the one to five second intervals, the learners were much more disordered than during the longer periods. Their behaviours shifted from being calm, quiet and critically observant towards becoming much more talkative, flustered and somewhat ‘all over the place’. You could feel the energy in the room become present. Their movements became louder and faster. The rumbling of sounds filled the room. You could hear the pencils move on the paper and every so often laughter and confusion in their remarks. The space was filled with their emotions, felt through the movements of their bodies.



**Figure 4.11: Participant 1, figure study (5 seconds), pencil on paper**



**Figure 4.12: Participant 1, figure study (1 minute), pencil on paper**

In response to the workshop, participants stated the following: “Time goes by so quick! There’s no time to even think. It’s just doing!” (Participant 2); “... like being on a rollercoaster ride!” (Participant 2); and “I couldn’t even see what the others were doing. I was so focused on getting something on paper! I didn’t even know if what I was doing, was right” (Participant 9).

Participant 7 said:

*I want to do this every day [laughs]! I can see why this is useful to improve our drawing. In real life, we wouldn’t have people standing still. In the street everyone moves by quickly. I think this helps with that. I would actually really like to do this in a busy street and draw people walking past! How cool would that be!*

To which Participant 4 responded: “Yes!”



**Figure 4.13: Participant 5, figure study (10 seconds), pencil on paper**

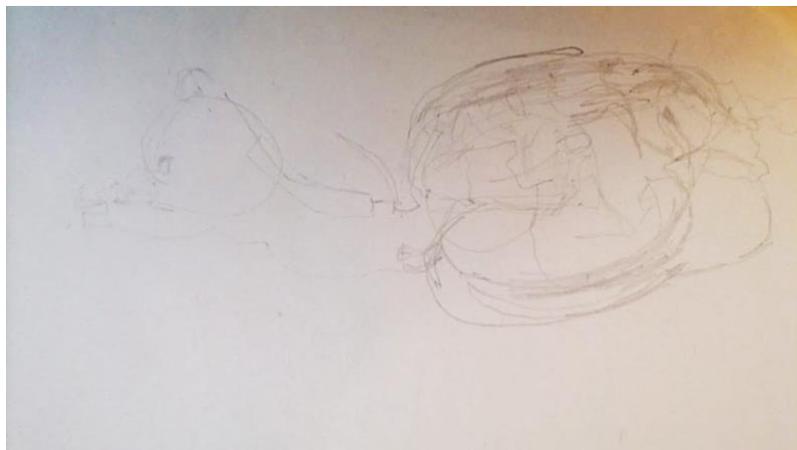


**Figure 4.14: Participant 5, figure study (10 seconds), pencil on paper**

However, not all learners were as actively engaged. In the back of the class, two learners did not care much for the project and only did a total of three drawings. When asked why, one answered: “I couldn’t focus. There wasn’t enough time”. This might have well been the case. However, the all-around experience of the workshop seemed positive and fun. It exposed the learners to an energetic new way of drawing from life. The space allowed them to actively engage – they were never silenced or told to do something. I wanted them to participate and respond how they saw fit. The workshop allowed me as researcher to see the benefits increasing in actively engaging space in terms of drawing and how learners were able to reflect on their surroundings in different timeframes. It showed how learners were able to convey their surroundings, through their skills and observational skills, in relation to the amount of time they were given. It also taught the participants that drawing can help them recognise a general outlook in a quick timeframe to get a better understanding of something, which in turn could be used for future reference. It was a method of using their senses, memory and hand-eye coordination through drawing, and in return becoming more aware of their surroundings and the apparent changes.

The last workshop, blind contour drawing, was similar to the one they had done before. Blind contours are much more intensive, as they are drawn from purely observing without looking at what one is drawing. On the day of the workshop, the learners were eager to continue their lesson. With each workshop their confidence in their abilities seemed to grow. Their doubts seemed less apparent – they started to trust the process.

On the first day of the blind contour workshop, the learners were asked to draw any object of their choice, or they could use the apples provided to them. Most learners drew either the apple or their stationary kit. An example can be seen in Figure 4.15: Participant 3 created her own still life with various found objects.



**Figure 4.15: Participant 3, blind contour (still life), pencil on paper**

Participant 2 remarked as follows:

*Doing this project really made me realise that I have a competitive side to me and I feel like that motivated me more. I have learned that continuous line drawing is a technique that I really admire and like. I feel like it is going to be my 'thing'.*



**Figure 4.16: Participant 10, blind contour (apple), pencil on paper**

Blind contour drawings are excellent tools for learning through art making. They combine critical observing and thinking skills, as well as the fluidity and freedom found in creative thinking. No drawings will ever look the same – they are an honest expression of a person’s own reflective thinking. The observations, in relation to the artistic expression, creates a visual symbol of the subject matter. As the line continuously grows longer, it takes on a form; the more time spent on the drawing, the more the subject matter becomes visible. It is a layering process – building the subject matter from the inside out.

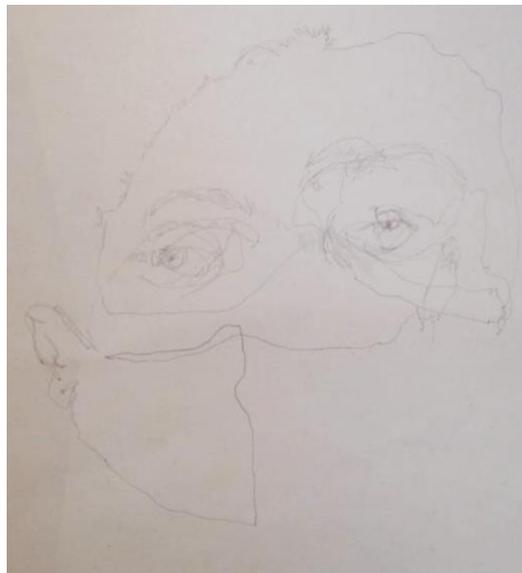
On the second day, the learners were given the task to draw their peer across them.<sup>42</sup> The class was still. It seemed that what Participant 2 stated about being competitive was apparent. They tried to actively engage in the process. Their consciousness of the subject was their aim and being able to reflect what they see the goal. The process was given a full period to give them as much time as they needed to draw as much information as they could (see figures 4.17 and 4.18 as examples).

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<sup>42</sup> Each learner was placed at a desk 1,5 metres apart to adhere to the national lockdown social distancing regulations.



**Figure 4.17: Participant 3, blind contour (learner), pen on paper**



**Figure 4.18: Participant 3, semi-blind contour (learner), pencil on paper**

Throughout my observations I was aware how much the learners' behaviours had changed in a short amount of time. They became much more motivated to engage with the process. They started understanding the purpose of each workshop. Their ability to motivate one another and how each learner continuously aimed at achieving more, drawing better than the day before, helped each learner to strive towards both personal and intellectual growth. The learners became visibly conscious of their surroundings, noticing each shadow and light cast, the planes and contours of the face – not just the basic outline. Through art, we can experience the world in relation to our senses (Colebrook, 2002). With every form of creating, art functions as a

means of generating new knowledge. Our perceptions<sup>43</sup> reflect a creative outlook on life, and through our technical capabilities we can visualise this.

It became clear that utilising drawing techniques that are not much explored in high school art classes helped the learners to think beyond the visible. With every workshop, their cognitive abilities in terms of using their senses became stronger. As a result, their own sense of self grew – they developed more confidence in their own capabilities. By using drawing techniques that shifted away from a ‘realistic’ perspective, the learners felt less pressure to create – they were creating from their own ideas and not trying to mimic that which was in front of them. It allowed a more open-ended engagement with the process and helped formulate a more natural outcome. When reflecting on the first drawings made during the workshops in relation to the last, a visible difference could be seen. The lines were more expressive and controlled – not being as subtle and unsure as some suggested in the beginning of the workshop. Each mark was made with confidence, rather than doubt. This could be as a result of various factors, or just pure coincidence, but I would like to believe that each learner started becoming more confident in their own abilities to critically and creatively think of and about their work and reflect it with confidence.

Participant 3 commented on the workshop as follows: “This was so much fun. There’s no pressure to achieve a specific standard. You’re kind of free to just draw from your point of view. I like that a lot.”

Participant 1 stated the following:

*It’s a double-edged sword in a way, I love the method, and how your end result is not definite, but when you look at the drawing in the end and realise it just kind of looks like a mess, it’s a bit disappointing [laughs].*

Participant 2 said:

*My drawings looked nothing like [Participant 6’s]. We found them hilarious. I do like the process, though. This was probably my favourite lesson of all. I think that this method has helped me a lot with my process of really observing. Usually I just take a picture of something and draw that. This made me step outside my comfort zone a bit. Also because were so used to trying to do realistic types of works and this is sort of the complete opposite. It doesn’t matter how the work comes out, but how it is made. That is really nice!*

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<sup>43</sup> We develop through our perceptions – they are the means in which we analyse the unknown and situate our own understanding (Colebrook, 2002:126).

### 4.2.3 Intrapersonal reflections

For the final project,<sup>44</sup> the learners were given a task that included creating a work in terms of their own perspective. The learners were given the opportunity to use their critical and creative skills to reflect their own understanding of themselves. The general idea was to keep this open to as many interpretations as possible.

Participant 2 stated as follows:

*When I heard our topic was self-reflection, I was excited, but I was even more excited when I heard we could use any style. Normally we stick to a style we were handed, but the mere fact that we could use any style really made me enjoy the project more.*

During the course in which learners worked on their final project, we had multiple one-on-one discussions, with their art teachers present to not only see the progress that they had made, but also to better understand their given theme. They were assigned to reflect their process work through a visual diary that included visual references, drawings, art, art movements and artists who inspired them, and a reflective essay that discussed their general idea. The overall outcome showed that the learners were capable of understanding themselves in terms of how others might see them, how they see themselves, their interest and what things in life influence how they identify themselves. The perspectives of learners varied in terms of their own thoughts – from social issues such as body positivity, gender fluidity, race and culture to spaces, animals and specific activities they found enjoyable.

Two learners used body positivity as a reference point.<sup>45</sup> Participant 7 stated as follows in her visual diary:

*Through every pain and joy, and fluctuation of the scale, my body has been with me. The way it looks to the way it moves or even the way that all of the parts don't work the way it used to – those changes are only part of me. We are the sum of our parts. The culmination of our life's work, a massive piling on of beauty and pain, of successes and failures.*

She continued: “From then on, I promised my body I wouldn't compare it to others. I would compare it to itself and would say sorry for the parts I didn't love as much as I should.”

This exploration of body in terms of our own understanding helps situate an understanding of the agency in which our bodies are part of our quest for knowledge and developing new ways

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<sup>44</sup> The general theme was “Self-reflective self-portrait”. See Addendum A.

<sup>45</sup> See figures 4.19, 4.20 and B2 (in Addendum B).

of being (Hickey-Moody *et al.*, 2016:220). Furthermore, by generating art as a means of thinking and reflecting on the understanding of body, the learners formed a deeper sense of its meaning, not only through social constructs as implied within their statements, but also through a materialist view of how they can utilise their body to formulate knowledge of and within the context of their work through gesture and movement (see Hickey-Moody *et al.*, 2016:214). Using the body in relation to reflection helped the learners to develop a notion of identity and becoming through a heightened awareness, acknowledgement and deconstruction of their thoughts, perspectives and ideas (see Griffin, 2015:274).

Another learner (Participant 1) used geometric shapes and various symbols to create a narrative that included all her ideas of how she situated herself in the world (see Figure 4.24).

Participant 1 stated:

*My artwork reflects how I see myself and how I think others might see me. There is a fine line between fantasy and reality. It represents me, both literally and figuratively. The face fading into the background is symbolising LIFE, and being part of a fading memory of others according to history. The lotus flower in the bottom right corner represents and symbolises 'pure'. Static emotion is implied on the facial expression.*

Participant 1 further stated:

*The geometric shapes represent how others always try to shape one another into the way the world says how it is supposed to be or being in a video game, when the gamer has one life left, waiting for the screen to say game over. Labels play another big role in self-image on how you picture yourself and see yourself. Feminism is emphasised by specific labels around the world. Trauma can lie underneath a mask, pretending everything is okay. Loving the way I am, hairstyle, height. Imperfect. To embrace all those things, purity (pure) is the meaning of my name that I would like to show in my artwork.*

Participant 1's ability to use symbols and social constructs in her final piece showcased a conceptual thinking beyond the traditional visual narratives of realism. Throughout the study, she continuously experimented with different styles and techniques to find her own expression in art. The participant constantly questioned her ability, technique and style, using her imaginative and creative abilities to convey intellectual thought. Her work was a constant process of thinking and rethinking which symbols and marks would aesthetically showcase her conceptual thought more accurately. Her love for symmetry and mathematics was incorporated with her social identity to combine different elements of her own interest and perspectives.

Participant 1 ended by stating:

*My culture plays a big role of showing my past of brown culture, which can be seen in the characteristic of my hair pattern. The style intends to the illusion of imagination and realism. The point was to show the model in the most critical and honest perspective.*

From a qualitative perspective, it is important to suggest that all forms of knowledge are constructed by past experiences, and that truth and opinion are not bound, but some forms are grounded through evidence. Participant 1 was able to situate and reflect on her own past experiences in relation to her cultural position. As the study was conducted in a high school with a vast number of cultures and identities, it became important for me as researcher to understand that when subjected to a multitude of identities, there are various perspectives and experiences that bring more than one given set of truths or opinions (see Lyons, 2010:27). Each participant showcased their own capabilities of situating their own understanding of self in relation to external influences, such as culture, that helped develop a continuous exploration of thought and imagination.

When speaking of their work, Participant 2 stated: “Based on people’s different perspective of me, am I everyone I am perceived as? Or am I truly my own person?” Participant 3 chose a different medium than the rest of the class: clay and mixed media. She stated that she had never worked with clay, but that she wanted to challenge her abilities. The reason for her medium was nature and clay being a strong associate towards femininity “The idea of the nature is strong and feminine – in a way I associate myself to it, and aspire to be like it.” Participant 3 further listed words that she inspired towards visualising: “Strength. Stability. Nobility. Like trees I want to grow into a person with this much strength.”

She also stated:

*A bird is more free than I will ever be. But my mind is not restricted to my barriers like my body is. My mind is a tree, imaginative and capable of going to the places I am not able to reach.*

When referring to the lightbulb she placed on the head of the sculpture, she stated: “Expectations from me crush my motivation to reach them. I don’t want to end up being a gifted kid that’s burned out.”

An artwork, as a case of study, is both individually and culturally constructed and can be used to represent specific ideas (Sullivan, 2005:80). These ideas then become a source of

knowledge. The above learners (participants 1, 2 and 3) showcased a strong sense of self. They critically assessed their interests, to what they aspire and how they can grow into becoming a better person through their own experiences. They were able to use metaphors and symbols to convey their understanding of not only how others see them, but also how they see themselves.

There were also learners who used concepts of emotions, memory and space in relation to themselves as beings. Participant 8 had an emotive drawing style towards his artwork, with various symbols used as signifiers for personal feelings. While discussing his work, he stated that: “My ideas that I want to use for my project are based on patterns as symbols for my personality and each emotion being a different personality” (translated from Afrikaans).

He further stated:

*In the background there's a shadow of a figure that is lightly shaded. The upper body contains all the different patterns. One of the patterns showcases the deepest of my emotions. The puzzle pattern shows how emotions are pieced together and the parts where it doesn't seem to fit portrays how certain emotions change, or disappear over time, after going through certain circumstances in our life. The ball pattern represents space, emotional space that can be filled and the brick pattern represents how we sometimes build up walls to hide our emotions from others.*

In relation to Participant 14's final work, she referenced particular words to describe her idea: “Dreams, experiences, surrealism, beyond, unexpected, unconscious, uncomfortable.”

Participant 14 further explained that she was “trying to show that even in my room I can feel this way, I don't feel comfort by any environments so it shows some degree of depersonalisation”.

With reference to the work, she stated:

*The eyes are broken mirrors – where the mirrors represent bad luck and the eyes being a window to the soul. Each colour represents a different emotion. The open mouth symbolises my frustration of not being heard, because I'm so young my 'opinions don't always matter'. The mirror symbolises all the disappointments I've experienced, and the huge impact society has had on the way I view things. And all the bad luck and misfortunes I've experienced. The different colour eyes are symbolising all the mixed emotions I feel and also a lot of eyes symbolises that I'm being watched, and my family has high expectations of me, pressured.*

From a materialist perspective, art is produced by selecting and combining particular materials and tools that resonate with the given ideas, thoughts and themes, in which the process of making is a result of interactions between body and matter (Roberts & Riley, 2012:67). The above-mentioned works were only a particular selection of the works created in the final project. Overall, each learner was able to use the relation between body and matter through an artistic expression to reflect their own sense of self. Each learner showcased a creative capability that incorporated a deeper understanding of identity and self. Their works created meaning through a personal reflection of their own reality by reflecting on memories, past experiences and narratives that situated around their own ideas of self (Kellman, 1999:40)

#### **4.2.4 Art as a tool for learning**

The act of creating art provided a means of developing multiple forms of intelligences in learners, in which they were able to express thoughts and ideas they found meaningful (see Gardner, 1999). It gives a means of seeing reality in alternative ways that expand their own perceptions of the world in which they live (see Berliner, 2011:291). In terms of the research process, the data generated from each learner allowed me as researcher and the learners to become more aware of the role of creating, as a sensory experience, towards thinking both creatively and critically. Each method used in the research formulated a new way of thinking of art as a viable source for producing and/or understanding knowledge. Learners showcased possibilities in their work to produce artworks that both critically and creatively reflected a narrative that not only resonated a personal experience, but also reflected a deeper understanding beyond the normative iterations of ‘copying’ reality found in schools.

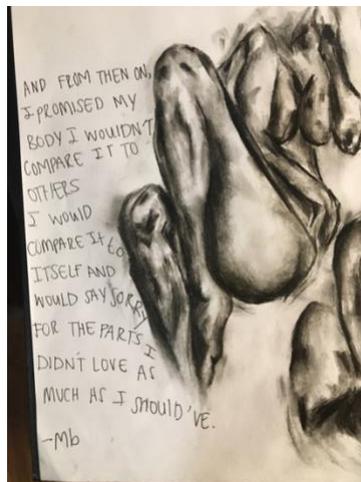
Learners need an educational platform that is authentic and allows mental, social and physical growth through creative and critical thinking (Heilig, Cole & Aguilar, 2010:137). Through the act of creating art, learners are provided with a means of making sense of how they see the world and enhance their own understandings of the realities in which they live (Goldblatt, 2006). Through the process of this research, I found that the arts provided the learners with a medium for learning beyond the traditional Cartesian school curriculum and offered a means through which they could express and transform their own thoughts and ideas into works of art (see Eisner, 1999:148). Furthermore, the data suggested that the learners were capable of identifying multiple ways of being and of understanding how art can visually express a variety of perspectives through the act of invention.

Participant 2 stated:

*My project started off with me mind mapping my ideas. Continuous line drawing was introduced to me at the end of primary school. I loved the fact that you could just draw a line and never stop until you see your image. That was the start and inspiration for my project. I wanted to base this style with something I'm comfortable and familiar with. My mind map was the beginning of rough ideas for my artwork. My idea was to base my art project title, 'Self-reflection', on body image. The way I see myself from every angle.*



**Figure 4.19: Participant 7, diary entry, charcoal on paper**



**Figure 4.20: Participant 7, diary entry, charcoal on paper**

Participant 7 stated the following in her visual diary:

*Through every pain and joy, and fluctuation of the scale, my body has been with me. The way it looks to the way it moves or even the way that all of the parts don't work the way it used to – those changes are only part of me. We are the sum of our parts. The culmination of our life's work, a massive piling on of beauty and pain, of successes and failures.*

The condition of invention is a perception or recognition of the ambiguity of appearance and beings when the signifier exceeds its signification – when the original idea of something is reconfigured and reconceptualised into other possibilities (Nelson, 2013:40–41). Any idea that ignores the role of intelligence in the field of art is based on the presumptions of thinking in a singular perspective (Eisner, 2002:15). Throughout the process of this research, the learners understood the means of conveying a particular idea in terms of critically and creatively thinking about what it is that they wanted to explore and how they wanted to explore it. Participant 2 said that her research process and the workshops helped her thinking process to develop a better understanding of what it was she wanted to showcase. Her process included using relevant artists and art styles that situated her style. Her reference images were self captured, and found images that resonated with her process of making were also used within her exploration of artistic expression.

In terms of her inspiration, she explained:

*I chose Pablo Picasso as my artist because his use of continuous line drawing, which is the art style I'll use throughout my project. I based this style on my personality. I am an overthinker. I think that this art technique best describes that.*

Participant 2 continued to describe the meaning behind her preliminary drawings:

*My A5 sketches were based on how I see my body image from different angles. The black fine liner outlines my body, but the red fine liner highlights my insecurities. I chose that final drawing because I want people to understand my struggle. My position, line and red line should outline my story.*

Both learners clearly understood their concept, and their means of critical assessment and personal reflection showed that they could use not only their imagination to think, but that they could also use critical thinking skills to develop a concept from which they could learn and produce new ways of thinking of themselves. They utilised their concept to form a narrative of their own ideas and create a work that was able to reflect such thinking.<sup>46</sup>

In relation to the works of participants 8 and 4, as mentioned earlier, both showed that they used critical and creative thinking in thinking of their work. They used symbols and narratives that conveyed their own emotional behaviours. Their understanding of their work in relation to the meaning is relevant. Understanding is formed by a creative, reproductive act in which researchers appropriate the meaning of a given object, rather than simply mirroring it – carrying

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<sup>46</sup> See figures B3, B4 and B8.

their own frame of reference and developing interpretations in accordance (Sullivan, 2005:97). The task of creative research is to extend the domains of knowledge through this reflection (Barret & Bolt, 2007:34). In this sense, learners were able to extend the knowledge that moves from practice-based research beyond the practice and contribute to a broader spectrum of knowledge.

Throughout each one-on-one discussion, the learners were very inspired and open to discussing their theme. They took pride in the work that they produced. Participant 12 reflected on this by stating: “It gave me a sense of belonging, if that makes any sense. I found myself while doing the project. It was very liberating.”

Participant 2 also suggested that both the workshops and the practical gave her a better sense of self – as both individual and artist: “This project was really enjoyable.”

She further stated as follows in her reflective essay:

*Through this art project I have also learnt that your art is your art. I should also stop basing off my art on other art that I don't even see myself doing. I wouldn't say that this art project required a lot of work because when you enjoy it, the work doesn't seem to matter. At first, I did this project all wrong and had to start over, but even when having to start over I was really impressed with how quickly I caught up. I'm starting to realise that I found my technique.*

Another learner (Participant 7) also changed her idea during last-minute discussions.<sup>47</sup> Art is therefore a recreation of the individual in which the recreation recreates (Eisner, 2002:239). Art generates a powerful means of recreation that becomes a new form of knowledge development – in favour of enriching us all. In terms of research methods, it is essential to acknowledge and describe the context in which the specific method is used, and in what ways it is adapted and why – specifically in terms of praxis (Gray & Malin, 2004:101). The continuous exploration of different methods of thinking of and through art helped form a better understanding of what outcome resonates more with the initial thoughts behind the concept that the participant was trying to convey. This process of rethinking, remaking and recollecting showcased that the particular learner was able to critically engage with the process of creating. In order for praxis, in relation to research, to be seen as viable in generating new forms of knowledge, the materials, methods, tools and ideas surrounding artistic practice must be considered – the engagement of these notions becomes primary over the assumed theoretical-

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<sup>47</sup> See figures 4.21–4.23 and B8.

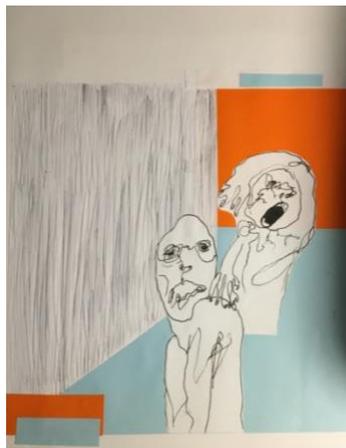
cognitive engagement (Ihde, 1979:117). Notably, this consciousness of ourselves and our own sense of knowledge is interconnected with our engagement with the things we know in relation to the unknown (Lyons, 2010:26). Through continuous explorations and experiments of thought, we can situate a mode of reflection that resonates our ideas more intuitively.

Participant 7 stated:

*Normally we all kind focus of realism. I do enjoy it. But I think for this specific topic, I rather wanted to push myself outside my comfort zone. [...] Working with line and pen I feel like I can express myself better. I don't have to worry about making it look perfect because art is not really about making things perfect, there's beauty in imperfections.*



**Figure 4.21: Participant 7, final project (first idea), pencil on paper**



**Figure 4.22: Participant 7, diary entry, mixed media**



**Figure 4.23: Participant 7, diary entry (final concept), pen on paper**

Participant 4 also said that realism was not her interest:

*‘This does not look realistic.’ Thank you! Now I’m finally a true artist. My perspective matters. Not every artwork needs to be realistic to be acknowledged as art. A wise man once said, ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder’.*

Participant 9 also said with reference to his work: “Photorealism is not what interests me, but trying to capture the soul of something. Animals are innocent in nature, and that’s what I wanted to show” (translated from Afrikaans).

Reflecting through art allowed the participants to uncover, understand and utilise emotions related to their work (see McKay & Sappa, 2019:35). As stated by Robinson (2015), emotions play an integral role in obtaining new knowledge, and throughout the process of discovery, emotions are apparent. The tasks allowed the learners to reflect on past experiences and recognise the role of emotions in shaping their own perspectives of themselves.

We use past experiences to transform our own thoughts, as they provide cognitive discords, contradictions and a vast network of insights (Piaget, 1977). The continuous exploration of different narratives in terms of their own perspectives became a phenomenon in itself. Their own narratives helped their own confidence in their capabilities and established a sense of ‘becoming’ – a deeper consciousness of their surroundings and lived realities. As the data unfolded, they understood that the process of creating art is a continuous exploration of narratives between self and matter.

To think effectively, we have to move beyond the realms of realist, ‘factual’-based thinking methods, and become more tentative to the relations of artistic thought – forming understandings through materials, symbols and other cognitive modes (Eisner, 2002:15). Art

functions not only by depicting the visual aesthetics of a given object; it also helps us to depict a feeling or emotion that any other reflective method fails to recognise. The multiplicity of knowledge construction and the many representational forms that it can present reflect the integrated nature of theory and practice in art (Sullivan, 2005:87). Art gives a necessary importance to our capabilities through the imagination and the refining and use of our sensibilities (Eisner, 2002:198). The learners showcased how they were able to utilise their own perspectives without merely imitating reality, but through their own sense of reality. They consciously explored ideas that furthered their own critical thoughts and creatively reflected their narratives through well-thought-out works of art.

Participant 12 referred to the importance of artists to convey meaning behind her work: “Make every night a time for reflection.”

### **4.3 Synthesis**

This chapter discussed the data captured during this study. It showcased the ideas, thoughts and discussions of the learners in relation to the workshops and reflected the narratives of how they used art as a means of developing a better sense of self. The learners showcased critical and creative thoughts throughout the study and reflected on their own realities in a sensitive, intellectual and imaginative manner. The findings are based on their own words, writings and artworks in relation to my observations as researcher. According to the responses of the learners’ art teachers, the outcome of the study led to an overall improvement in their engagement with both class discussions and practical assessments. The overall result influenced the majority of the learners to become more critically engaged with both learning of and creating art. Not only did their technical skills improved, but so too did their ability to provide more meaningful art that is not merely copied from found images by critically and creatively engaging with subject matters of their own personal reflection.

Concluding the findings of each workshop, the learners developed a stronger ability to reflect on their surrounding spaces and improved their cognitive abilities to utilise their senses in relation to their technical abilities as artists. The art teachers also mentioned that the overall behaviours of the learners also showed much improvement. Although some learners still did not put in the necessary amount of work, many learners’ participation had improved throughout. The workshops also prompted the learners to become more willing to participate in class activities, and they seemed overall more excited each day to continue to explore the act of making beyond the traditional forms of art experienced in school settings.

Concluding the findings of the final project, the learners developed a consciousness of how art can be used as a learning tool that fosters lifelong learning. Their development throughout the course of the study showcased a deeper understanding of how art showcases personal reflections, rather than mimicking the world around them. Their explorations showcased how art can be utilised as a transformative tool towards personal development and learning – as they produce cognitive conflicts, multiple perspectives and critical assessment (see Piaget, 1977). Each learner experienced a different thinking method and created a work that resonated towards their process of thinking. Furthermore, the research provided the learners with an opportunity to develop a better sense of their own self through the act of making. Their cognitive abilities showed a deeper understanding of their own subjectivity as artists and their ability to embody a particular perspective of their own thoughts and/or ideas. In the following chapter, the concluding remarks and implications from the findings are discussed.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and implications**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The research conducted for the purpose of the thesis aimed to explore the possibilities of using art as a tool for learning. The goal of the study was to formulate a better understanding of the influences of time, space and matter on the behavioural effects of learners, and how this could, in turn, help develop critical and creative skills to reflect their own sense of self. By introducing high school learners to new ways of drawing beyond the realistic approaches favoured in school, the act of making art opened up possibilities of critically and creatively reflecting on their own realities – giving meaning to their sense of self and their perspectives.

Through the use of a case study, in terms of qualitative research in relation to post-qualitative approaches, the research was able to utilise different views, perspectives and understandings from a small number of participants. Each learner was encouraged to explore their own capabilities and perspectives, without being limited to the usual structures of art classes. The research introduced a materialistic way of thinking – placing matter over mind.<sup>48</sup>

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the structure of the study was limited to the pressures of not wasting valuable time for assessments, and the final workshop was therefore conducted for their curriculum assessment. The learners were, however, consistently encouraged to not limit themselves to the normative standards in high school art by constantly addressing each learner through one-on-one discussions about their ideas and reassuring them that the purpose was not to purely imitate reality, but their reality – how they see, think, feel, understand and experience.

### **5.2 Conclusions drawn from the findings and implications**

The following section discusses the factual and interpretive, as well as the conceptual conclusions and implications drawn from the findings.

#### **5.2.1 Factual and interpretive conclusions and implications**

Based on the findings of the research, I would argue that the role of our five bodily senses is imperative to develop a critical consciousness through the act of making art. For this to happen, intra-active agencies between learner, teacher and matter should be accounted for. As Barad (2007:141) suggests, intra-active agencies allow a continuous interchanging and diffracting of inseparable relations, in which objectivity cannot be accounted for. The embodiment of both

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<sup>48</sup> In other words, situating the role in which our surroundings and spaces, including time, have a direct impact on our behaviours – how each individual experiences these notions differently.

human and non-human matter formulates a deeper understanding of not only our surroundings, but also our lived realities, and gives meaning to our own perspectives. As a result, we can continuously strive to find meaning towards the constant fluxes presented by the passing of time. Allowing a sensory experience, through art, helps to formulate a holistic approach to understanding the relations of happenings within ourselves and the world around us, and to develop a deeper sense of thinking, knowing and understanding beyond the traditional curricula provided by high school learning institutions.

Developing a more conscious understanding of the relations between human and matter, we are able to recognise the interrelations between everything. The act of making art is therefore noted to be a collaborative engagement between artists and matter, in which thinking functions through and within each momentary act. Situating a critical mode of thinking towards a creative manner helps learners to not only become more reflective, but also to develop a better sense of self, and in return, creates a possibility for learners to become more actively engaged in processes of producing new forms of knowledge.

Art functions to rethink our understanding of our own lived experiences and memories, and to form active engagements with our surroundings. The interchanging of our own experiences with our surrounding spaces gives the means to form new ways of thinking of and about the nature of being – for both human and non-human notions. Assemblages of memories, created by our lived experiences, are open-ended happenings of trying to make sense of our own realities, in which we generate new ways of thinking and knowing (Rovelli, 2018). Time changes things, and as things change, we have to adapt our understanding of the given instance. This form of experience could have been explored more extensively throughout the course of the study, if not for the limitations mentioned.

Shifting the traditional Cartesian mode of learning that is set on given principles and outcomes, or ‘definite truths’, towards a post-qualitative, materialist perspective that offers a vast range of interchangeable perspectives often seems impossible, given the extensive predetermined learning curricula incorporated in schools. However, learning systems that offer learners the possibility of critically and creatively addressing particular instances through their own perspectives and imagination could offer the potential for more honest, open-ended discussions between learner, educator and curricula. The opportunity for personal reflection could not only give a means of developing a better sense of self, but also a sense of becoming that is fostered by lifelong learning.

### 5.2.2 Conceptual conclusions and implications

Art, from a materialist perspective, not only functions to help develop technical skills, but also captures the dynamic presence of matter in relation to time and space – shifting the thinking of learners beyond the traditional sense of recognition (see Hood & Kraehe, 2017). Throughout the course of the study, the learners continuously explored their capabilities of ‘thinking of’<sup>49</sup> and ‘thinking about’.<sup>50</sup> By utilising drawing experiences from life, learners were introduced to looking at reality through their senses. This, especially in relation to our given technological exposure, is more important than ever. Developing a sensual experience helped the learners to not become out of touch with their senses and, in return, to learn how to orient themselves in the multiple dimensions of reality (see Abram, 1996:x). To become more aware helps formulate a deeper understanding of our own thoughts and behaviours in relation to matter and our surrounding spaces (Eisner, 2002:2). By engaging with our senses, we are able to transform our consciousness through the act of making art, and in return, develop a more critical approach to thinking processes. As such, I would suggest that introducing a materialist perspective within the realm of art education would not only benefit learners’ ability to make use of their bodily senses in a constructive manner, but will also improve their artistic expression, thinking process and technical abilities overall.

The drawing workshops discussed in Chapter 4 showed an improvement in the majority of the learners’ ability to think critically of and about their subject matter. The act of making in relation to the material and subject matter prompted the learners to be more aware of the relations between human and non-human entities. Both gestural and contour drawings helped the learners become more aware of their surrounding spaces and how they were able to utilise these instances to critically engage with their own capabilities. By limiting their senses,<sup>51</sup> they became more aware of the importance of the relations between body, mind and matter in terms of taking in new information. Our sensing bodies is not merely a mechanical programme, but an active, ongoing form that continuously functions to make sense of the relations between things in our own life (Abram, 1996:49). Each line and mark indicated a consciousness that challenged their perceived ideas of their surroundings. The learners were actively becoming more aware of their surroundings to make sense of it, visualise it and reflect it through their own perspective. As such, I conclude that educators should seek to encourage learners to

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<sup>49</sup> Recalling something from memory.

<sup>50</sup> Remembering something – considering something and using time to think through it.

<sup>51</sup> The limitations were developed by removing their ability to see what they were drawing and obstructing the amount of time to draw.

actively engage with their surroundings and seek new ways of understanding things they take for granted.

The learners were not passively seeking to take in information, but rather actively engaged with their own senses and perspectives to formulate their own understanding. The learners were learning by doing, and doing to understand. Each activity became an experience itself or a quest for knowledge in which learning took place in terms of their own participation. Giving learners a sense of autonomy could therefore foster a better learning experience. I would also argue that the workshops also effectively allowed a more honest exploration of artistic expression than the realistic approaches favoured in schools.

The workshops also served as a possible way in which learners were helped to question preconceived thoughts, understandings, perspectives and expectations in relation to their own senses. As such, I would argue that our bodily senses should be nurtured and utilised more efficiently within learning systems to understand the relation between self and matter beyond the limited universal thinking prescribed in learning institutions to help formulate and cultivate lifelong learning. Allowing learners to be introduced to a learning environment that allows their own perspectives to be taken in account could help bring forth both personal and intellectual growth. I would also suggest that placing more emphasis on learners' sensory experiences could bring forth more holistic, imaginative approaches that seek to question and counter the traditional sense of 'knowing'. In my opinion, learning to question becomes the goal. Nothing is definite, and allowing learners to explore their own understandings beyond the boundaries of learning curricula in schools could potentially serve as a constructive tool for thinking beyond the trajectories of learning institutions.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges learners from different socio-political backgrounds faced can impact the overall learning experiences of learners. Many learners struggled to adapt to the new structure, and faced more obstacles than ever before. Considerable parts of the school curricula were placed online to combat the disruptive implications of the lockdown protocols. However, from my own experience in conducting my research, I noticed a strong inequality between learners from low- and high-income backgrounds. Not all learners had access to electronic devices and not all could fully take advantage of the measures put in place to amend for the loss of time. As such, the research was structured in a manner to ensure that all learners could equally partake. Although the research did not fully address the impact of socio-cultural differences, I would argue that the role these instances played in the general outcome of learning influenced the achievements of the learners. In my opinion, there is a

definite need for addressing the inequalities faced by learners to fully ensure equal opportunities in learning. As the pandemic continues, only then will we fully understand the extensive impact it had caused on learning institutions.

As educators, we must become aware of all the interwoven happenings that take place both in and outside learning institutions to become more aware of the impact and challenges faced by each individual. To fully engage with helping learners cultivate the necessary skills for lifelong learning, I would suggest that more emphasis should be placed on addressing and understanding the lived realities of each individual. To fully account for the intra-actions and happenings that continuously shift in nature, we should understand the role of each lived experience and be more aware of the influences that determine how learners interact with their surroundings and ultimately experience and participate in learning processes.

### **5.3 Further research and critique**

Due to the nature of the study, it could be critiqued that the study itself was not objective enough to be proven accurate, or to give a definite answer to the research questions stated in Chapter 1. However, this was not the intention of the study. By utilising a mixed methodology of qualitative research with elements of post-qualitative insights, I focused on developing an outcome of understanding, rather than a definite outcome towards the question.

The study concludes no proof that the findings can be generalised to be effective in the development of critical and creative thinking processes. Seeing as the study took place in a specific setting, with a group of high school learners, it can only reflect the outcome. The boundaries and limitations throughout the study also suggest that no particular instance should be concluded as definite, but merely a possibility. The findings are interpreted through the perspectives of each learner, and should not be subscribed as anything more.

The findings of the study could have possibly brought further insights if the data were approached and read differently. I could have possibly introduced ways beyond the naturalistic approach to discussions to gain more insight into the perspectives of the learners. However, forming a more structured questionnaire or discussion could have led to generalised claims and statements that serve no purpose.

Although I do believe that the mixed methodologies used in study were relevant to the nature of the phenomenon, I would argue that the limitations of time constraints and sample selection need to be enhanced to show a greater outcome. In order to be more insightful, such as study could take place during longer periods, and possibly outside the limitations of a high school

schedule. The data collected throughout the study should only be applied to the given study and used as a possibility for further, more extensive research. I would argue that, through a more extensive timeframe, with a larger sample of participants, the data would show even further improvement towards a given phenomenon. Similar approaches could be used to conduct further transdisciplinary explorations of the role of art in the development of critical and creative thinking. Further studies can expand on this research to develop different approaches to the role of art as medium for personal reflection.

#### **5.4 Concluding remarks**

The aim of the research was not to find an answer to the research question, but rather to gain possible understanding of the given phenomenon, and whether or not it could be utilised in a positive manner.

The capability of high school learners to critically and creatively reflect on their own perspectives beyond the normative prescribed curricula in school proved to be effective for the most part. As researcher, I do not conclude that the study provides any guarantee to effectively improve learners' capabilities of critically and creatively reflecting through the act of creating art, but in terms of the findings, the particular selection of participants showed an overall improvement in both their technical skill and their ability to situate a better understanding of a given topic.

Due to the limitations during the course of the study, I would propose further explorations after the pandemic to allow more extensive timeframes for conducting the research to gain further insight and allow more data to be collected from different possible art projects, and possibly introducing participants to spaces beyond the art class.

After the study was completed, I continued my stay, and found that the learners were able to utilise the tools developed during the study throughout their next projects and gained an overall better understanding of art as a medium for personal reflection, rather than mimicking or copying. As such, I would encourage further explorations of the study and introducing new possible ways of creating art in school curricula. The workshops provided learners with a stronger sense of self and the participation of the learners, according to the teachers, showed a dramatic improvement – especially in light of decreased interest in school activities the outbreak of the pandemic has created.

Situating a materialist perspective through the role of art has the possibility to create a deeper consciousness of the relations between the role of learners and matter, learners and teachers,

and teacher and matter, that enables one to critically engage with the intra-actions between human and non-human matter through intra-active pedagogies of life, self and other. Given this, I would conclude that art, as a tool for learning, specifically with regard to high school learning institutions, should introduce holistic thinking methods ‘of’ and ‘through’ material and action that give learners an autonomous platform to explore their own realities.

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## Addendum A: Project brief

GR. 11 VISUAL ART PRACTICAL BRIEF

### TOPIC: SELF-REFLECTIVE SELF PORTRAIT “an investigation of the self”

*There are many things that we contribute to our identities, the way we think, feel, and present ourselves – both internal and external. This practical aims for you, as artist, to truly consider what these possibilities may include and reflect them through making. What do you think holds great influence in your behaviours and mannerisms?*

#### **Task Requirements:**

1. **An artwork in any given medium to best represent you as a person, without merely mimicking reality.**

Think outside the box of the traditional sense of self-portraits. The subject matter should not merely only focus on your physical self but include a sense of conceptual thought – thinking critically and carefully considering what it is you wish to make.

A self-portrait can reflect anything of your own making if you can convincingly argue why you present it as such. Consider all external influences in your life. Always try to explore different options to form the best possible outcome – try to make at least 3 rough ideas/concepts to show that you have done an investigation to the task. (rough sketches and a short description of idea)

#### **You can consider the following:**

- Identity (race, culture, sex, gender, class and or religion)
- Personality traits - what best represents you as a person?
- Think of things you enjoy doing – e.g., hobbies, how you spend most of your free time
- What would you rather do at this very given moment?
- People, animals, objects and things in your own life that have significant meaning to you
- Spaces – places you feel most at home (e.g., your room, streets, even your mind)
- Emotions and behaviours
- Movements
- Draw from your own perspective
- Try not to draw from pictures (only acceptable if you have taken them yourself)

2. **An artist statement of approximately 200 words**

An artist statement should describe your concept behind the work – what is important for the viewer to know without giving away too much information. Always allow room for different perspectives. It is not only there to describe your work but strengthen it. It is a background context as to why and how the work was created.

**This could include:**

- Intent – purpose of the work
- Why you chose the specific subject matter – what it represents and why?
- Whether or not the medium, gestures, and/or movements play any significance
- Possible historical background
- Use of colour
- The act of making
- A poem, quote or writing – always reference the original work
- The type of style

Keep it specific and short. Be honest and avoid repetition of words. Use simple language and short sentences to draw attention and illustrate your ideas behind the work.

**Course work**

Drawing class (Blind, Semi blind and gesture drawings)

- Bring along any old scrap paper to draw on (Newsprint, cartridge, fabriano, etc)
- charcoal, pencils (2b, 4b, 6b), charcoal (compressed, willow) and pen/ink
- A small, interesting object of choice (keep in mind this will be drawn – look at the shape texture and form)

I will also bring along extra paper and materials if needed

More will be explained on the day of each workshop

## Addendum B: Participants' final artwork examples



**Figure B1: Participant 1, final practical (2021), acrylic on paper**



**Figure B2: Participant 2, final project (2021), mixed media on paper**



**Figure B3: Participant 3, final project (2021), clay sculpture**



**Figure B4: Participant 3, final project (2021), clay sculpture**



**Figure B5: Participant 4 (2021), final project, acrylic on paper**



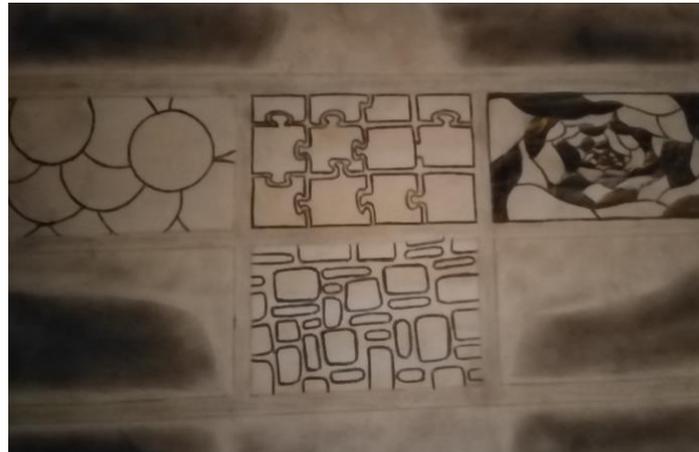
**Figure B6: Participant 5 (2021), final project, charcoal on paper**



**Figure B7: Participant 6 (2021), final project, mixed media on paper**



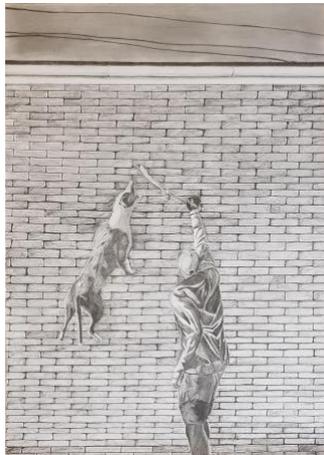
**Figure B8: Participant 7 (2021), final project, pen on paper**



**Figure B9: Participant 8 (2021), final project, charcoal on paper**



**Figure B10: Participant 9 (2021), final project, colour pencil on paper**



**Figure B11: Participant 10 (2021), final project, pencil on paper**



**Figure B12: Participant 11 (2021), final project, colour pencil on paper**



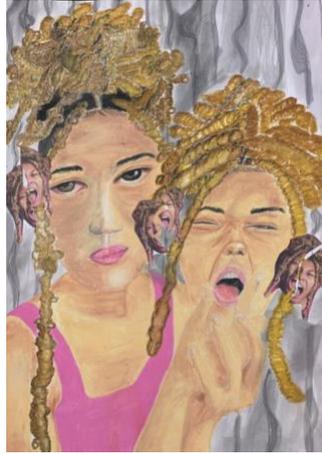
**Figure B13: Participant 12 (2021), final project, acrylic on paper**



**Figure B14: Participant 13 (2021), final project, acrylic on paper**



**Figure B15: Participant 14 (2021), final project, acrylic on paper**



**Figure B16: Participant 15 (2021), final project, mixed media on paper**

## Addendum C: Consent forms

### Participant Consent Form



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

#### **STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

---

You are invited to take part in a study conducted by Lourens Petrus Bester, from the Visual Art Department at Stellenbosch University. You were approached as a possible participant because you have the necessary self-taught skills in generating creative works of art.

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to investigate how art can be used as a medium of knowledge, to form new attentive ways of seeing things that surround us. Main themes within the study is how memory and past experiences shape our understanding of things. Everyone thinks, feels and expresses things differently. This study aims to show how art use these instances as a tool of for learning. My interest, as researcher, lies in the way we interact with our surroundings, and whether or not, these experiences can be used practically.

#### **2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to partake in the study during their art lesson in school, in the course of 3 weeks. All participants will be asked to create works of art in each lesson, which will also be supervised by their own art teacher.

In the first week participants will be drawing figure study drawings in different time frames to enhance their hand eye coordination and ability to look more accurately at a given frame. All materials for the still life will be provided.

During the second week participants will be asked to bring an object from places they occupy most (both natural objects such as wood, plants, etc. or man-made, such as plastic, metal, or fabric pieces. – e.g. Rope, pictures, magazines, books, wood, beads, frames, toys, etc.).

*[\*Note: these objects should not have any value, as they will be used to create a new work of art]*

Each participant will draw the given object in blind and semi blind contour drawings.

The participants will also be given a Practical Topic and create a body of work in relation to the the "Self-Reflective Self Portrait". More information will be handed on the first day.

#### **3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

This study does not have any possible risks in regard to the participants physical and mental health.

#### **4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO THE SOCIETY**

Participants will be subjected to a practical lesson in Fine Art which would both develop and promote their technical and creative ability to produce works of art. Each participant will experience technical

lessons at a university level and would give a short introduction to what studying towards a Fine Art degree entails. Participants would have the possibility of gaining knowledge from a student perspective, if they are interested in obtaining a degree in Visual Art.

## **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

### **6.**

All materials needed for the course of the study will be provided for participants. If they wish to use any material that is not provided, they must provide it at their own cost.

Each participant will be provided with the following:

- *Willow Charcoal Sticks*
- *Compressed Charcoal Sticks*
- *Pencils*
- *Newsprint Paper*
- *Cartridge Paper*
- *Recycled Paper*

## **7. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY**

Any information you share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected. This will be done by keeping all personal information anonymous and confidential. All information regarding the participant will remain safe by using a system of numbers (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). All information will be stored in a locked drawer, to which only I will have access. No personal information will be needed from any participant if they do not wish to share – excluding works of art and possible written dialogue produced during the course of the study.

All forms of data will be stored and kept safely throughout the study. Participants will have full access to all files pertaining their information and can grant access at any given time. Pictures and recordings will be taken of participant's artwork, and possible discussions will be written down, for the sake of the research, and will be destroyed once research has been completed. All data will remain safe and secure. None of the above will be shared with any external party/agency.

There will be no other publications of the study extending the research thesis. If participant agrees to partake, their information will remain confidential and anonymous.

## **8. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you agree to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without any consequence. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this study if the participant does not attend to the prescribed lesson and practical art tasks.

## **9. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Lourens Bester at [20412894@sun.ac.za](mailto:20412894@sun.ac.za) or 0623305857 and/or the supervisor Neeske Alexander at [neeskealexander@gmail.com](mailto:neeskealexander@gmail.com)

## **10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

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**DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT**

As the participant, I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of participant*) agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Lourens Petrus Bester

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

As the **principal investigator**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.                                                                                                                                          |
|  | The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this "Consent Form" is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent. |

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Principal Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## Parent(s)/Legal(s) Guardian Consent Form



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jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

### **STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

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I would like to invite your child to take part in a study conducted by Lourens Petrus Bester, from the Visual Art Department at Stellenbosch University. Your child will be invited as a possible participant because they have prior creative learning experience within the field of art.

#### **11. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to investigate how art can be used as a medium of knowledge, to form new attentive ways of seeing things that surround us. Main themes within the study are how memory and past experiences shape our understanding of things. Everyone thinks, feels and expresses things differently. This study aims to show how art use these instances as a tool of for learning. My interest, as researcher, lies in the way we interact with our surroundings, and whether or not, these experiences can be used practically.

#### **12. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF MY CHILD?**

If you consent to your child taking part in this study, the researcher will then approach the child for their assent to take part in the study. If the child agrees to take part in the study, he/she will be asked to partake in the study during their art lesson in school, in the course of 3 weeks. All participants will be asked to create works of art in each lesson, which will also be supervised by their own art teacher.

In the first week participants will be Figure Study drawings in different time frames to enhance their hand eye coordination and ability to look more accurately at a given frame. All materials for the still life will be provided.

During the second week participants will be asked to bring an object from places they occupy most (both natural objects such as wood, plants, etc. or man-made, such as plastic, metal, or fabric pieces. – e.g., Rope, pictures, magazines, books, wood, beads, frames, toys, etc.).

*[\*Note: these objects should not have any value, as they will be used to create a new work of art]*

Each participant will use these objects to create a series of Blind and Semi-Blind drawing.

Participants will also be given a Practical Term Project titled "Self-Reflective Self Portrait. More information pertaining the project will be given on the first day, or upon request.

#### **13. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

This study does not have any possible risks in regard to the participants physical and mental health.

#### **14. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO THE CHILD OR TO THE SOCIETY**

Participants will be subjected to a practical lesson in Fine Art which would both develop and promote their technical and creative ability to produce works of art. Each participant will experience technical lessons at a university level and would give a short introduction to what studying towards a Fine Art

degree entails. Participants would have the possibility of gaining knowledge from a student perspective, if they are interested in obtaining a degree in Visual Art.

## **15. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

All materials needed for the course of the study will be provided for participants. If they wish to use any material that is not provided, they must provide it at their own cost.

Each participant will be provided with the following:

- *Willow Charcoal Sticks*
- *Compressed Charcoal Sticks*
- *Pencils*
- *Newsprint Paper*
- *Cartridge Paper*
- *Recycled Paper*

## **16. PROTECTION OF YOUR AND YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY**

Any information you or your child will share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you or your child will be protected. This will be done by keeping all personal information anonymous and confidential. All information regarding the participant will remain safe by using a system of numbers (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). All information will be stored in a locked drawer, to which only I will have access. No personal information will be needed from any participant if they do not wish to share – excluding works of art and possible written dialogue produced during the course of the study.

All forms of data will be stored and kept safely throughout the study. Participants will have full access to all files pertaining their information and can grant access at any given time. Pictures and recordings will be taken of participant's artwork, and possible discussions will be written down, for the sake of the research, and will be destroyed once research has been completed. All data will remain safe and secure. None of the above will be shared with any external party/agency.

*There will be no other publications of the study extending the research thesis. If participant agrees to partake, their information will remain confidential and anonymous.*

## **17. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You and your child can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you consent to your child taking part in the study, please note that your child may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw your child from this study if they do not attend to the prescribed lesson and practical art tasks.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Lourens Petrus Bester at [20412894@sun.ac.za](mailto:20412894@sun.ac.za) or 0623305857 and/or the supervisor Neeske Alexander at [neeskealexander@gmail.com](mailto:neeskealexander@gmail.com)

## **18. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

Your child may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Neither you nor your child are waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your or your child's rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

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**DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD- PARTICIPANT**

As the parent/legal guardian of the child I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information have been explained.

By signing below, I \_\_\_\_\_ (*parent/legal guardian*) agree that the researcher may approach my child to take part in this research study, as conducted by Lourens Petrus Bester

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

As the **principal investigator**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the parent/legal guardian. I also declare that the parent/legal guardian was encouraged and given ample time to ask any questions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Principal Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## High School Request Form:



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### **STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

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Dear Mr. H. Mellet and Ms. T. Van Rensburg

My name is Lourens Petrus Bester and I am a Masters Student in Visual Art, I would like to invite to request permission for any Gr.10-12 art class of De Kuilen High School to participate in a research project entitled, *Mind and Memory: A Practice Based Investigation of the Behavioural Effects of Time and Space in the Field of Fine Art.*

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of the study. Also, student participation is **entirely voluntary** and if you agree, students are free to decline to participate. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

#### **19. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to investigate how art can be used as a medium of knowledge, by both a conscious and unconscious mind, to form new attentive ways of seeing things that surround us – drawing from time, memory and place. This practice led educational research is based on the notion that past experiences and memories, subjected to space and object, become valuable resources for learning. My interest, as researcher, lies in the way we interact with our surroundings, and whether or not, these experiences can be used practically.

#### **20. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF SCHOOL LEARNERS?**

If you consent to your learners taking part in this study, the researcher will then approach the learner, and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) for their assent to take part in the study. If you and the child agrees to take part in the study, the study will be conducted during their art lesson in school, in the course of 3 weeks, which can be either coherent, or stretched in time slots throughout the year, to fit the need of the teacher as much as possible. I will also be available for any other assistance the teacher needs me to be.

All participants will be asked to create works of art in each lesson, which will also be supervised by their own art teacher.

In the first week participants will be drawing Figure Study drawings in different time frames to enhance their hand eye coordination and ability to look more accurately at a given frame. All materials for the still life will be provided.

During the second week participants will be asked to bring an object from places they occupy most (both natural objects such as wood, plants, etc. or man-made, such as plastic, metal, or fabric pieces. – e.g. Rope, pictures, magazines, books, wood, beads, frames, toys, etc.).

*[\*Note: these objects should not have any value, as they will be used to create a new work of art]*

Each participant will use the object to create Blind and Semi-Blind contour drawings.

The participants will also be given a Practical Term Project titled "Self-Reflective Self Portrait.

More information regarding the topic is attached as a separate file

## **21. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

This study does not have any possible risks in regards to the participants physical and mental health.

## **22. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO THE CHILD OR TO THE SOCIETY**

Participants will be subjected to a practical lesson in Fine Art which would both develop and promote their technical and creative ability to produce works of art. Each participant will experience technical lessons at a university level, and would give a short introduction to what studying towards a Fine Art degree entails. Participants would have the possibility of gaining knowledge from a student perspective, if they are interested in obtaining a degree in Visual Art.

## **23. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

All materials needed for the course of the study will be provided for participants. If participants wish to use any material that is not provided, they must provide it at their own cost.

Each participant will be provided with a communal kit consisting of the following:

- *Willow Charcoal Sticks*
- *Compressed Charcoal Sticks*
- *Pencils*
- *Newsprint Paper*
- *Cartridge Paper*
- *Recycled Paper*

## **24. PROTECTION OF YOUR AND YOUR LEARNERS'S INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY**

Any information you or your learners will share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you or your child will be protected. This will be done by keeping all personal information anonymous and confidential. All information regarding the participant will remain safe by using a system of numbers (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). All information will be stored in a locked drawer, to which only I will have access. No personal information will be needed from any participant if they do not wish to share – excluding works of art and possible written dialogue produced during the course of the study.

All forms of data will be stored and kept safely throughout the study. Participants will have full access to all files pertaining their information, and can grant access at any given time. Pictures and recordings will be taken of participant's artwork, and possible discussions will be written down, for the sake of the research, and will be destroyed once research has been completed. All data will remain safe and secure. None of the above will be shared with any external party/agency.

*There will be no other publications of the study extending the research thesis. If participant agrees to partake, their information will remain confidential and anonymous.*

## **25. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

If you accept this request for your learners taking part in the study, please note that they may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. Learners may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may

withdraw learners from this study if they do not attend to the prescribed lesson and practical art tasks.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Lourens Petrus Bester (Researcher)  
Email: [20412894@sun.ac.za](mailto:20412894@sun.ac.za)

Neeske Alexander (Supervisor)  
Email: [neeskealexander@gmail.com](mailto:neeskealexander@gmail.com)

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:** You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.  
You have right to receive a copy of the Information and Consent form.

**If you are willing to participate in this study please sign the attached Declaration of Consent and**

*email it to me via: [20412894@sun.ac.za](mailto:20412894@sun.ac.za)*

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in a  
research study entitled..... and conducted by  
..... (Name of Researcher)

I declare that:

- I have read the attached information leaflet and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide have been explained to my satisfaction.

Signed at .....

.....  
.....

Signature of Principle

Date

.....  
.....

Signature of Art Teacher

Date