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MASTER'S THESIS

Identity awareness through an art practice: Expanding the definition of a self-portrait

En utvidet definisjon av selvportrettet

Karen Aarre

MA in creative disciplines and learning processes
Arts education: arts and crafts

15 November, 2018

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Identity Awareness through an art practice

Expanding the definition of a self-portrait

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Arts education: arts and crafts

1.0 Abstract

"Wonder is the unwilled willingness to meet what is utterly strange in what is most familiar"

"To wonder is to step back and let things speak to us, a radical passive receptivity to let the things of the world present themselves in their own terms"

(van Manen & Adam, 2010, p.452 and p. 442)

Wonder sparked my attention, made me question, ponder and seek to explore the 'utterly strange' in the 'most familiar'. The 'most familiar' is the assertion that participation in the arts facilitates identity development and increases self-awareness. The 'utterly strange' for me is *how* does participation in the arts facilitate in identity development and increased self-awareness? In the state of wonder and wide-awakeness, functioning as the artist-researcher, I have explored the possibilities of an expanded definition of a self-portrait in order to perhaps experience for myself the elusive and ineffable *how*. My research was conducted through the qualitative method called Artistic Research. Utilizing this method made it possible for me to act as both the researcher and the subject of the research. Applying phenomenology as the philosophical lens to my research meant that I have been acutely aware of the phenomenon in focus, 'bracketing' out any preconceived meanings or prejudices and assuming a state of wonder and wide-awakeness to be open to discovering and understanding.

In the first phase of my inquiry I studied the art and art practices of Catherine Opie, Tracey Emin and Louise Bourgeois. Their work, representing three distinctly different mediums, exemplifies the diversity of contemporary non-representational self-portraiture. It was important to establish an understanding of the various ways artists utilize their creative practice to portray aspects of their identity.

In the second phase, using my art practice as the site of my inquiry, I have conducted a reflective study that focused on trying to understanding how identity development and an increased sense of self-awareness can be manifested during the creative process. My aim was to explore the potential of non-representational self-portraiture in three different mediums; photography, conceptual art and sculpture.

I found that expanding the traditional self-portrait beyond representing the likeness of the creator opens up the possibilities of articulating the self beyond the visage we ordinarily present to the world. An expanded self-portrait informs us of our personal identities, rather then focusing on our social identities, allowing us the possibility to break away from the stereotypes that categorize and 'box' us in. Sculpture, conceptual art and photography speak three different languages, because of this they also informed me in three different manners.

My research is relevant to art educators who wish to give their students the possibility to explore beyond the traditional self-portrait. An expanded self-portrait increases the potential to exploit the multitude of mediums and materials available for expressing oneself, thus expanding the communicative qualities that are unique to the arts. Understanding *how* the different mediums communicate can also help guild teachers in choosing projects that are appropriate to their students.

Innholdsfortegnelse

During my undergraduate studies in art education, I have often come across statements claiming that participation in the arts can lead to identity development, increased self-awareness or other proclamations about identity that follow the same lines. There are many such examples. The official Norwegian report NOU 2015:8, *The School of the Future*, endorses classes in the arts based on claims that, "experiencing and contributing to creating artistic expressions may be important for individuals development of identity, knowledge development and the ability to express oneself" (p.27). The qualitative data collected in Bamford's (2009) UNESCO study on the impact of the arts in education, makes the claim that, "arts education builds reflectivity and allows young people to get in contact with their personality and form self-identities" (p.135). The first sentence of the handbook for arts education in the USA under the title of *Understanding and Using the Core Arts Standards* (State

Education agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014), it stands, "The arts have always served as the distinctive vehicle for discovering who we are" (p.2). Similar is the statement in Haabesland and Vavik's (2000) book, written for art educators in Norway, that through a creative practice we are able to 'create' our own identity. Each time I am confronted with statements such as these, my interest is piqued. If it is true that participation in the arts facilitates in 'developing identity', or lets us 'discover who we are' or helps us to 'create our identity', *how* does it happen? **41**

A search through the litterateur affirms that participation in the arts enables individuals to express themselves, build reflectivity, excite the imagination, increase mental awareness and assist in breaking stereotypes to create new life stories. These outcomes were seen as important tools that increased the potential of positive identity development and aided in boosting ones sense of self-awareness (Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; Halvorson, 2010; O'Fallon, 1995; Bamford, 2009; Malin, 2015; Rolling, 2009). The litterateur, however, does not indicate *how* this happens. What mechanisms are at play in the creative process when one transforms an expression, an idea, or a feeling into a fixed medium? When do we know? What does it feel like? Is there one way over another that can relay the message of identity better then another? **41**

In research, it is the research questions that guide the study. The questions that guild me throughout my project are: **41**

What properties within an aesthetic creative visual arts practice influence self-awareness and identity development? How does an aesthetic art practice enhance self-awareness and facilitate in identity development? **42**

3.0 Identity **42**

The term 'identity' is a difficult concept to define. Fearon (1999) in his article, *What is Identity (As we now use the word),* describes identity as a complicated and unclear concept, "something of an enigma"(p.1), he explains that ambiguity persists due to the fact that definitions concerning identity in academia and ordinary language differ, he writes, "In popular discourse identity is often treated as something ineffable and even sacred, while in the academy identity is often treated as something complex and even ineffable. One hesitates to try to define the sacred, the ineffable, or the complex" (Fearon, 1999, p.4.) Fearon (1999) notes that even in academic writing, there is very little agreement on a universal definition. Hoover & Eriksen (2004) concur, adding, "there is agreement *within* schools of scholars- and much disagreement *between* schools" (p.2). In the Individualist's eyes, identity is self created, constructionists see identity as an artifact of power, and the essentialist school defines identity as fixed by gender, race and sometimes class (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004). In the coarse of this paper I use the term Identity often, it is therefore important to take a look at the different ways the term identity can be understood and how I intend to use it. **42**

3.1 Erickson's Three C's *42*

The way we define the term 'identity' today is very much due to the work of psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1902-1994) on the importance of identity carried out in the 1950's (Fearon, 1999). **42**

Erikson posited identity as a crucial developmental stage through which individuals must move prior to being able to establish meaningful, intimate relationships with others. According to this perspective, knowledge of oneself is fundamental to psychological well-being (Baumgardner, 1990, p.1062). **42**

Erikson's definition of identity consists of three dimensions, these include: Who one is with –*commitments,* where one is from-*communities*, and what one does-

competencies **(Hoover & Eriksen, 2004, p, 4*). The first group, *commitments*, includes all of the personal relationships that define us, for example, I am a daughter, a mother, a sister and a wife. *Communities,* consists of our ethnical background, religious beliefs, cultural heritage, loyalties to country, or any groups we adhere to. The last dimension, *competencies,* describes the professions we belong to, our talents and the roles we play in society, such as teacher, politician, artist or student (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004). In Erikson's theory of identity, each dimension is like a leg of a three-legged stool, if all three are strong and complete, the stool stands stable, however, if there is a dimension or two that are damaged or incomplete, the stool becomes unstable; the unstable stool is a metaphor for what Erikson termed an 'identity crises' (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004).** **43**

When one is asked about their identity, very often they think in terms of the *who, what and where* Erikson established over sixty years ago (Fearon, 1999). The traditional way of looking at our identity lacks the personal dimension, it restricts us by placing us in what Anzaldua & Keating (2002) call 'identity boxes' (p.561). We limit ourselves if we only think of the 'boxes' we fit into, Anzaldua & Keating believe a radical shift is needed to break out of the boxes of conformity, they call for a, "a different story…enabling [a person] to rethink [themselves] in more global-spiritual terms instead of conventional categories of color, class, career" (Anzaldua & Keating, 2002, p.561). 'Identity boxes' perpetuate old prejudices by continuing stereotypes that create divisions in society. **43**

Fearon (1999) asserts that identity today is seen as a bifurcated definition consisting of a persons 'social' and 'personal' identity. 'Social identity' incorporates the three dimensions put forth by Erikson, or the three C's. Personal identity, our 'missing' dimension from Erikson's model, is defined as, "a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways" (Fearon, 1999, p.25). Because identity is such a wide topic, there are more then likely a plethora of definitions that could define the 'personal' dimension, what is important, however, is acknowledging that it does exist and that it is important for our well being to understand, Erikson (1968) Writes, "in the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of Identity" (p.38). Kroger echoes Erikson when she says, "identity provides one with a sense of well-being, a sense of mattering to those who count. Identity is what makes one move with direction; identity is what gives one reason to be" (Kroger, 2004, p.63). **43**

The focus of my research is concerned with the 'personal' dimension of identity. Because our personal identity is often ineffable and hidden deep in our unconsciousness, it is most effectively articulated through the language of art. Csikszentmihalyi and Schiefele (1992) write, "the process of visual expression clearly helps gain some control and understanding of barely conscious internal tensions, diffuse problems, or felt ambiguities" They add that, "the creation of art is by definition an intentional and self-determined activity, it should contribute to what a person defines as his or her being" (p.171-172). **44**

As I have illustrated above, identity is a heavily-laden concept. It is easily misunderstood, outdated for today's society, inconsistent, and could possibly lead to the perpetuation of prejudices and unwanted stereotyping through 'identity boxing'. It is easy to understand the conundrum one faces when posed with the question; how do you define your identity? I feel it is better to ask, do you know yourself? How do you define yourself? **44**

contributes to knowledge and understanding, how the actual *process,* and not just the *product* of art can be considered relative empirical data and how a self study into my own creative practice is a viable and meaningful contribution to the academic world and the world in general. Additional questions are: what are the different ways of researching in the arts and where does my study fit in? And lastly, am I qualified do carry out such a study? **45**

In my search for research papers similar in design to my own, I found that research in the arts is considerably diverse in form, function and execution. Christopher Frayling's (1993) article *Research in Art and Design* brings clarity to the subject by distinguishing three forms of research in the arts: research *into*, research *through* and research *for* art and design. The first category, research *into* art and design, Frayling describes as the most, "straightforward" (p.5). It includes, inquiry *into* art history, aesthetic and perceptual research as well as art theory. The next category, research *through* art and design, is described as applied and includes, materials research, development work and action research. The last group, research *for* art, is defined as, "research where the end product is an artefact- where the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artefact" (Frayling, 1993, p.5). Frayling (1993) uses the term "thorny" to describe this last catagory of research (p.5). Back in 1993 it was considered 'thorny', 'thorny' because this line of inquiry was still highly debated as legitimate research and difficult to validate and valorize. **46**

My study, where I am both the researcher and the researched, and where my practice is intimately connected to the end product or as Frayling terms the "artifacte" falls into the "thorny" group. Almost twenty years later, Henk Borgdorff (2010), the president of the Society for Artistic Research still refers to this category as complicated; yet, it is the one category that has expanded most among the arts-based methods (Borgdorff, 2012; Boomgaard, 2011; Leavey, 2015; Nowotny, 2012; Hannula, 2005). Borgdorff refers to such research as Artistic research, other methods that fall into this category include, practice led research and art practice as research. **46**

Updating Fraylings categorizations of the forms of research in the arts, Borgdorff (2010) adds his own twist, renewing and renaming each definition in conjunction with the fast paced changes in the field. To distinguish between the different ways of researching in the arts, Borgdorff (2012) uses the terms research *on*, *for* and *in* the arts. The first two categories are somewhat similar to Fraylings; *research on the arts*, or also termed "the interpretative perspective" (p. 46) is art practice as the "object of study", where the investigation is aimed, "at drawing valid conclusions about art practice from a theoretical distance" (Borgdorff, 2010, p.6). The second, *research for the arts*, or "the instrumental perspective" (Borgdorff, 2012, p.46) is where art is not the "object of investigation, but its objective", and in every case, the study is, "in service of [the] art practice"(Borgdorff, 2010, p.6). The last, *research in the arts* is "research the does not assume the separation of subject and object, and does not observe a distance between the researcher and the practice of art" (Borgdorff, 2010, p.6), otherwise defined by Borgdorff (2012) as 'artistic research' (p.46). **47**

My study has been conducted *in* and *through* the creative process. It was not a study *on* my art, neither was it a study solely for the advancement of my art practice. It was a study where my art practice has been utilized as a tool for gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon in question. The method 'artistic research' is the discipline that accommodates my study better then any other. **47**

My research project is a reflective study of a phenomenon that is situated within the creative processes of my art practice. The focus is on the processes happening in the practice and not on the resulting artwork that is produced. Artistic research is the method that focuses its attention predominantly on the practice as a site of knowing. Borgdorff (2012) explains that in artistic research, the art practice is the distinguishing feature that becomes the, "methodological vehicle when the research unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing" (p.46). Graeme Sullivan, a widely published writer in the field, adds: **47**

The artist is the key figure in the creation of new insights and awareness that has the potential to change the way we see and think. The studio experience is a form of intellectual and imaginative inquiry, and the studio is a site where research can be undertaken that is sufficiently robust to yield knowledge and understanding that is individually situated and socially and culturally relevant (Sullivan, 2010, p70). **47**

As stated earlier, research in the arts, especially inquiry where the researcher plays the double role of researcher and researched, is still considered an emerging method. Shaun McNíff (2011) one of the pioneers in arts-based research writes of his first experience with self-study in the late 1980's. Feeling that he had exhausted the use of interviewing other subjects on topics of experience in art making, he realized that working directly with his own art process yielded a more "honest"(p.390) result. He describes that he had both the "fear of ridicule" (p.390) as well as a feeling of liberation when he broke away from traditionally expected norms. McNiff (2011) states that, "the significance of the outcome often correlates with the degree of risk and the willingness to go against the grain of current practice in order to improve it" (p.392). He advises that, "There is no better way to understand a particular aspect of creative practice than to research it in this direct way" (2008, p.31). Sullivan (2010) articulates the need for such studies because, as he says, "what has not been well understood in the past is the place of artists and the things they do in the studio" (p.71). Blumenfeld-Jones (2015) also calls for more research that looks into the, "ways an artist thinks and acts 'from the inside'" (322). In my investigation I will have a first hand, insider view of the art practice. Ballechio writes of the special attributes of the art practice, illustrating that an, **48**

Art p*ractice* is, in and of itself, a specific and special form of research, in the arts the very idea of a qualitative-quantitative divide becomes irrelevant because by its distinct nature arts research calls for a different set of categories where the arts do not search for stuff or facts, but they generate it (Ballechio, 2009, p.4). **48**

What does art seek to express?...I think every work of art expresses, more or less purely, more or less subtly, not feelings and emotions the artist *has*, but feelings and emotions which the artist *knows*; his *insight* into the nature of sentience, his picture of vital experience, physical, and emotive and fantastic. (Langer, 1957, p.91) **48**

The American philosopher Susanne Langer classifies the arts as non-discursive knowledge. She explains that the knowledge bound up in the artists creative process is, "not expressible in ordinary discourse", she goes on to illustrate that, "the reason for this ineffability is not that the ideas to be expressed are too high, too spiritual, or too anything-else, but that the forms of feeling and the forms of discursive expression are logically incommensurate" (Langer, 1957, p. 91).

Eisner (2008) has a similar view; he writes that artists have the ability to, "create through the application of technique and skill forms whose empirical structure echoes the structure of a form of feeling. Thus, works of art enable us to know something about feeling that cannot be revealed in literal scientific statements" (p.7-8). **48**

Barrett (2007) draws on both John Dewey's theory of expression and Michael Polanyi's theory of 'tacit knowing' to argue that research in a creative art practice operates on, "explicit and exact knowledge as well as tacit and experiential knowledge" (p.115). She writes: **48**

Experience operates within the domain of the aesthetic and knowledge produced through the aesthetic experience is always contextual and situated. The continuity of artistic experience with normal processes of living is derived from an impulse to handle materials and to think and feel through their handling (Barrett, 2007, p.115). **49**

On this basis she posits that, "creative arts practice as research is an intensification of everyday experiences from which new knowledge or knowing emerges" (p.115). Barrett's definition follows Donald Schön's (1983) theory of the reflective practitioner, where he places knowledge in the practice, otherwise called *knowing-in-practice*. According to Schön (1983), "our knowing is in action, ordinary in tactic form and implicit in our patterns of action" (p.49). Like the competent practitioner that possesses knowing-in-practice, an artist enacts what Sullivan (2006) calls, "performative knowledge", this type of knowledge is describes as, "likened to more traditional grounded strategies such as observation and empirical confirmation (p.31). **49**

Lastly, Borgdorff (2006) sees knowledge as embodied in the art practice. He reminds us, however, that, "if the focus of investigation is on the creative process, one should not lose sight of the result of that process- the artwork itself" (p.13). I take heed of Borgdorff's warning and understand that the resulting artwork is also a site of knowledge in and of itself. In this project, however, my main focus is on the process, the embedded knowledge in the creative practice and not entirely concentrated on the end-result. **49**

4.5 Who can partake in an artistic research? *49*

Some of my biggest concerns in the early stages of research were the questions: Am I qualified to do a study in artistic research? For my study to be legitimate, do I need to be considered a working artist in the field? **49**

What I found was divided opinions. Borgdorff (2006) is very clear, he believes that because, "artistic creative processes are inextricably bound up with the creative personality and with the individual, sometimes idiosyncratic gaze of the artist, research like this can best be performed 'from within' (p.16). Barone and Knowels (2012) standpoint is less rigid, they write, "by an 'artist' we do not necessarily mean a professional painter, dancer, or novelist. But the researcher must exhibit artistry in whatever form he or she chooses" (p.57). Leavey (2015) agrees, by stating, "you can learn as you go, regardless of your starting point. Because art making is a 'doing' activity, the best way to learn is through practice" (Leavey, 2015, p.30). Finally, McNiff (2011) also has a relaxed view of the researchers skill levels, he finds "that manual skill levels should not universally block people from participating in art-based research", he further elaborates that, "the degree of artistic skill and experience are factors to be considered in relation to what is needed to meet the goals of a project rather than general prerequisites" (p.393). **49**

I feel confident that my level of skill and experience working with the creative process is sufficient enough for me to carry out an artistic research project. I am

in agreement with O'Fallon (1995) when he remarks that all too often art is looked at as something reserved only for those individuals, "born with talent", He points out that this perspective "isolates and limits powerful 'ways of knowing'" (para.11) that is available to all of us. 50

5.0 Methodology 50

In artistic research, the methodology is not a, "fixed recipe" or "formula" (Barone &Eisner, 2014, p.48); instead, it is designed to explore specific research objectives (Leavy, 2015; McNiff, 2011, 2013; Nimkulrat, 2009). McNiff (2013) asserts that, "if art is the primary vehicle of research, then methods of inquiry need to correspond to the infinite variety of artistic expressions" (p.xv), he adds, "the arts encourage variation and even uniqueness in both methods and outcomes" (McNiff, 2011, p.387). "Methodological pluralism rather than methodological monism" according to Barone and Eisner (2014), "is the greater virtue" (p.49). Leavey puts forth a similar view when she writes: 50

New methods provide ways to 'come at things differently'. Therefore, methodological innovation is not simply about adding new methods to our arsenal for the sake of 'more', but rather opening up new ways to think about knowledge-building: *new ways to see* (Leavey, 2015, p.291). 50

Artistic research methodologies are unique, allowing the artist-researcher freedom to explore without constraining protocol (McNiff, 2011), yet it is important that the methodology fits the research question (McNiff, 2011; Leavy, 2015). In the following chapter, I will outline the methodological steps I've taken in my research to gain an understanding of my research questions. 50

5.1 Art Practice 50

To gain understanding of my research questions, my research was centered in my art practice, with my interest primarily on the creative process of creating. The artworks created during the process of researching are important in the validation of my research, but have not been the main focus in my study. The creation of artworks, according to Nimkulrat (2009), cannot be looked upon as a method, but rather, "a creative production [that] can be used to test various thoughts in practice" (p.52). According to Nimkulrat (2009) opening the artistic practice to inquiry reveals the developments that occur in the process of making, it unmasks the "what" and "why" of the artworks created. It is for this reason, Borgdorff (2012) claims that artistic research, "unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing" (p.46). Borgdorff (2012) explains, "methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings and products come into being" (p.46). 51

The pathway in artistic research is not always straight and predictable, Barone and Eisner (2014) explain that the process seldom moves, "in a series of linear steps" (p.48). Borgdorff elucidates further by saying: 51

The erratic nature of creative discovery-of which unsystematic drifting, serendipity, chance inspirations and clues form an integral part-is such that a methodological justification is not easy to codify. Just as in many other academic research studies, it involves doing unpredictable things and this implies intuition and some measure of randomness. Research is more like exploration than like following a firm path (Borgdorff, 2012, p.57). 51

Armed with my research questions and openness for the unknown and the unpredictable, I started my exploration. I followed Leavey's recommendation, "to remain open to spontaneity, be unafraid to experiment, and to trust one's intuition" (Leavey, 2015. P.30), and heeded McNiff 's (2008), warning that, "you generally know little about the end of an artistic experiment when you are at the

beginning"(p.40). Keeping a phenomenological attitude throughout my research process reinforced my openness to experience the process in both a state of wonder and wide-awakeness. I let the research lead me on my path rather then predetermining how I wanted the study to go. **51**

Although my research was primarily *in and through* my creative practice, theory, literature and the art and art practices of Catherine Opie, Louise Bourgeois and Tracy Emin have been equally relevant and are considered an integral part of my research design. Nimkulrat (2009) lists reading as one of three approaches she utilized in her doctoral research on the expressivity in textile art. She found that reading literature during the different phases of her inquiry worked reciprocally, She writes, "*reading* influenced *making* and vice versa…thoughts and ideas generated from reading [were] brought into [the] artistic productions for the purposes of being tested in practice and discussing the processes of making artworks" (p. 53), the flipside of the equation was that, "the art productions influenced [her] decision about what literature seemed to be relevant to the research problem at a particular phase of research in order to offer theoretical discussions of the problem from different perspectives" (Nimkulrat, 2009, p53-54). **52**

In my inquiry I found a similar reciprocal relationship to *reading*. For example, in the first phase where I explored photography, I read the philosophic writings of Barthes, Sontag, Bazin and others. I studied the practice of Catherine Opie and analyzed her portrait of Kate & Laura (2012) as well as other self-portrait photographs she has taken throughout her career. This gave me insight into my own photography practice, cultivated critical reflection, and offered a source of inspiration. When the direction of my research changed it's coarse to concept art, the philosophers, art and artist I *read* about also shifted with the new medium. On the other hand, reading influenced my choice to explore sculpture. Reading Dewey's (1934/2005) *Art as Expression*, I realized I was missing an important element in my research, that of expression through a tangible material. **52**

The symbiosis between the practical and theoretical dimensions opened my research, granting a broader understanding of my research questions. Wesseling summarizes when she writes: **52**

The exceptional thing about research in and through art is that practical action (the making) and theoretical reflection (the thinking) go hand in hand. The one cannot exist without the other; in the same way action and thought are inextricably linked in artistic practice (Wesseling, 2011,p.2). **52**

The factor that differentiates a traditional artistic practice and an artistic practice performed for research is the documentation (Nimkulrat, 2009; Marshall, 2010). I used a journal to record every aspect of my creative journey during my research, much like a diary, noting everything from small insights, frustrations, ponderings over the next step to take, and discoveries that have taken me by surprise. It is important to note that the creative process starts long before the actual making, therefore entries where more then what would be found in a process log. Entries consisted of my thoughts and musings that where important in the formation of ideas, notes from literature that influenced me, quotes from artist's or paraphrased texts that I found inspiring and insightful. During active making I would force myself to stop in mid-process in order to record the fleeting thoughts that often float in my head when creating. Breaking the momentum, otherwise called 'flow' was not always an option. In these

creating. The objective of my study is to try to locate and understand what I have up until now called a phenomenon; that indefinable property within the creative process that communicates to both the artist and the audience. The paradox is however, trying to define the indefinable. **56**

Boomgaard (2011) alludes to this elusive property when he writes, "artistic research renders something visible, or furnishes an insight or knowledge that another form of research cannot accomplish, that 'something' resides in the fact that art plays a pivotal role in the research (p.63). I will add to Boomgaard's statement by arguing that it is not just the '*art*' that plays the pivotal role, but the 'something' within the creative art practice, during the transformation of a medium into an artwork. Eisner (2002) has a similar view when he states that, "in the process of creation [the arts] stabilize what would otherwise be *evanescent*. Ideas and images are very difficult to hold onto unless they are inscribed in a material that gives them at least a kind of semi-permanence" (p.11). Here again is the reference to the art practice that captures and embodies the 'phenomenon', the element that would otherwise be evanescent. **56**

Intuition is sometimes referred to as the sixth sense. Although often shunned by science for not being exact enough, intuition cannot be ignored especially in art where exploration of the unconscious mind is often common. Samples (1976) writes that, "Albert Einstein called the intuitive or metaphorical mind a sacred gift. He added that the rational mind was a faithful servant. It is paradoxical that, in the context of modern life, we have begun to worship the servant and defile the divine" (p.26). Dewey (1934/2005), describes intuition as, "the meeting of the old and the new [thoughts], of foreground and background", it is a, "readjustment" that occurs on every level of consciousness. This meeting of old and new is felt as a sudden and abrupt, "flash of revelation… accomplish only by effort, prolonged perhaps to the point of pain" (p.277). Intuition happens, "when the old and new jump together, like sparks when the poles are adjusted [bringing] the obscure into the clear and luminous" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p.277). **56**

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes (1980) establishes two elements that can be found in a photograph, the *studium* and the *puctum* (p.26). For Barthes (1980), *studium* refers a photograph's overall affect, be it negative or positive. Barthes comments that, "the *studium* is of the order of liking, not of loving", it is the "all right" attitude of vague interest (p.27). *Studium* educates and informs the viewer of the photographer's intentions and history while also including historical, social and cultural semiotic messages. *Punctum* on the other hand is the aspect that stops us in our tracks, or "pricks us" (Barthes, 1980, p. 27), it breaks or "punctuates the *studium*". Barthes calls the *punctum* an, "accident", an unintended element that one does not seek out to find in a photograph, but rather, it is; "the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (Barthes, 1980, p.26). **57**

Although the concepts of *studium* and *punctum* are photography-specific and are not directly transferable to art in general, I argue that they can help to illustrate the special communicating function of an artwork, especially *punctum*. Van Manen (2014) has similarly borrowed punctum, he writes, "punctum belongs to language…A text acquires punctum when an anecdote becomes a compelling narrative 'example' and claims the power to stir us and to bring about an understanding that ordinary propositional discourse cannot do. It helps us to 'understand' and experience something that we do not know in an intellectual sense" (van Manen, 2014, p.253) **57**

Punctum, **for me, is the moment when either the artist or the spectator is 'pricked' by the artwork they have made or beheld. To be 'pricked' is to encounter an instantaneous resonation with the artwork. In physics, to resonate with something is the joining of identical frequencies. Using physics as a metaphor, I argue that in an encounter with art, we experience the 'prick' of the *punctum* when an artwork's external resonance meets the internal natural frequency of the artist or spectator, thus opening a direct and instantaneous line of communication, a communication that is art specific.** **57**

Tracey Emin, best known for her controversial installation '*My Bed'* (1998), is a perfect example of how the *punctum* reveals itself to the artist. '*My Bed'* is literally Emin's bed, with soiled sheets, dirty underwear, empty vodka bottles, cigarette stubs, and used condoms. It is displayed in museums around the world, just as it looked in her apartment the day she woke up, hung-over, dehydrated and emancipated. She recalls that she had been drinking excessively, a true, "walking disaster"; depressed and suicidal after a difficult breakup she collapsed on her bed not waking again for two days. (Freedman, Winterson &Fuchs, 2006 p.251). In an interview with Carl Freedman, Emin describes the moment she knew that her bed was more than just a bed; **57**

...(After getting up and finding a glass of water) Ugghh...It was disgusting. And I looked at the bed and thought 'Oh my God, I could have died in there', and that is how I would have been found. And then from one second looking horrible it suddenly transformed itself into something removed from me, something outside of me, and something beautiful. I suddenly imagined it out of that context, frozen, outside of my head, in another place (Freedman, 2006, p.252). **58**

The bed transformed into an artwork the moment Emin felt the 'prick' of its *punctum*. But its transcendence was more than a 'prick', as Barthes (1980) writes, the 'prick' can be so intense and poignant that, "it bruises" (p.27). As an artwork, '*My Bed'* communicates when it resonates with the viewer, just as it did with the artist. **58**

For Barthes (1980) the *punctum* is a visually unintended "accident" that breaks through, or "punctuates" the indexical properties of a photograph. *Punctum,* translated into a non-photographic paradigm is the 'prick' one senses when moved by an artwork. It is acknowledging discursively the non-discursive language of the arts. Emin was aware enough to recognize the communicative potential her bed would have. Twenty years later, it is still an iconic piece. It is the *punctum* in the creative process that I am looking for within my creative process, the 'prick' that can possibly give me an awareness of an aspect of who I am. **58**

Part 2 **59**

8.0 Expanding the concept of self-portrait **59**

Traditionally, when we think of self-portraiture, we think of a painting, drawing, or photograph that depicts the 'likeness' of the artist. The classic self-portraits of Rembrandt, van Gogh and Dürer come to mind. But, there is more to a self-portrait then the depiction of the outward image, whether it is in the form of a classic painting or even a selfie. Contemporary self-portraits are more about the inner then the outer, no longer bound to the details of ones visage; they are inquiries into the artists' identity that are realized in a multiplicity of mediums and come in all possible forms. Cumming (2009) writes that regardless of the subject matter, "self-portraits [will always] reveal something deep and incontroverible (and distinct from portrait)- namely this special class

of truth, this pressure from within that determines what appears as art without, that leaves its trace in every self-portrait (p.4). **59**

I have always been drawn to works labeled 'self-portrait', especially works that tell more *about* the artist then informing me of the artist appearance. In the following chapter I will present a background of the genre self-portraiture, and illustrate how expanding the concept of the self-portrait allows the artist multitudinous possibilities to explore and express their inner self in any matter they find appropriate. **59**

In the coarse of my research, I have drawn inspiration from the self-portraits (self-representations) of three artists, they include: Tracey Emin's conceptual installation *My Bed* (1998), the sculpture *Untitled 1947-49* by Louise Bourgeois, and Catherine Opie's photograph titled *Kate & Laura* 2012. These works have been the important impulse in the creative process of my practice. They have also been instrumental in informing me of the unlimited forms self-representation can take and has influenced me to experiment with different mediums. Presenting these works, will offer a clearer picture of what is meant by non-representational self-portrait, or as I argue, an expanded definition of a self-portrait. **59**

8.1 Historical to Modern self-portrait *59*

Historically, self-portraiture was the artist's best form of advertisement, demonstrating an artist's skill and style to a prospective patron. Self-portraits served as practice pieces, historic documentation, gifts or simply filled the basic human need to verify ones existents like van Eyck's image painted in the mirror that hangs on the wall of his famous painting *The Arnolfini Portrait;* on that same mirror stands the graffiti-like inscription, "Jan Van Eyck was here 1434" (West, 2004; Borzello, 2017). **59**

The use of self-portraiture as a means of self expression expands in the twentieth century, Cumming (2009) describes it as the, "century of the naked self-portrait. We don't talk of them as nude, just as we don't talk of the nude truth, because nude implies something carefree or even seductive. Naked means stripped bare, exposed: a truth exposed" (p.263). Exposing the truth about political, social and personal issues changed the self-portrait into the diverse examples we see today (Butler, 2017). The web initiative by Cristina Nunez, *The Self-Portrait Experience* brings a modern definition to a historic art form: **60**

A self-portrait is our inner image, our private image. It is generally produced in a longer lapse of time, in a situation centered on the creative process. It springs from the inner life of the author who is also subject and spectator. He does not control the image, on the contrary, it's the creative process which allows the unconscious to speak with the language of art. The self-portrait is a profound dialog with oneself, guided by the author's vulnerability (selfportrait.eu). **60**

Self-portraiture depicts a deeper image of the self, one that reaches beyond the fabricated facade we adopt when we meet the outside public world. It is, "the idea or wish to freeze, to maintain or to document a fluctuating but significant slice of life" (Carbon, 2017, p.16). Our identities, like our lives, are dynamic and in constantly change, Grovevant&Cooper (1998) concur that the, "development of identity is a life-long process characterized by cycles of exploration and consolidation as well as experiences of competence and vulnerability" (p.6). The self-portrait captures, "a fragment of someone's life" according to Cumming, **60**

[It] turns the subject inside out, and remakes him or her as an indivisible trinity: There is the work of art, the image of the maker and the truth of what he or she sensed, imagined or believed about themselves and how they choose, as we all must choose, to present themselves (Cumming, 2009 p.9). **60**

poignant self-portrait that both reveals and documents a tumultuous chapter of her life. By appropriating her bed as a readymade, Emin directly challenges the traditional definition of self-portrait; she is "shifting attention from the iconic qualities to the indexical ones" (West, 2004, p.212). Emin's art is often labeled autobiographical or confessional mainly because her art is almost only about herself, she is quoted as saying, "I work with what I know. But it goes beyond that. I start with myself but end up with the universe" (Galenson, 2009, p.246). Emin reveals in an interview that, "[making] art is like being given something…it is a way forward, a way of telling me something that I don't know" (Lewis-Smith, 2013, 8:11). Later in the interview she admits that her work is about living and life, it is her way of communicating, " My work isn't about art, it is about life experiences…[my art] is about me, and I'm getting to know me much better" (Lewis-Smith, 2013, 12:20). 63

***My Bed* belongs to the artistic genre conceptual art. Emin's main purpose in displaying her bed was to convey an 'idea' or 'thought'. In conceptual art the aesthetical qualities of the installation are of little significance in relation to the concept that is expressed. A well-used definition in "*Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*" by Sol LeWitt in 1967 will help explain further: 63**

In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art (LeWitt, 1967, para. 2.). 63

LeWitt's paragraphs, the first published account of the expression 'Conceptual Art', are seen as the movements manifesto (Goldie & Schellekens, 2007). According to LeWitt (1967), it is not the skill and craftsmanship of the artist that determines if a work is successful, what the work of art looks like is also unimportant, in fact, the work itself does not necessarily need to be realized for it to be considered a work of art. For LeWitt (1967), "conceptual art is good only when the idea is good" (para. 17). Conceptual art then is, "of the mind", according to Goldie and Schellekens (2007), it is "analytic, and as such, art is in the business of creating and transmitting ides, and not the art object, that is at the heart of artistic experience" (p.x). LeWitt adds that sometimes the final artwork is less interesting then the thought processes that led to its creation, he writes, "All intervening steps-scribbles, sketches, drawings, failed works, models, studies, thoughts, conversations- are of interest" (para.11). I find exactly this point to be of special interest due to the fact that I am concerned with the process rather then the focusing directly on the final product. 63

When asked what is the most important aspect of great art, thought or skill, Emin's answer was vocalized loud and clear, for her it is the quality of the thought in an artwork, it's all about transmitting thought, she asserts, "think first and then you make the art" (Art Basel, 2013, 22.39). 64

***Untitled* 1947-49 Louise Bourgeois Quarantania 1 1947-49 Louise Bourgeois 64**

"All the work of an artist is the realization of a self-portrait. But very often it is unconscious. Very often, you do not realize that you reveal yourself that much" 64

Louise Bourgeois (Galenson, 2009, p.239). 64

Louise Bourgeois' (1911-2010) art is always about herself. She expressed herself through a number of mediums including installation, fiber, drawing, performance and printmaking; however, sculpture was closest to her heart. The

untitled sculpture dated 1947-1949 is in the ISelf collection owned by Maria and Malek Sukkar. It has been shown in the exhibition titled *'self-portrait as a Billy Goat'* at the Whitechapel Gallery in the spring/summer of 2017. The ISelf collection is comprised of artworks that explore identity or as Butler (2017) points out, "captures the essence of the conundrum of self" (p.9). Bourgeois' work was one of the central pieces in the exhibition, although not directly labeled 'self-portrait', Butler explains that, Bourgeois viewed her sculptures as "extensions of her body" (Whitechaple, 2017), the artist herself stated that, "for me, sculpture is the body. My body is sculpture" (Bourgeois, 2006, p.281). Borzello (2017) adds that every work created by Bourgeois is always, "deeply personal" (p.22). In the documentary the *Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine*, Bourgeois, remarks, "the purpose of sculpture is really self knowledge" (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 4:20). **65**

What draws me to the ISelf sculpture is the long thin totemic form that evokes both a feeling of strength and fragility. At the center is an oval void where an egg shaped form is cradled. The simplistic form alludes to the reproductive female. This particular example is a bronze painted white and blue. For Bourgeois the color blue attributed to the qualities of peace, meditation and escape, and white was considered virginal and represents 'going back to start' (Leoni-Figini, 2008). The ISelf sculpture is a cast of an original wooden sculpture that belongs to a work titled *Quarantania 1* (1947-49). *Quarantania 1is* a collection of five thin standing figures carved of soft balsa wood. The first time they were shown in 1949 at the Peridot Gallery in New York, they stood separately as individual works of art she called *'peronages'*, later, in 1981 she reassembled the five into one group sculpture that we now know as *Quarantania* 1 (MoMa, 2018). Wye points out that in Bourgeois' work a single form meant loneliness, two were a couple, and three together could lead to jealousy (Museum of Modern Art, 2017, 2:39). As a group, they still hold their individual qualities, yet are given a new context that suggests safety, like the kind you find in family (Leoni-Figini, 2008). This particular group is interesting because it is said that it refers to her immediate family, herself, her husband and their three boys. Bourgeois made numerous sculptures belonging to the 'personages' series, sculptures that she created as a means of battling loneliness. Originally from France, she had moved to New York in 1938 to join her American husband Robert Goldwater, a well know art historian. She felt a deep separation from the ones she left behind and the reality of the World War intensified her feelings of homesickness (Bernadac, 2006). Creating art was her savior, her gift. She explains further what the gift has meant to her: **65**

The artist has been given a gift. This word comes back all the time. It is the gift of being at ease with your unconscious and trusting it. It is the ability immediately to short-circuit the conscious and to have direct access to the deeper perceptions of the unconscious. This is a gift because such awareness is useful, allowing you to know yourself, especially your limitations (Meyer-Thoss, 2006, p.241). **66**

In another interview she affirms this statement, describing why she feels an artist is privileged, she explains, "the artist has the privilege of being in touch with his or her unconscious, It is a gift-the definition of sanity-it is the definition of self-realization (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 12:15). **66**

When asked the question, what use is sculptor? Why do you make it? Bourgeois' answer was simple, making sculpture was not about being successful in the art market, "My proof of success is whether it does something to me, it makes me a nicer person and it gives me pleasure" (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 3:51). **66**

When asked what happens when you begin a sculpture, Bourgeois replied, **66**

We do not talk about 'planning' a sculpture; we talk about a need to express some very deep emotion. Then we talk about realization. Realization doesn't have to do with strategy. It has to do with a hit-or-miss process. It is open-ended. You start, and you don't know exactly where you're going to end. It is the privilege of intuition, the confidence in the intuitive drive… failure only drives me. (Meyer-Thoss, 2015, p.250). **66**

Bourgeois preferred the tangible medium of sculpture; working in the three-dimensional form she could feel her emotions much more vividly than through other mediums (the Museum of Modern Art, 2017, 4:01). Sullivan (2010) calls this "thinking in a medium"(p.135). Letting forms emerge while working, allowing the chosen material guild the work instead of imposing ideas into a material. Tucker, a British sculptor known for both his artworks and his writing on sculpture elucidates the subject: **66**

The sculptor recognizes the existence of the lump of wood, earth, or stone-the thing-by perceiving in it an image which he then modifies. Now, if we strip away from this process the element of representation, the image, we are left with the original act, the act of *recognition*. The thing's being is exposed: the making of sculpture is then not synthetic-a construction, a structure, as of buildings- but rather a recovery of recognition, an uncovering and a disclosure of being (Tucker, 1977, p.154-155). **66**

Through sculpture, Bourgeois was able to work with her emotions, uncovering the self-portrait that she says all artists realize through their art. **66**

As a medium, sculpture speaks it's own language (Dewey 1934/2005). Unlike a painting that needs to create the illusion of three-dimensional space, sculpture *is* three-dimensional. The illusion sculpture creates is the space it occupies beyond the cubic measure of the material the work is constructed of. Langer calls this a sculptures 'virtual space' (Langer, 1953), she explains by stating, "The tangible form has a complement of empty space that it absolutely commands, that is given with it and only with it, and is, in fact part of the sculptural volume" (Langer, 1953, p.88). She expands further on the subject by stating that: **67**

Sculpture creates an equally visual space, but not a space of direct vision; for volume is really given originally to touch, both haptic touch and contact limiting bodily movement, and the business of sculpture is to translate its data into entirely visual terms, i.e. *to make tactual space visible* (Langer, 1953, p.89-90). **67**

Tucker calls this a sculptures 'visibility', a quality he believes is the most essential to the medium. The visibility of a sculpture is not the visible domain that a work commands in space, but more importantly how it meets, attracts and holds our attention (de Baranano, 2015). Bourgeois command of these basic qualities of sculpture is evident in the evolution of the 'personages' series. The act of transforming the individual 'lonely' elements of the five 'personages' into the supportive family group in *Quarantania 1* is an act of changing the visibility of the two different works. Like our fluctuating identities, Bourgeois is perhaps unconsciously recreating her self-portrait. I end this section with the quote from earlier in this paper, *"All the work of an artist is the realization of a self-portrait. But very often it is unconscious. Very often, you do not realize that you reveal yourself that much" (Galenson, 2009, p.239).* **67**

Kate & Laura 2012 Katherine Opie Regen Project Los Angeles **68**

The portrait labeled *Kate and Laura* (2012) is a work belonging to a larger project by the highly acclaimed American photographer Catherine Opie. The portrait is a tableaux of domestication and properness that is suddenly interrupted by a 'drop of blood' being stitched on the fabric stretched over an embroidery loop. The photograph has been meticulously constructed; every detail thought over and carefully planned, just as it is no mistake that the two subjects are the Mulleavy sisters, the founders and designers behind the high-end fashion brand Rodarte (Mizota, 2013). As one sister stitches a drop of blood, the other discreetly whispers that the blood drop is the blood that Opie no longer has. Opie comments that, " my other works are about my politics of representation, this one is more about the politics of being a fifty-two year-old woman in menopause" (Mélia, 2013, p.14) A portrait such as this is a step away from what Opie has done in the past, She explains, "I think they're very deep, they're very interestingly psychological, allegorical, and I had not really played in that territory before" (Mélia, 2013, p.14). 69

The portrait of the Mulleavy sisters is an allegory. Opie remarks, "It's an allegory for something almost as culturally scary as S&M: women and aging" (Ulaby, 2016, para. 14). The series of photographs that includes the Mulleavy portrait is Opie's medium for exploring the new aspect of her identity as a post-menopausal woman. Opie comments that, "blood has always been a medium that I personally have really valued, and it's really interesting when blood really leaves your life, even in that way that's on a monthly basis, where it's just like, 'Oh, that substance is gone'" (Ulaby, 2016, para.16). Opie considers this series to be a deeply personal body of work, exploring her interior world through photography was challenging, she remarks, "I'm really talking about this internal place that we inhabit as people, which is hard to try to figure out how to do in images" (Mizota, 2013, para.7). By the means of the indexical qualities of a staged photograph, Opie has figured it out, brilliantly portraying what menopause means to her and the stigma it holds in society. Opie has not labeled this particular photograph as a self-portrait, yet through her medium and without depicting any signs of her likeness, she has portray an intimate aspect of her identity in a photograph. 69

The photograph *Kate and Laura* (2012) is presented as a 'portrait' of the Mulleavy sisters, yet the photograph, composed more in the spirit of a painting then a photograph, is not what we generally expect of a portrait. The intention of a portrait is to capture the likeness of it's subject, however, in this portrait, Opie reverses the intentionality; she points her camera in the direction of the sisters, but the focus is solely centered back onto herself. With Opie as subject, the sisters are merely actors in a play that facilitate in telling Opie's story rather then theirs. 69

The photograph *Kate and Laura* is reminiscent of Cindy Sherman's *Untitles Film Stills*. In Shermanesque style, Opie has created a fictitious setting and characters that enact a narrative. Like Sherman, Opie capitalizes on photography's realism, the scene, fabricated only for the camera is believable because it *is* a photograph and not a painting. As Waldon (1984) contends, "a photograph is always a photograph of something which actually exits…paintings needn't picture actual things" (p.250). This is because a photograph is indexical, it points to the fact that the photograph is a picture of an event that actually occurred, it is, "tangible evidence of a thing's existence" (Wells, 1996, P.348). Staging is also a tool used by Opie to tell her story. In staging the; 70

Photographer consciously and intentionally creates events for the express purpose of making images thereof. This may be achieved by intervening in ongoing "real" events or by staging tableaux- in either case, by causing

My wonder goes to the fixation with the selfie. Capturing pictures of what we look like, at least the best out of seven or eight. I am guilty. I have been known to take a selfie or two as well. I cannot be a hypocrite and say that the selfie is a terrible thing, but at the same time I know that a photograph can communicate more than what we look like on the surface. After the girl left, I have not been able to work. I'm left looking at the empty cubicle, thinking. Do we really know who we are among all of the pictures we take? Are we really the face in the selfie, or is there more to us? And lastly, how then can we take a picture of the *inside* when we are always focusing on the *outside*. What I come away with during this study time is a knowing that I want to start my research journey working with the photographic image. I want to explore the possibilities of depicting the image of who I am on the inside and start to expand the definition of the self-portrait. **71**

10.1 Photography *71*

Before I even think about taking pictures, I know I need to have a structure, like the scaffolding that supports improvisation (Sawyer, 2011); I need scaffolding to support my work, symbols that will communicate my message. **72**

The genre of photography I intend to work with is not about taking pictures of a pretty landscape or finding a subject in something interesting that captures the eye, it is about painting a picture purely for the camera, a staged photograph. Before I can paint that picture, telling the camera who I am, I need to dig deep and ask myself, who am I? How do I portray myself? What aspect of myself do I want to portray? And how can I portray them? I turn to two of the artists I have chosen to research, Catherine Opie and Tracey Emin. Both Opie and Emin have used their art to reflect aspects of their aging. Their art influences me. I feel a connection to their work and know that I have most likely chosen these artists because of this connection. I turned fifty the last year. A milestone. I reflect quite a bit about age, and what it means for me. Reflecting in my thoughts is one thing; I look forward to handing them over to the creative process and letting that take over. **72**

10.1.1 A chair 72

It is hard to say how the thought comes into my head, but it does. I realize that I want to use a chair as my main symbol, the scaffolding in the creative process. My chair, (actually four) is special to me. I feel it represents my life in Norway. It has supported me, as is a chairs main functional job. But it is also a sentimental object that represents support. It is interesting how an innate object can be given meaning, in this case a functional object that has been part of my life. **72**

10.1.2 Clothesline 72

It is an unusually nice day. It's the kind of day where it is impossible to be inside and work. It's the kind of day where you drop what you are doing and enjoy the outdoors. I took advantage of the warm weather and hung a load of laundry on the cloths line. The load I hung just happened to be made up entirely of kitchen towels. Sitting in the sun, enjoying a cup of coffee I couldn't help but look at the newly hung towels. There was something about the clothesline, something more than the aesthetically pleasing symmetry of the towels hung neatly side by side or how they imposed order to the otherwise chaotic nature found in my backyard. It is kind of interesting how a realization enters the mind. It happens suddenly, the spark of intuition, or what Dewey (1934/2005) calls the "flash of revelation" (p.277). The intuitive spark of revelation that made me realize that what I saw hanging on the clothesline was a picture of my domestic identity. It was a simple picture of me, the mother, the wife, the woman who chose to stay at home and raise her kids, the back to basics, me. **72**

In reviewing my notes, I was made aware of a connection to a basic teaching of Maxine **72**

Greene (2001). She was a staunch believer that an aesthetic experience had the ability to bring about a state of wide-awakeness, She explains that, "breakthroughs…occur, to the upsurges of the unexpected we may experience at certain moments of engagement with the works of art" (p.116). For Greene, the aesthetic experience was not only limited to engagement with the arts, but extended to experiences in nature as well (p.187). During an aesthetic experience, Greene (2001) believes, "We experience a sense of surprise oftentimes, an acute sense that things may look otherwise, feel otherwise, *be* otherwise than we have assumed–and suddenly the world seems new, with possibilities still to be explored" (p.116). **73**

***Halfway* 2017** **Karen Aarre** **73**
10.2 'Halfway' *73*

The clothesline in itself could be enough for a self-portrait. I am reminded of Opie, who after shooting *700 Nimes Road*, a series of images of Elizabeth Taylor's personal belonging, felt confident that she had captured Taylor's portrait without having to actually *see* her (Furguson, 2016). **73**

My journey on this day starts by taking pictures of the clothesline itself, next I brought out my chair and placed it in front of the clothesline, in the end I set up a tripod and start adding myself into the composition, experimenting with numerous poses in various states of dress and undress. The digital camera gives instant feedback. After every image I take, I evaluate and critique, looking at both the composition of the image, the technical settings and most of all how I feel the image captures something about me. Every picture I take is based on what changes I feel are necessary from the previous image, a perfect example of Schön's (1983) concept of *reflection-in-action*. With each shot I came closer to what I feel tells my story. Like starting on an uphill journey, it is hard to see the top of the mountain, until you actually reach the peak. Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) term *flow,* best describes my state during the days shoot, "like being carried away by a current" (p.181), totally absorbed in the task at hand and losing all track of time. **74**

Sontag writes that, "to photograph people is to violate them" (p.14). In a similar vain, Barthes (1980) describes how he feels when he finds a camera pointed in his direction, he writes, "I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death" (p.14). Each time I lay on the chairs, waiting for the self-timer to release I think about what Sontag and Barthes have written, I ask myself, do I feel violated right now in this moment? No, I don't. I feel it is my way of painting my picture (just faster) but unlike a painting, a photograph takes a picture of something that has happened. It is indexical. Bazin (1960) writes, "the aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its power to lay bare the realities" (p.8). Maybe what I am seeking is a way to look back after the fact and see myself, like looking in a mirror that reflects the *inside* instead of the *outside*. Not death but life. **74**

***Where I've been and where I'm going* 2017** **Karen Aarre** **75**
10.3 Where I've been and where I'm going *75*

My next project in photography was a continuation in the same series as *Halfway,* but with a different approach. While *Halfway* was a spontaneous improvised photograph, *Where I've been and where I'm going*, was a well planned and thought concept. I chose to use a Zeiss Ikon Nettar from the late 1940's, and a Kodak Brownie Flash II (1957 -1960) that I found at a thrift store that happened to have film in it. Choosing analogue over digital meant that I

could no longer enjoy the instant feedback digital technology offers; rather, feedback would only come after the films were developed. Earlier in my graduate studies, I had experimented drawing with light using pinhole photography at dusk and dawn. This technique allowed me to move in front of the open shutter without my image being recorded on the film. The only evidence of my presence in front of the camera was the light of a flashlight I drew with. It is this aspect that I found particularly interesting, being visible, yet invisible. **75**

In the dark I set up the tripod and readied the cameras. I placed the chair in an open spot in the garden, happy for the thin layer of snow that covered the ground. I recruited the help of my daughter, her job was to open the shutter of the camera and shine a flashlight on me while I sat on the chair. After exposing my figure, with the shutter still open I walked around the chair turning the flashlight on and off to create the effect of small lights, representing the visible and the invisible. **75**

Of the pictures taken, the most significant for me was from the Kodak Brownie's last unexposed frame on film that could easily be the same age as myself. Photoshop can never match a photograph taken on old film in affect or poignancy. The grainy quality, a fact of the physical aging process of the film, references my aging symbolically in the photograph. It is the punctum that has pricked me. McNiff (2007) writes, "in the creative process, the most meaningful insights often come by surprise, unexpectedly, and even against the will of the creator" (p.40). Borgdorff (2009) also talks about how we sometimes, "stumble across unexpected outcomes or surprising insights and far sights" (p.4). The outcome of this photograph was not a product of the careful planning I had taken, instead serendipity stepped in and took me by surprise and its result have again filled me with wonder. The photograph spans time and at the same time that it freezes time. When Barthes (1980) writes, "death is the *eidos* of [the] photograph" (p.15), he is referring to the fact that a photograph captures a moment that is no longer. The instant the shutter opens and closes the image is already part of the past; a glimpse of death is captured in a photograph. This photograph informs me of where I've been, it freezes a moment when I am, and it hints toward the future, which for every living being is eventually death. **76**

The photographs *Halfway* and *Where I've Been and Where I'm Going* were both products of intense thought, demonstrating that the creative process starts long before any images are shot. Reflective thinking about myself, digging deep to look for the 'things inside' was an integral part of the journey that not only informed me in my photographic practice, but spurred other projects as well. The creative process behind the making of each photograph played a role in my reflection. *Halfway* was a process of reflection-*in*-action, reflection during the process not only informed me of the qualities of the image, but also gave me incites about myself *in* the act of creating. *Where I've Been and Where I'm Going* is better defined as reflection-*on*-action, reflecting on the work that had taken place, informing me after the image was developed. Here I am reminded of Bergdorff's (2006) warning that we should not forget the end product of artistic research. I also feel a little like Matisse, who, according to Dewey said: "When a painting is finished, it is like a new-born child. The artist himself must have time for understanding it" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p.111). Even though I have focused my research on the process, I find that it continues even after the product is finished. Wesseling (2011) tells us that, " The work of art is not the end product of the artist's thinking, or just for a moment at best; it is an intermediate stage, a temporary halting of a never-ending thought process" (p.12). **76**

state of wide-awakeness, I am able to dig deep, and face myself squarely and honestly. I am on a mental journey that takes me from the bath time such a long time ago to my present self who sits here writing, writing because I made a decision to seek a higher academic degree. All of the stepping-stones between the these two milestones have been my personal journey to where I am today and informs me of who I am, my personal identity. I am again remained of the last sentence in Nunez's (selfportrait.eu) definition of a self-portrait, where she states, "the self-portrait is a profound dialog with oneself, guided by the author's vulnerability". Conceptual art is an artistic process that is not based in a medium but rather in the mind. The 'punctum' hit me when I realized that *my secret* held more significance than a mere childhood memory, it informed me of who I am. **79**

During my undergraduate studies in art education, my class was given an assignment that would launch us into our next topic of study, the three-dimensional world of sculpture. Our mission was to pick a work of sculpture on campus and experience it with every sense of our body, a full engagement with the artwork. The entire class left the classroom like second-graders going outside for recess. What I learned that day was that sculpture is haptic. Barbara Hepworth, the famous British sculptor insists that, "every sculpture must be touched. It is part of the way you make it, it is our first sensibility, the first one we have when we are born" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018). I felt that if I was going to investigate the process of a creative practice, it was important to include a medium that was tactile, one where I could work physically with my body. **80**

Louise Bourgeois once said, "Sculpture is a problem to be resolved, it is a pleasure to find a solution! But after you have found the solution, you let go of the object- so that the purpose of sculpting is really self knowledge" (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 4:00). Bourgeois' statement inspires me to 'find myself' in a sculpture. I want to locate a problem, find a solution and know myself. **80**

My journey starts with two wood carving tools, a hammer and one large piece of the stem from a plum tree my neighbor cut down several years ago. My idea is to 'uncover'; I wish to uncover the nature of the tree, to see what is under the bark, discover its rings, smell its wood, and find it's core. The tree was at one time a living organism. It has its own history, a history that started as a seed then grew from a sapling to a full-grown fruit-bearing tree and is now the material I use to express myself through the creative process. Like the tree, I too have a history, in the process of 'uncovering' the trees history, I hope to 'uncover' and discover a little more of what is found under my bark, and within my core, a peice my personal history. **80**

I start without a sketch, or pre-planned vision of what I intend to create; what is important is that I let the wood dictate how I will proceed. I start pealing the bark, taking away the trees protective layer, that reminds me of the visage we present to the world. It protects us, but it doesn't always tell our story. I dig deeper. The outer layer of wood is soft and gives little resistance to the carving knife. I go from the earthy smell of the bark to the fresh clean scent of wood. There is actually a touch of plum smell as well. The wood is light in color, but as soon as I carve a little deeper it turns darker, more compact. As I work I recall a documentary of Louise Bourgeois where she calls sculpting an aggressive act (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 1:59). I understand her statement now as I violently chip away at the wood. As I carve I reveal special qualities the wood has hidden from view, each new discovery is reflected back onto myself. I notice the rings

that begin to grow closer together as I reach the core, they are not always symmetrical, thick in some areas more compact in others, a sign that the tree was a dynamic living organism. I think about what growth rings I might have, adaptations, growth spurts, and lean times all recorded in my lines. I uncover a vein of red, a beautiful line that runs longitudinally up the trunk like the linea nigra of pregnancies past. A crack forms, instead of deeming it ugly and unwanted I try to elevate its beauty. I reflect over my aging, I think about my imperfections, the wrinkles of age that get deeper with every year. When I come to the core the tree makes me work harder. The wood is compact and not easily worked. The process is slow, but meditative. I have time to let my mind wander as I carve. It is important that I have no distractions, no music, only the sounds of nature and hammer to chisel. I make sure I am in a wide-awake state. I stop often to put my tools down and feel with my hands the progress I am making. Nimkulrat (2009) writes that, according to Merleau-Ponty, "the tactile experience gained through touching the material could establish a connection with [the] consciousness, thus recalling memories of experiences from [the] past" (p.66). Carving incorporates more then touch; it engages all of my senses, multiplying the connections with my consciousness, making me more aware of my memories, my surroundings and myself. 81

Each time I am done for the day, I save the woodchips that have accumulated during my work. It is an important reminder of the tree that was, and the work accomplished, both physical and mental. 81

Tin (2013) writes, "making is the practical dimension of culture, it transforms matter, and it articulates meaning, making has a cognitive dimension: it makes sense" (p.1). Making a sculpture made sense to me. It gave me a dimension that I did not find in photography or conceptual art, it also gave me a new dimension in which I could learn about myself. During the creative process I was able to reflected both *in* and *on* action, I easily found flow, and appreciated the meditative qualities sculpting offered. The 'thinking' was centered within the practice of actual creating. I let wonder engulf me, "took a step back to let things speak to [me]" (van Manen & Adams, 2010, p.442), and I listened. All forms of creativity are engaging, but I agree with Burton's statement that: 81

Materials bring responses into focus for the mind, so they simultaneously act as vehicles of reflection provoking new shades of meaning and enriching the immediate significance of the originating thought, memory, or event. This on-going dialectic between action with a material and reflection on the outcome engages [the makers] thinking, feeling, and sensing" (Burton, 2001, p.38). 82

Having a material to physically work with meant that I had a direct line of communication through the creative process between the tree and myself. As I carved I 'uncovered' special attributes hidden in the tree. This in turn triggered my feelings, emotions and wonder. 82

Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2008) philosophy places the body as the primary site of knowing the world as opposed to the consciousness, he writes, "it is our interactions with the world and our bodies that place us in the world" (xvi). Tactically forming and handling a material engaged all of my senses. It was my body informing me of who I am. 82

Pinar (1998) recounts a lecture he attended by Maxine Greene, he remembers that in mid speech she stopped and paused and then asked the question, "who am I?" the question was phrased in such a way that it was both to herself and the audience, she answered, "I am who I am not yet" (Pinar, 1998, p.1). Her words

echo Socrates who is attributed to have stated, "The unexamined life is not worth the living" (Scholtz, 2006, p.2). Socrates believed that Self-knowledge was the most important knowledge one could pursue, "he knew that he didn't know" (Scholz, 2006, p.2). The French renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne mused that man often looks everywhere else rather then at his own self for knowledge. He and surely Socrates as well found inspiration in the aphorism chiseled above a doorway of the temple of Delphi that read, "know thyself" (Scholz, 2006, p.1). For Montaigne, the commandment from the god at Delphi, "look back into your self; get to know your self; hold on to your self" (Kramer, 2009, para.4) was his lifelong passion. Louise Bourgeois obviously inspired by Montaigne, amusingly commented that, "if he had been given to talk a little bit more he would have said 'know yourself- *and you will be happy"*' (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 4:20) She added the '*you will be happy'* to Montaigne's proverb because she knew firsthand the benefits of self-knowing through her lifelong art practice. Her art was always about getting to know herself and that made her happy. Tracey Emin's oeuvre is all about herself, getting to know herself and learning about herself. Catherine Opie as well uses her practice as a sounding board to issues that she finds important to her identity. 82

After studying the art and art practices of Emin, Opie and Bourgeois I have learned that exploring aspects of identity through art does not mean that you must confine yourself to the traditional self-portrait. These three artists have shown me that a non-representational self-portrait, or as I have argued, an expanded definition of a self-portrait, is a powerful means of expressing the ineffable qualities of our personal identities. An expanded self-portrait lets us break away from the stereotypes that can categorize and 'box' us in, it informs us of our personal identities rather then only focusing on social identity and gives us freedom to explore in any medium, through any material, using any method. 83

I found in my research that the communicative properties within the creative process has the ability to 'speak to us' and inform us of aspects of our identity. Each medium and material and even the approach can change the communication between the artist and artwork. Dewey (1934/2005) explains, "for each art has its own medium and that medium is especially fitted for one kind of communication. Each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as completely in any other tongue" (p.110). Engaging in the creative process, working with different mediums that allow us to communicate beyond ordinary discursive language, we are able to learn about ourselves, if we are willing to listen. 83

Through the concept of the expanded definition of a self-portrait, art educators have the opportunity to continue the teachings of Socrates, Montaigne and Greene. Becoming bilingual, trilingual or even multilingual in the languages of the arts gives students a greater opportunity to express themselves and hopefully at the same time get to know themselves a little better. 83

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s here. Feil! Bokmerke er ikke definert.

Thank you

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2.0 Introduction

During my undergraduate studies in art education, I have often come across statements claiming that participation in the arts can lead to identity development, increased self-awareness or other proclamations about identity that follow the same lines. There are many such examples. The official Norwegian report NOU 2015:8, *The School of the Future*, endorses classes in the arts based on claims that, "experiencing and contributing to creating artistic expressions may be important for individuals development of identity, knowledge development and the ability to express oneself" (p.27). The qualitative data collected in Bamford's (2009) UNESCO study on the impact of the arts in education, makes the claim that, "arts education builds reflectivity and allows young people to get in contact with their personality and form self-identities" (p.135). The first sentence of the handbook for arts education in the USA under the title of *Understanding and Using the Core Arts Standards* (State Education agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014), it stands, "The arts have always served as the distinctive vehicle for discovering who we are" (p.2). Similar is the statement in Haabesland and Vavik's (2000) book, written for art educators in Norway, that through a creative practice we are able to 'create' our own identity. Each time I am confronted with statements such as these, my interest is piqued. If it is true that participation in the arts facilitates in 'developing identity', or lets us 'discover who we are' or helps us to 'create our identity', *how* does it happen?

A search through the litterateur affirms that participation in the arts enables individuals to express themselves, build reflectivity, excite the imagination, increase mental awareness and assist in breaking stereotypes to create new life stories. These outcomes were seen as important tools that increased the potential of positive identity development and aided in boosting ones sense of self-awareness (Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; Halvorson, 2010; O'Fallon, 1995; Bamford, 2009; Malin, 2015; Rolling, 2009).[1] The litterateur, however, does not indicate *how* this happens. What mechanisms are at play in the creative process when one transforms an expression, an idea, or a feeling into a fixed medium? When do we know? What does it feel like? Is there one way over another that can relay the message of identity better then another?

In research, it is the research questions that guide the study. The questions that guild me throughout my project are:

[1] Information based on unpublished literature review 6.6.2017 by Karen Aarre

What properties within an aesthetic creative visual arts practice influence self-awareness and identity development? How does an aesthetic art practice enhance self-awareness and facilitate in identity development?

3.0 Identity

The term 'identity' is a difficult concept to define. Fearon (1999) in his article, *What is Identity (As we now use the word),* describes identity as a complicated and unclear concept, "something of an enigma"(p.1), he explains that ambiguity persists due to the fact that definitions concerning identity in academia and ordinary language differ, he writes, "In popular discourse identity is often treated as something ineffable and even sacred, while in the academy identity is often treated as something complex and even ineffable. One hesitates to try to define the sacred, the ineffable, or the complex" (Fearon, 1999, p.4.) Fearon (1999) notes that even in academic writing, there is very little agreement on a universal definition. Hoover & Eriksen (2004) concur, adding, "there is agreement *within* schools of scholars- and much disagreement *between* schools" (p.2). In the Individualist's eyes, identity is self created, constructionists see identity as an artifact of power, and the essentialist school defines identity as fixed by gender, race and sometimes class (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004). In the coarse of this paper I use the term Identity often, it is therefore important to take a look at the different ways the term identity can be understood and how I intend to use it.

3.1 Erickson's Three C's

The way we define the term 'identity' today is very much due to the work of psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1902-1994) on the importance of identity carried out in the 1950's (Fearon, 1999).

> Erikson posited identity as a crucial developmental stage through which individuals must move prior to being able to establish meaningful, intimate relationships with others. According to this perspective, knowledge of oneself is fundamental to psychological well-being (Baumgardner, 1990, p.1062).

Erikson's definition of identity consists of three dimensions, these include: **Who one is with –** *commitments,* **where one is from**-*communities*, and **what one does**- *competencies* (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004, p, 4*)*. The first group, *commitments*, includes all of the personal relationships that define us, for example, I am a daughter, a mother, a sister and a wife. *Communities,* consists of our ethnical background, religious beliefs, cultural heritage, loyalties to country, or any groups we adhere to. The last dimension, *competencies,* describes the professions we belong to, our talents and the roles we play in society, such as teacher, politician, artist or student (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004). In Erikson's theory of identity, each dimension is like a leg of a three-legged stool, if all three are strong and complete, the stool stands stable, however, if there is a dimension or two that are damaged or incomplete, the stool becomes unstable; the unstable stool is a metaphor for what Erikson termed an 'identity crises' (Hoover & Eriksen, 2004).

3.2 'Identity Boxes'

When one is asked about their identity, very often they think in terms of the *who, what and where* Erikson established over sixty years ago (Fearon, 1999). The traditional way of looking at our identity lacks the personal dimension, it restricts us by placing us in what Anzaldua & Keating (2002) call 'identity boxes' (p.561). We limit ourselves if we only think of the 'boxes' we fit into, Anzaldua & Keating believe a radical shift is needed to break out of the boxes of conformity, they call for a, "a different story…enabling [a person] to rethink [themselves] in more global-spiritual terms instead of conventional categories of color, class, career" (Anzaldua & Keating, 2002, p.561). 'Identity boxes' perpetuate old prejudices by continuing stereotypes that create divisions in society.

3.3 Social and Personal Identity

Fearon (1999) asserts that identity today is seen as a bifurcated definition consisting of a persons 'social' and 'personal' identity. 'Social identity' incorporates the three dimensions put forth by Erikson, or the three C's. Personal identity, our 'missing' dimension from Erikson's model, is defined as, "a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways" (Fearon, 1999, p.25). Because identity is such a wide topic, there are more then likely a plethora of definitions that could define the 'personal' dimension, what is important, however, is acknowledging that it does exist and that it is important for our well being to understand, Erikson (1968) Writes, "in the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of Identity" (p.38). Kroger echoes Erikson when she says, "identity provides one with a sense of well-being, a sense of mattering to those who count. Identity is what makes one move with direction; identity is what gives one reason to be" (Kroger, 2004, p.63).

3.4 Identity- the place it has in my research

The focus of my research is concerned with the 'personal' dimension of identity. Because our personal identity is often ineffable and hidden deep in our unconsciousness, it is most effectively articulated through the language of art. Csikszentmihalyi and Schiefele (1992) write, "the process of visual expression clearly helps gain some control and understanding of barely conscious internal tensions, diffuse problems, or felt ambiguities" They add that, "the creation of art is by definition an intentional and self-determined activity, it should contribute to what a person defines as his or her being" (p.171-172).

As I have illustrated above, identity is a heavily-laden concept. It is easily misunderstood, outdated for today's society, inconsistent, and could possibly lead to the perpetuation of prejudices and unwanted stereotyping through 'identity boxing'. It is easy to understand the conundrum one faces when posed with the question; how do you define your identity? I feel it is better to ask, do you know yourself? How do you define yourself?

4.0 Arts-Based Research

What I am investigating is a phenomenon, a phenomenon that occurs within the creative process. To gain a better understanding of this particular phenomenon, I have centered my inquiry in and around my creative art practice; therefore placing myself as both researcher and the object to be researched. This is possible within the emergent methodological genre called Arts-based research.[2]

Arts-based research is an umbrella term for research that bases investigation within a creative art practice. Shaun McNiff, one of the fields pioneering authors, defines it as:

> The systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience be both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies (McNiff, 2008, p.29).

Patricia Leavy in her book, *Method Meets Art*, elucidates the unique benefits of an arts based inquiry, adding that such studies offer researchers:

[2] Leavy (2009) uses the terms 'emergent methodological genre' and 'set of methodological tools' to describe Arts-based research in the first edition of her book *Method Meets Art.* In the second edition, Leavy (2015) argues that Arts-based research is, "a paradigm of its own" (p.6). She is not alone in making such claims (Rollings, 2013, 2010). There is also a heated academic debate on the subject within the field (Kjørup, 2012). I have chosen to continue to use Leavy's older term in response to the fact that there is disagreement in the field rather then referring to arts-based research a paradigm.

> New ways to tap into what would otherwise be inaccessible, make connections and interconnections that are otherwise out of reach, ask and answer new research questions, explore old research questions in new ways, and represent research differently, often more effectively with respect to reaching broad audiences and nonacademic stakeholders (Leavey, 2015, p.21).

4.1 Art Practice as research

Art practice as research is a relatively new methodological genre within qualitative inquiry, only appearing as recently as the 1980's, and becoming more visible toward the mid 1990's (Savin-Boden & Wimpenny, 2014; Barone & Eisner, 2012; McNiff, 1998; Sullivan, 2010). Someone like me, who is a novice in the field, can easily become confused by the large amount of differing disciplines that offer research within the arts. One can also feel inundated by the prolific writing concerned with defining the various methods and defending the valorization and validation of such a study (Biggs & Karlsson 2013; Sullivan 2010; Leavy 2015; Barrett, 2007; Bergdorff, 2006, 2012; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014). Leavy writes:

> With the enormous growth in ABR [Arts-based research] over the past several years alone, the literature has been flooded with different terms meant to capture or distinguish this work (and its authors). Some authors are quick to point to subtle differences between these terms, however; mostly this frenetic attempt to label work has led to confusion (Leavy, 2015, p. 4).

This "publishing boom", as Sullivan (2010, p. 55) calls it, includes such approaches as: *Art practice as research*, *Arts-related research*, *Arts-informed research*, *Practice-led research*, a/r/*tography*, *Arts-Based inquiry*, *Practice- based research, Studio-based* research and *Artistic inquiry*, to name just a few. I have drawn inspiration from much of the literature pertaining to the different approaches, finding that at the root of each method is the position that a creative art practice is a viable site of study ontologically, epistemologically, methodologically and theoretically (Sullivan, 2010; Leavy, 2015; Borgdorff, 2010; Baron & Eisner 2012; Rollings, 2013; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014; Hannula & Suoranta & Vaden, 2005).

In a field that is so new and extensive in terms of choices, it has been important for me to have a full understanding of what an arts based inquiry is and what its methodologies can offer. But more then just knowing what a method offers, I want to have an understanding of the ways a visual art practice enhances and contributes to knowledge and understanding, how the actual *process,* and not just the *product* of art can be considered relative empirical data and how a self study into my own creative practice is a viable and meaningful contribution to the academic world and the world in general. Additional questions are: what are the different ways of researching in the arts and where does my study fit in? And lastly, am I qualified do carry out such a study?

4.2 Research 'Into', 'Through' and 'For' Art and Design

In my search for research papers similar in design to my own, I found that research in the arts is considerably diverse in form, function and execution. Christopher Frayling's (1993) article *Research in Art and Design* brings clarity to the subject by distinguishing three forms of research in the arts: research *into*, research *through* and research *for* art and design. The first category, research *into* art and design, Frayling describes as the most, "straightforward" (p.5). It includes, inquiry *into* art history, aesthetic and perceptual research as well as art theory. The next category, research *through* art and design, is described as applied and includes, materials research, development work and action research. The last group, research *for* art, is defined as, "research where the end product is an artefact-where the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artefact" (Frayling, 1993, p.5). Frayling (1993) uses the term "thorny" to describe this last catagory of research (p.5). Back in 1993 it was considered 'thorny', 'thorny' because this line of inquiry was still highly debated as legitimate research and difficult to validate and valorize.

My study, where I am both the researcher and the researched, and where my practice is intimately connected to the end product or as Frayling terms the "artifacte" falls into the "thorny" group. Almost twenty years later, Henk Borgdorff (2010), the president of the Society for Artistic Research still refers to this category as complicated; yet, it is the one category that has expanded most among the arts-based methods (Borgdorff, 2012; Boomgaard, 2011; Leavey, 2015; Nowotny, 2012; Hannula, 2005).[3] Borgdorff refers to such research as Artistic research, other methods that fall into this category include, practice led research and art practice as research.

4.3 Research 'On', 'For' and 'In' the Arts

[3] For more information on the both expansion and the debates surrounding artistic research, I refer to the collected writings in, *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, edited by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (2012) and JAR the Journal of Artistic Research: www.jar-online.net

Updating Fraylings categorizations of the forms of research in the arts, Borgdorff (2010) adds his own twist, renewing and renaming each definition in conjunction with the fast paced changes in the field. To distinguish between the different ways of researching in the arts, Borgdorff (2012) uses the terms research *on*, *for* and *in* the arts. The first two categories are somewhat similar to Fraylings; *research on the arts*, or also termed "the interpretative perspective" (p. 46) is art practice as the "object of study", where the investigation is aimed, "at drawing valid conclusions about art practice from a theoretical distance" (Borgdorff, 2010, p.6). The second*, research for the arts*, or "the instrumental perspective" (Borgdorff, 2012, p.46) is where art is not the "object of investigation, but its objective", and in every case, the study is, "in service of [the] art practice"(Borgdorff, 2010, p.6). The last, *research in the arts* is "research the does not assume the separation of subject and object, and does not observe a distance between the researcher and the practice of art" (Borgdorff, 2010, p.6), otherwise defined by Borgdorff (2012) as 'artistic research' (p.46).

My study has been conducted *in* and *through* the creative process. It was not a study *on* my art, neither was it a study solely for the advancement of my art practice. It was a study where my art practice has been utilized as a tool for gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon in question. The method 'artistic research' is the discipline that accommodates my study better then any other.

4.3.1 Artistic Research

My research project is a reflective study of a phenomenon that is situated within the creative processes of my art practice. The focus is on the processes happening in the practice and not on the resulting artwork that is produced. Artistic research is the method that focuses its attention predominantly on the practice as a site of knowing. Borgdorff (2012) explains that in artistic research, the art practice is the distinguishing feature that becomes the, "methodological vehicle when the research unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing" (p.46). Graeme Sullivan, a widely published writer in the field, adds:

> The artist is the key figure in the creation of new insights and awareness that has the potential to change the way we see and think. The studio experience is a form of intellectual and imaginative inquiry, and the studio is a site where research can be undertaken that is sufficiently robust to yield knowledge and understanding that is individually situated and socially and culturally relevant (Sullivan, 2010, p70).

As stated earlier, research in the arts, especially inquiry where the researcher plays the double role of researcher and researched, is still considered an emerging method. Shaun McNíff (2011) one of the pioneers in arts-based research writes of his first experience with self-study in the late 1980's. Feeling that he had exhausted the use of interviewing other subjects on topics of experience in art making, he realized that working directly with his own art process yielded a more "honest"(p.390) result. He describes that he had both the "fear of ridicule" (p.390) as well as a feeling of liberation when he broke away from traditionally expected norms. McNiff (2011) states that, "the significance of the outcome often correlates with the degree of risk and the willingness to go against the grain of current practice in order to improve it" (p.392). He advises that, "There is no better way to understand a particular aspect of creative practice than to research it in this direct way" (2008, p.31). Sullivan (2010) articulates the need for such studies because, as he says, "what has not been well understood in the past is the place of artists and the things they do in the studio" (p.71). Blumenfeld-Jones (2015) also calls for more research that looks into the, "ways an artist thinks and acts 'from the inside'" (322). In my investigation I will have a first hand, insider view of the art practice. Ballechio writes of the special attributes of the art practice, illustrating that an,

> Art p*ractice* is, in and of itself, a specific and special form of research, in the arts the very idea of a qualitative-quantitative divide becomes irrelevant because by its distinct nature arts research calls for a different set of categories where the arts do not search for stuff or facts, but they generate it (Ballechio, 2009, p.4).

4.4 Knowledge in a practice

> What does art seek to express?...I think every work of art expresses, more or less purely, more or less subtly, not feelings and emotions the artist *has*, but feelings and emotions which the artist *knows*; his *insight* into the nature of sentience, his picture of vital experience, physical, and emotive and fantastic. (Langer, 1957, p.91)

The American philosopher Susanne Langer classifies the arts as non-discursive knowledge. She explains that the knowledge bound up in the artists creative process is, "not expressible in ordinary discourse", she goes on to illustrate that, "the reason for this ineffability is not that the ideas to be expressed are too high, too spiritual, or too anything-else, but that the forms of feeling and the forms of discursive expression are logically incommensurate" (Langer, 1957, p. 91). Eisner (2008) has a similar view; he writes that artists have the ability to, "create through the application of technique and skill forms whose empirical structure echoes the structure of a form of feeling. Thus, works of art enable us to know something about feeling that cannot be revealed in literal scientific statements" (p.7-8).

Barrett (2007) draws on both John Dewey's theory of expression and Michael Polanyi's theory of 'tacit knowing' to argue that research in a creative art practice operates on, "explicit and exact knowledge as well as tacit and experiential knowledge" (p.115). She writes:

> Experience operates within the domain of the aesthetic and knowledge produced through the aesthetic experience is always contextual and situated. The continuity of artistic experience with normal processes of living is derived from an impulse to handle materials and to think and feel through their handling (Barrett, 2007, p.115).

On this basis she posits that, "creative arts practice as research is an intensification of everyday experiences from which new knowledge or knowing emerges" (p.115). Barrett's definition follows Donald Schön's (1983) theory of the reflective practitioner, where he places knowledge in the practice, otherwise called *knowing-in-practice*. According to Schön (1983), "our knowing is in action, ordinary in tactic form and implicit in our patterns of action" (p.49). Like the competent practitioner that possesses knowing-in-practice, an artist enacts what Sullivan (2006) calls, "performative knowledge", this type of knowledge is describes as, "likened to more traditional grounded strategies such as observation and empirical confirmation (p.31).

Lastly, Borgdorff (2006) sees knowledge as embodied in the art practice. He reminds us, however, that, "if the focus of investigation is on the creative process, one should not lose sight of the result of that process- the artwork itself" (p.13). I take heed of Borgdorff's warning and understand that the resulting artwork is also a site of knowledge in and of itself. In this project, however, my main focus is on the process, the embedded knowledge in the creative practice and not entirely concentrated on the end-result.

4.5 Who can partake in an artistic research?

Some of my biggest concerns in the early stages of research were the questions: Am I qualified to do a study in artistic research? For my study to be legitimate, do I need to be considered a working artist in the field?

What I found was divided opinions. Borgdorff (2006) is very clear, he believes that because, "artistic creative processes are inextricably bound up with the creative personality and with the individual, sometimes idiosyncratic gaze of the artist, research like this can best be performed 'from within' (p.16). Barone and Knowels (2012) standpoint is less rigid, they write, "by an 'artist' we do not necessarily mean a professional painter, dancer, or novelist. But the researcher must exhibit artistry in whatever form he or she chooses" (p.57). Leavey (2015) agrees, by stating, "you can learn as you go, regardless of your starting point. Because art making is a 'doing' activity, the best way to learn is through practice" (Leavey, 2015, p.30). Finally, McNiff (2011) also has a relaxed view of the researchers skill levels, he finds "that manual skill levels should not universally block people from participating in art-based research", he further elaborates that, "the degree of artistic skill and experience are factors to be considered in relation to what is needed to meet the goals of a project rather than general prerequisites" (p.393).

I feel confident that my level of skill and experience working with the creative process is sufficient enough for me to carry out an artistic research project. I am in agreement with O'Fallon (1995) when he remarks that all too often art is looked at as something reserved only for those individuals, "born with talent", He points out that this perspective "isolates and limits powerful 'ways of knowing'" (para.11) that is available to all of us.

5.0 Methodology

In artistic research, the methodology is not a, "fixed recipe" or "formula" (Barone &Eisner, 2014, p.48); instead, it is designed to explore specific research objectives (Leavy, 2015; McNiff, 2011, 2013; Nimkulrat, 2009). McNiff (2013) asserts that, "if art is the primary vehicle of research, then methods of inquiry need to correspond to the infinite variety of artistic expressions" (p.xv), he adds, "the arts encourage variation and even uniqueness in both methods and outcomes" (McNiff, 2011, p.387). "Methodological pluralism rather than methodological monism" according to Barone and Eisner (2014), "is the greater virtue" (p.49). Leavey puts forth a similar view when she writes:

> New methods provide ways to 'come at things differently'. Therefore, methodological innovation is not simply about adding new methods to our arsenal for the sake of 'more', but rather opening up new ways to think about knowledge-building: *new ways to see* (Leavey, 2015, p.291).

Artistic research methodologies are unique, allowing the artist-researcher freedom to explore without constraining protocol (McNiff, 2011), yet it is important that the methodology fits the research question (McNiff, 2011; Leavy, 2015). In the following chapter, I will outline the methodological steps I've taken in my research to gain an understanding of my research questions.

5.1 Art Practice

To gain understanding of my research questions, my research was centered in my art practice, with my interest primarily on the creative process of creating. The artworks created during the process of researching are important in the validation of my research, but have not been the main focus in my study. The creation of artworks, according to Nimkulrat (2009), cannot be looked upon as a method, but rather, "a creative production [that] can be used to test various thoughts in practice" (p.52). According to Nimkulrat (2009) opening the artistic practice to inquiry reveals the developments that occur in the process of making, it unmasks the "what" and "why" of the artworks created. It is for this reason, Borgdorff (2012) claims that artistic research, "unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing" (p.46). Borgdorff (2012) explains, "methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings and products come into being" (p.46).

The pathway in artistic research is not always straight and predictable, Barone and Eisner (2014) explain that the process seldom moves, "in a series of linear steps" (p.48). Borgdorff elucidates further by saying:

> The erratic nature of creative discovery-of which unsystematic drifting, serendipity, chance inspirations and clues form an integral part-is such that a methodological justification is not easy to codify. Just as in many other academic research studies, it involves doing unpredictable things and this implies intuition and some measure of randomness. Research is more like exploration than like following a firm path (Borgdorff, 2012, p.57).

Armed with my research questions and openness for the unknown and the unpredictable, I started my exploration. I followed Leavey's recommendation, "to remain open to spontaneity, be unafraid to experiment, and to trust one's intuition" (Leavey, 2015. P.30), and heeded McNiff 's (2008), warning that, "you generally know little about the end of an artistic experiment when you are at the beginning"(p.40). Keeping a phenomenological attitude throughout my research process reinforced my openness to experience the process in both a state of wonder and wide-awakeness. I let the research lead me on my path rather then predetermining how I wanted the study to go.

5.2 Reading

Although my research was primarily *in and through* my creative practice, theory, literature and the art and art practices of Catherine Opie, Louise Bourgeois and Tracy Emin have been equally relevant and are considered an integral part of my research design. Nimkulrat (2009) lists reading as one of three approaches she utilized in her doctoral research on the expressivity in textile art. She found that reading literature during the different phases of her inquiry worked reciprocally, She writes, "*reading* influenced *making* and vice versa…thoughts and ideas generated from reading [were] brought into [the] artistic productions for the purposes of being tested in practice and discussing the processes of making artworks" (p. 53), the flipside of the equation was that, "the art productions influenced [her] decision about what literature seemed to be relevant to the research problem at a particular phase of research in order to offer theoretical discussions of the problem from different perspectives" (Nimkulrat, 2009, p53-54).

In my inquiry I found a similar reciprocal relationship to *reading*. For example, in the first phase where I explored photography, I read the philosophic writings of Barthes, Sontag, Bazin and others. I studied the practice of Catherine Opie and analyzed her portrait of Kate & Laura (2012) as well as other self-portrait photographs she has taken throughout her career. This gave me insight into my own photography practice, cultivated critical reflection, and offered a source of inspiration. When the direction of my research changed it's coarse to concept art, the philosophers, art and artist I *read* about also shifted with the new medium. On the other hand, reading influenced my choice to explore sculpture. Reading Dewey's (1934/2005) *Art as Expression*, I realized I was missing an important element in my research, that of expression through a tangible material.

The symbiosis between the practical and theoretical dimensions opened my research, granting a broader understanding of my research questions. Wesseling summarizes when she writes:

> The exceptional thing about research in and through art is that practical action (the making) and theoretical reflection (the thinking) go hand in hand. The one cannot exist without the other; in the same way action and thought are inextricably linked in artistic practice (Wesseling, 2011,p.2).

5.3 Documentation

The factor that differentiates a traditional artistic practice and an artistic practice performed for research is the documentation (Nimkulrat, 2009; Marshall, 2010). I used a journal to record every aspect of my creative journey during my research, much like a diary, noting everything from small insights, frustrations, ponderings over the next step to take, and discoveries that have taken me by surprise. It is important to note that the creative process starts long before the actual making, therefore entries where more then what would be found in a process log. Entries consisted of my thoughts and musings that where important in the formation of ideas, notes from literature that influenced me, quotes from artist's or paraphrased texts that I found inspiring and insightful. During active making I would force myself to stop in mid-process in order to record the fleeting thoughts that often float in my head when creating. Breaking the momentum, otherwise called 'flow'[4] was not always an option. In these instances I would take time after the fact and record what I experienced and the processes that occurred.

5.4 Reflection-in-practice and reflection-on-practice

My journal was an important tool for reflecting *on* and *in* the action of making. Reflection-*in*-action, according to Schön (1983), refers to a practitioner's ability to reflect on an activity while *in* action and reflection-*on*-action is the practitioner's reflection that occurs after an activity had taken place. Both types of reflection increase a practitioners potential to learn from experience and expose one's tacit knowledge. The act of writing down my reflections in the midst of making, increased my self-awareness and actually amplified my reflection-*in*-action. Reading the journal occasionally over the coarse of the research gave me an opportunity to evaluate and again reflect *on* the progress and direction of the study.

The journal was also valuable in assessing when I had reach what Leavey (2015) calls "data saturation" this is, "the point at which the collection of more data stops adding to the insights gained and the researcher risks being inundated" (p. 269).

Schön (1983) writes, "doing and thinking are complementary" (p.280). In the same vein, I contend that my journal was the place where action and thinking joined.

5.5 Medium

[4] Flow is a phenomena that is, "an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused stated of consciousness" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p.110). To be deeply engulfed in a task, either mental or physical activity that demands intense concentration and commitment.

I am not a photographer, nor am I a concept artist and I am defiantly not a sculptor, but I choose these three different mediums for a reason. McNiff (2011) argues that, "virtuosity can sometimes obstruct the ability to appreciate and see certain aspects of expression that may be more apparent to a beginner" (p.393). I wanted to have a 'beginners' viewpoint, so I could benefit from heightened awareness of a novice.

Dewey (1934/2005) writes, "Because objects of art are expressive, they are a language" (p.110). The arts then consist of multiple languages, each medium having it's own method of communicating. I found that a trilingual approach enabled me to compare and contrast the three different mediums, giving me a broader understanding of my research questions.

5.6 The artwork

As I have stated previously the actual artwork is not my primary focus, but as the outcome of the creative process it is impossible to overlook. Wesseling (2011) points out that the work of art created in artistic research is, "not the end product of the artist's thinking…it is an intermediate stage, a temporary halting of a never-ending thought process" (p.12). The artwork in all of its phases is important in the research. The back and forth communication during the creative process facilitates important reflection-*in*-action and the finished product is the site of reflection-*on*-practice (Schön, 1983). Eisner (2002) has a similar thought when he writes, "The work we create speak back to us, and we become in their presence a part of a conversation that enables us to 'see what we have said'" (p.11).

6.0 Phenomenology

In the history of phenomenology, the arts, both artworks and their creation, have long been the subject occupying the minds of the great thinkers. Wrathall (2011) remarks that, "the founding philosophers of phenomenology, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, believe that works of art at their best are capable of showing us the phenomena under consideration more directly, powerfully and perspicuously than any philosophical prose could" (p.9) The arts have the ability to broaden our view of the perceptual world and express it in a fixed form. Wrathall (2011) explains that, "Art performs a kind of phenomenology insofar as it shows us something in such a way that we can understand it more perspicuously than we did before"(p.12).

6.1 Seeing through the lens of Phenomenology

During all phases of my research I have adopted the attitude of the philosophical paradigm phenomenology. Phenomenology asks questions that pertain to phenomenon concerning the domain of human experience. In his book the *Phenomenology of Practice,* Van Manen (2014) explains that, "phenomenology is primarily a philosophic method for questioning, not a method for answering or discovering or drawing determinate conclusions" (p.29).

Basically phenomenology is concerned with the study of phenomenon, it is about making the invisible visible (Laverty, 2003), rediscovering the world and returning to "the things themselves" (Willis, 2001, p.1). Willis informs us that:

> Phenomenology wants to slow the researcher down and hold his or her gaze on the phenomenon itself-the lived-experience of some activity - seeking not to locate it in an abstract matrix by saying how its abstracted structure might be similar to others, but rather to illumine its specific quality as an experience (Willis, 2001, p.2).

One does not have to call himself or herself a phenomenologist to 'do' phenomenology, *doing* phenomenology means, "developing a pathos for the great texts, and, simultaneously, reflecting in a phenomenological manner on the living meanings of everyday experiences, phenomena, and events" (van Manen, 2014, p.23). Applying phenomenology as the philosophical lens to my research meant that I have been acutely aware of the phenomenon in focus. This is accomplished by 'bracketing' out, as much as possible, any preconceived meanings or prejudices that I might have. 'Bracketing' opens up a place for awareness and allows one to break with the taken-for-granted state and sharpen their focus on the phenomenon in question (van Manen, 2014). Assuming a state of wide-awakeness is also a strategy that enhances perception and engagement with the world.

6.1.1 Maxine Greene 'Wide Awakeness'

Maxine Greene (1917-2014), philosopher-in-residence at the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education was well known for her use of the term 'wide-awakeness'. Although the concept permeates her writing, it is not a term she personally coined, but that of the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz. Schutz defined Wide-awakeness as, an achievement, a type of awareness, "a plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements" (as cited in Greene, 1978, p.42). For Greene, to be wide-awake meant to be alive, thriving, and embracing everything the world has to offer. She is quoted as saying, "without the ability to think about yourself, to reflect on your life, there's really no awareness, no consciousness. Consciousness does not come automatically; it comes through being alive, awake, curious and often furious" (Cruickshank, 2008, p.1). Being in a wide-awake state in the process of creating, means you are open, alert, intuitively aware and capable of feeling the 'prick' of *punctum* if it strikes you.

7.0 The Paradox: Defining the 'indefinable'

In qualitative research we ask questions, but since these questions can never be answered in full, we instead try to understand them in the best way possible. I feel my questions relating to identity and self-awareness within an art practice are best understood through a self-study using my personal reflections while creating. The objective of my study is to try to locate and understand what I have up until now called a phenomenon; that indefinable property within the creative process that communicates to both the artist and the audience. The paradox is however, trying to define the indefinable.

7.1 The 'something'

Boomgaard (2011) alludes to this elusive property when he writes, "artistic research renders something visible, or furnishes an insight or knowledge that another form of research cannot accomplish, that 'something' resides in the fact that art plays a pivotal role in the research (p.63). I will add to Boomgaard's statement by arguing that it is not just the '*art*' that plays the pivotal role, but the 'something' within the creative art practice, during the transformation of a medium into an artwork. Eisner (2002) has a similar view when he states that, "in the process of creation [the arts] stabilize what would otherwise be *evanescent*. Ideas and images are very difficult to hold onto unless they are inscribed in a material that gives them at least a kind of semi-permanence" (p.11). Here again is the reference to the art practice that captures and embodies the 'phenomenon', the element that would otherwise be evanescent.

7.2 Intuition

Intuition is sometimes referred to as the sixth sense. Although often shunned by science for not being exact enough, intuition cannot be ignored especially in art where exploration of the unconscious mind is often common. Samples (1976) writes that, "Albert Einstein called the intuitive or metaphorical mind a sacred gift. He added that the rational mind was a faithful servant. It is paradoxical that, in the context of modern life, we have begun to worship the servant and defile the divine" (p.26). Dewey (1934/2005), describes intuition as, "the meeting of the old and the new [thoughts], of foreground and background", it is a, "readjustment" that occurs on every level of consciousness. This meeting of old and new is felt as a sudden and abrupt, "flash of revelation… accomplish only by effort, prolonged perhaps to the point of pain" (p.277). Intuition happens, "when the old and new jump together, like sparks when the poles are adjusted [bringing] the obscure into the clear and luminous" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p.277).

7.3 Studium & Punctum

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes (1980) establishes two elements that can be found in a photograph, the *studium* and the *puctum* (p.26). For Barthes (1980), *studium* refers a photograph's overall affect, be it negative or positive. Barthes comments that, "the *studium* is of the order of liking, not of loving", it is the "all right" attitude of vague interest (p.27). *Studium* educates and informs the viewer of the photographer's intentions and history while also including historical, social and cultural semiotic messages. *Punctum* on the other hand is the aspect that stops us in our tracks, or "pricks us" (Barthes, 1980, p. 27), it breaks or "punctuates the *studium*". Barthes calls the *punctum* an, "accident", an unintended element that one does not seek out to find in a photograph, but rather, it is; "the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (Barthes, 1980, p.26).

Although the concepts of *studium* and *punctum* are photography-specific and are not directly transferable to art in general, I argue that they can help to illustrate the special communicating function of an artwork, especially *punctum*. Van Manen (2014) has similarly borrowed punctum, he writes, "punctum belongs to language…A text acquires punctum when an anecdote becomes a compelling narrative 'example' and claims the power to stir us and to bring about an understanding that ordinary propositional discourse cannot do. It helps us to 'understand' and experience something that we do not know in an intellectual sense" (van Manen, 2014, p.253)

Punctum, for me, is the moment when either the artist or the spectator is 'pricked' by the artwork they have made or beheld. To be 'pricked' is to encounter an instantaneous resonation with the artwork. In physics, to resonate with something is the joining of identical frequencies. Using physics as a metaphor, I argue that in an encounter with art, we experience the 'prick' of the *punctum* when an artwork's external resonance meets the internal natural frequency of the artist or spectator, thus opening a direct and instantaneous line of communication, a communication that is art specific.

Tracey Emin, best known for her controversial installation '*My Bed'* (1998), is a perfect example of how the *punctum* reveals itself to the artist.[5] '*My Bed'* is literally Emin's bed, with soiled sheets, dirty underwear, empty vodka bottles, cigarette stubs, and used condoms. It is displayed in museums around the world, just as it looked in her apartment the day she woke up, hung-over, dehydrated and emancipated. She recalls that she had been drinking excessively, a true, "walking disaster"; depressed and suicidal after a difficult breakup she collapsed on her bed not waking again for two days. (Freedman, Winterson &Fuchs, 2006 p.251). In an interview with Carl Freedman, Emin describes the moment she knew that her bed was more than just a bed;

[5] "My Bed" (1998) by Tracey Emin was first displayed in 1998 Toyko's Sagacho Exhibit Space. In 1999 the installation became famous when it was shortlisted for the Turner Prize. It is on long-term loan to Tate modern for permanent display (Tate.org.uk).

> ...(After getting up and finding a glass of water) Ugghh...It was disgusting. And I looked at the bed and thought 'Oh my God, I could have died in there', and that is how I would have been found. And then from one second looking horrible it suddenly transformed itself into something removed from me, something outside of me, and something beautiful. I suddenly imagined it out of that context, frozen, outside of my head, in another place (Freedman, 2006, p.252).

The bed transformed into an artwork the moment Emin felt the 'prick' of its *punctum*. But its transcendence was more than a 'prick', as Barthes (1980) writes, the 'prick' can be so intense and poignant that, "it bruises" (p.27). As an artwork, '*My Bed*' communicates when it resonates with the viewer, just as it did with the artist.

For Barthes (1980) the *punctum* is a visually unintended "accident" that breaks through, or "punctuates" the indexical properties of a photograph. *Punctum,* translated into a non-photographic paradigm is the 'prick' one senses when moved by an artwork. It is acknowledging discursively the non-discursive language of the arts. Emin was aware enough to recognize the communicative potential her bed would have. Twenty years later, it is still an iconic piece. It is the *punctum* in the creative process that I am looking for within my creative process, the 'prick' that can possibly give me an awareness of an aspect of who I am.

Part 2

8.0 Expanding the concept of self-portrait

Traditionally, when we think of self-portraiture, we think of a painting, drawing, or photograph that depicts the 'likeness' of the artist. The classic self-portraits of Rembrandt, van Gogh and Dürer come to mind. But, there is more to a self-portrait then the depiction of the outward image, whether it is in the form of a classic painting or even a selfie. Contemporary self-portraits are more about the inner then the outer, no longer bound to the details of ones visage; they are inquiries into the artists' identity that are realized in a multiplicity of mediums and come in all possible forms. Cumming (2009) writes that regardless of the subject matter, "self-portraits [will always] reveal something deep and incontroverible (and distinct from portrait)- namely this special class of truth, this pressure from within that determines what appears as art without, that leaves its trace in every self-portrait (p.4).

I have always been drawn to works labeled 'self-portrait', especially works that tell more *about* the artist then informing me of the artist appearance. In the following chapter I will present a background of the genre self-portraiture, and illustrate how expanding the concept of the self-portrait allows the artist multitudinous possibilities to explore and express their inner self in any matter they find appropriate.

In the coarse of my research, I have drawn inspiration from the self-portraits (self-representations) of three artists, they include: Tracey Emin's conceptual installation *My Bed* (1998), the sculpture *Untitled 1947-49* by Louise Bourgeois, and Catherine Opie's photograph titled *Kate & Laura* 2012. These works have been the important impulse in the creative process of my practice. They have also been instrumental in informing me of the unlimited forms self-representation can take and has influenced me to experiment with different mediums. Presenting these works, will offer a clearer picture of what is meant by non-representational self-portrait, or as I argue, an expanded definition of a self-portrait.

8.1 Historical to Modern self-portrait

Historically, self-portraiture was the artist's best form of advertisement, demonstrating an artist's skill and style to a prospective patron. Self-portraits served as practice pieces, historic documentation, gifts or simply filled the basic human need to verify ones existents like van Eyck's image painted in the mirror that hangs on the wall of his famous painting *The Arnolfini Portrait;* on that same mirror stands the graffiti-like inscription, "Jan Van Eyck was here 1434" (West, 2004; Borzello, 2017).

The use of self-portraiture as a means of self expression expands in the twentieth century, Cumming (2009) describes it as the, "century of the naked self-portrait. We don't talk of them as nude, just as we don't talk of the nude truth, because nude implies something carefree or even seductive. Naked means stripped bare, exposed: a truth exposed" (p.263). Exposing the truth about political, social and personal issues changed the self-portrait into the diverse examples we see today (Butler, 2017). The web initiative by Cristina Nunez, *The Self-Portrait Experience*[6] brings a modern definition to a historic art form:

> A self-portrait is our inner image, our private image. It is generally produced in a longer lapse of time, in a situation centered on the creative process. It springs from the inner life of the author who is also subject and spectator. He does not control the image, on the contrary, it's the creative process which allows the unconscious to speak with the language of art. The self-portrait is a profound dialog with oneself, guided by the author's vulnerability (selfportrait.eu).

Self-portraiture depicts a deeper image of the self, one that reaches beyond the fabricated facade we adopt when we meet the outside public world. It is, "the idea or wish to freeze, to maintain or to document a fluctuating but significant slice of life" (Carbon, 2017, p.16). Our identities, like our lives, are dynamic and in constantly change, Grovevant&Cooper (1998) concur that the, "development of identity is a life-long process characterized by cycles of exploration and consolidation as well as experiences of competence and vulnerability" (p.6). The self-portrait captures, "a fragment of someone's life" according to Cumming,

> [It] turns the subject inside out, and remakes him or her as an indivisible trinity: There is the work of art, the image of the maker and the truth of what he or she sensed, imagined or believed about themselves and how they choose, as we all must choose, to present themselves (Cumming, 2009 p.9).

8.1.1 Selfies

[6] Crinstina Nunez is the artist behind the method *The Self-Portrait Experience*. The method uses self-portrait photography in the exploration one's own inner life. See also https://selfportrait-experience.com or http://selfportrait-experience.com/2016616we-exist-self-portraits-in-norwegian-prisons/

The newest addition to the genre of self-portraiture, made possible by today's innovative cell phone technology, is the modern day 'selfie'. Selfie-photography is both the bane of the art-world and a current subject of research for many (Carbon, 2017; Butler, 2017; Kozinets & Gretzel & Dinhopi, 2017). Carbon (2017) writes, "Humans want to document their lives, their personality, their outward appearances, and sometimes also their current situation, their mood, feeling or cognition" (p.8). Selfies, like traditional self-portraits relay similar messages contained in a single compact format. The spontaneous selfie, however, goes against the idea that a self-portrait is a work of art that craves time, reflection and the workings of the creative process. The selfie has been deemed an, "inflated performance of the self" that spurs narcissistic tendencies (Kozinets et al., 2017, p.3). Borzello (2017) writes, "whereas the point of the selfie is to show the spectator a perfected version of our selves, the [contemporary] self-portrait is an open-ended genre, one capable of asking questions, involving our emotions and inspiring debate" (p.22).

8.1.2 Non-representational self-portrait

Contemporary artists have taken the liberty to break away from traditional norms of self-portraiture. No longer adhering to the need to depict their outward image, artists are free to express the tacit aspects of their inner-self through non-representational self-portraiture. The bark of a tree, like our outer appearance, is the protective skin that guards the inner core of our personal identity. Exposing the core, through the medium of a non-representational self-portrait, requires self-reflection, wide-awakeness, and as Nunez has already pointed out, "a profound dialog with oneself, guided by the author's vulnerability". Borzello adds,

> The modern concern with identity and representation and the death of confidence in telling the personal story through appearance alone, is what typifies today's self-portraits, allowing free rein to artists' imaginations and trusting the spectator to respond to their subtleties and complexities (Borzello, 2017, p.22).

A traditional self-portrait or even a selfie will inform the maker of an aspect of identity, but the self-portrait where the 'likeness' of the maker is absent has the power to present more.

9.0 Impulse, Inspiration, Aspiration

In the next chapter I will present examples of non-representational self-portraits by contemporary artists Tracey Emin, Louise Bourgeois and Catherine Opie. Their work, representing three distinctly different mediums, represents the diversity of contemporary self-portraiture. Each medium speaks a different language offering unique qualities that are capable of communicating the ineffable. Understanding how artists exploit their medium to express aspects of their identity broadens our definition of the traditional self-portrait. The works by Emin, Bourgeois and Opie have not only endowed my education in self-portraiture, they have also been the impulse, inspiration and aspiration of my creative process during the research process.

My Bed 1989 Tracey Emin Tate Modern

9.1 Tracey Emin, My Bed, 1998

Reviewing Tracey Emin's conceptual installation '*My Bed*', Hudson (2017) recognizes that in the act of reframing her bed as an artwork, "Emin has turned her worst moment into her most transcendent … She's done it without involving her own presence: we don't hear her voice, see her face … Less Emin turns out to be more" (para. 8). Emin's installation (previously described in (7.3) is a poignant self-portrait that both reveals and documents a tumultuous chapter of her life. By appropriating her bed as a readymade, Emin directly challenges the traditional definition of self-portrait; she is "shifting attention from the iconic qualities to the indexical ones" (West, 2004, p.212). Emin's art is often labeled autobiographical or confessional mainly because her art is almost only about herself, she is quoted as saying, "I work with what I know. But it goes beyond that. I start with myself but end up with the universe" (Galenson, 2009, p.246). Emin reveals in an interview that, "[making] art is like being given something…it is a way forward, a way of telling me something that I don't know" (Lewis-Smith, 2013, 8:11). Later in the interview she admits that her work is about living and life, it is her way of communicating, " My work isn't about art, it is about life experiences…[my art] is about me, and I'm getting to know me much better" (Lewis-Smith, 2013, 12:20).

9.1.1 Conceptual art

My Bed belongs to the artistic genre conceptual art. Emin's main purpose in displaying her bed was to convey an 'idea' or 'thought'. In conceptual art the aesthetical qualities of the installation are of little significance in relation to the concept that is expressed. A well-used definition in "*Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*" by Sol LeWitt in 1967 will help explain further:

> In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art (LeWitt, 1967, para. 2.).

LeWitt's paragraphs, the first published account of the expression 'Conceptual Art', are seen as the movements manifesto (Goldie & Schellekens, 2007). According to LeWitt (1967), it is not the skill and craftsmanship of the artist that determines if a work is successful, what the work of art looks like is also unimportant, in fact, the work itself does not necessarily need to be realized for it to be considered a work of art. For LeWitt (1967), "conceptual art is good only when the idea is good" (para. 17). Conceptual art then is, "of the mind", according to Goldie and Schellekens (2007), it is "analytic, and as such, art is in the business of creating and transmitting ides, and not the art object, that is at the heart of artistic experience" (p.x). LeWitt adds that sometimes the final artwork is less interesting then the thought processes that led to its creation, he writes, "All intervening steps-scribbles, sketches, drawings, failed works, models, studies, thoughts, conversations- are of interest" (para.11). I find exactly this point to be of special interest due to the fact that I am concerned with the process rather then the focusing directly on the final product.

When asked what is the most important aspect of great art, thought or skill, Emin's answer was vocalized loud and clear, for her it is the quality of the thought in an artwork, it's all about transmitting thought, she asserts, "think first and then you make the art" (Art Basel, 2013, 22.39).

Untitled 1947-49 Louise Bourgeois Quarantania 1 1947-49 Louise Bourgeois

9.2 Louise Bourgeois- Untitled 1947-1949 [self-portrait]

"All the work of an artist is the realization of a self-portrait. But very often it is unconscious. Very often, you do not realize that you reveal yourself that much"

Louise Bourgeois (Galenson, 2009, p.239).

Louise Bourgeois' (1911-2010) art is always about herself. She expressed herself through a number of mediums including installation, fiber, drawing, performance and printmaking; however, sculpture was closest to her heart. The untitled sculpture dated 1947-1949 is in the ISelf collection owned by Maria and Malek Sukkar. It has been shown in the exhibition titled *'self-portrait as a Billy Goat'* at the Whitechapel Gallery in the spring/summer of 2017. The ISelf collection is comprised of artworks that explore identity or as Butler (2017) points out, "captures the essence of the conundrum of self" (p.9). Bourgeois' work was one of the central pieces in the exhibition, although not directly labeled 'self-portrait', Butler explains that, Bourgeois viewed her sculptures as "extensions of her body" (Whitechaple, 2017), the artist herself stated that, "for me, sculpture is the body. My body is sculpture" (Bourgeois, 2006, p.281). Borzello (2017) adds that every work created by Bourgeois is always, "deeply personal" (p.22). In the documentary the *Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine*, Bourgeois, remarks, "the purpose of sculpture is really self knowledge" (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 4:20).

What draws me to the ISelf sculpture is the long thin totemic form that evokes both a feeling of strength and fragility. At the center is an oval void where an egg shaped form is cradled. The simplistic form alludes to the reproductive female. This particular example is a bronze painted white and blue. For Bourgeois the color blue attributed to the qualities of peace, meditation and escape, and white was considered virginal and represents 'going back to start' (Leoni-Figini, 2008). The ISelf sculpture is a cast of an original wooden sculpture that belongs to a work titled *Quarantania 1* (1947-49).[7] *Quarantania 1is* a collection of five thin standing figures carved of soft balsa wood. The first time they were shown in 1949 at the Peridot Gallery in New York, they stood separately as individual works of art she called *'peronages'*, later, in 1981 she reassembled the five into one group sculpture that we now know as *Quarantania* 1 (MoMa, 2018). Wye points out that in Bourgeois' work a single form meant loneliness, two were a couple, and three together could lead to jealousy (Museum of Modern Art, 2017, 2:39). As a group, they still hold their individual qualities, yet are given a new context that suggests safety, like the kind you find in family (Leoni-Figini, 2008). This particular group is interesting because it is said that it refers to her immediate family, herself, her husband and their three boys. Bourgeois made numerous sculptures belonging to the 'personages' series, sculptures that she created as a means of battling loneliness. Originally from France, she had moved to New York in 1938 to join her American husband Robert Goldwater, a well know art historian. She felt a deep separation from the ones she left behind and the reality of the World War intensified her feelings of homesickness (Bernadac, 2006). Creating art was her savior, her gift. She explains further what the gift has meant to her:

[7] Sundberg (2010) makes reference to a work by Bourgeois titled *Pillar*, a wooden sculpture in the 'personages' series that was later cast in bronze. He speculates that the original sculptures in the series were cast in bronze due to influence from the art market.

> The artist has been given a gift. This word comes back all the time. It is the gift of being at ease with your unconscious and trusting it. It is the ability immediately to short-circuit the conscious and to have direct access to the deeper perceptions of the unconscious. This is a gift because such awareness is useful, allowing you to know yourself, especially your limitations (Meyer-Thoss, 2006, p.241).

In another interview she affirms this statement, describing why she feels an artist is privileged, she explains, "the artist has the privilege of being in touch with his or her unconscious, It is a gift-the definition of sanity-it is the definition of self-realization (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 12:15).

When asked the question, what use is sculptor? Why do you make it? Bourgeois' answer was simple, making sculpture was not about being successful in the art market, "My proof of success is whether it does something to me, it makes me a nicer person and it gives me pleasure" (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 3:51).

9.2.1 Sculpture

When asked what happens when you begin a sculpture, Bourgeois replied,

> We do not talk about 'planning' a sculpture; we talk about a need to express some very deep emotion. Then we talk about realization. Realization doesn't have to do with strategy. It has to do with a hit-or-miss process. It is open-ended. You start, and you don't know exactly where you're going to end. It is the privilege of intuition, the confidence in the intuitive drive… failure only drives me. (Meyer-Thoss, 2015, p.250).

Bourgeois preferred the tangible medium of sculpture; working in the three-dimensional form she could feel her emotions much more vividly than through other mediums (the Museum of Modern Art, 2017, 4:01). Sullivan (2010) calls this "thinking in a medium"(p.135). Letting forms emerge while working, allowing the chosen material guild the work instead of imposing ideas into a material. Tucker, a British sculptor known for both his artworks and his writing on sculpture elucidates the subject:

> The sculptor recognizes the existence of the lump of wood, earth, or stone-the thing-by perceiving in it an image which he then modifies. Now, if we strip away from this process the element of representation, the image, we are left with the original act, the act of *recognition*. The thing's being is exposed: the making of sculpture is then not synthetic-a construction, a structure, as of buildings- but rather a recovery of recognition, an uncovering and a disclosure of being (Tucker, 1977, p.154-155).

Through sculpture, Bourgeois was able to work with her emotions, uncovering the self-portrait that she says all artists realize through their art.

As a medium, sculpture speaks it's own language (Dewey 1934/2005). Unlike a painting that needs to create the illusion of three-dimensional space, sculpture *is* three-dimensional. The illusion sculpture creates is the space it occupies beyond the cubic measure of the material the work is constructed of. Langer calls this a sculptures 'virtual space' (Langer, 1953), she explains by stating, "The tangible form has a complement of empty space that it absolutely commands, that is given with it and only with it, and is, in fact part of the sculptural volume" (Langer, 1953, p.88). She expands further on the subject by stating that:

> Sculpture creates an equally visual space, but not a space of direct vision; for volume is really given originally to touch, both haptic touch and contact limiting bodily movement, and the business of sculpture is to translate its data into entirely visual terms, i.e. *to make tactual space visible* (Langer, 1953, p.89-90).

Tucker calls this a sculptures 'visibility', a quality he believes is the most essential to the medium. The visibility of a sculpture is not the visible domain that a work commands in space, but more importantly how it meets, attracts and holds our attention (de Baranano, 2015). Bourgeois command of these basic qualities of sculpture is evident in the evolution of the 'personages' series. The act of transforming the individual 'lonely' elements of the five 'personages' into the supportive family group in *Quarantania 1* is an act of changing the visibility of the two different works. Like our fluctuating identities, Bourgeois is perhaps unconsciously recreating her self-portrait. I end this section with the quote from earlier in this paper, *"All the work of an artist is the realization of a self-portrait. But very often it is unconscious. Very often, you do not realize that you reveal yourself that much" (Galenson, 2009, p.239).*

Kate & Laura 2012 Katherine Opie Regen Project Los Angeles

9.3 Catherine Opie- Kate & Laura

The portrait labeled *Kate and Laura* (2012) is a work belonging to a larger project by the highly acclaimed American photographer Catherine Opie. The portrait is a tableaux of domestication and properness that is suddenly interrupted by a 'drop of blood' being stitched on the fabric stretched over an embroidery loop. The photograph has been meticulously constructed; every detail thought over and carefully planned, just as it is no mistake that the two subjects are the Mulleavy sisters, the founders and designers behind the high-end fashion brand Rodarte (Mizota, 2013). As one sister stitches a drop of blood, the other discreetly whispers that the blood drop is the blood that Opie no longer has. Opie comments that, " my other works are about my politics of representation, this one is more about the politics of being a fifty-two year-old woman in menopause" (Mélia, 2013, p.14) A portrait such as this is a step away from what Opie has done in the past, She explains, "I think they're very deep, they're very interestingly psychological, allegorical, and I had not really played in that territory before" (Mélia, 2013, p.14).

The portrait of the Mulleavy sisters is an allegory. Opie remarks, "It's an allegory for something almost as culturally scary as S&M: women and aging" (Ulaby, 2016, para. 14). The series of photographs that includes the Mulleavy portrait is Opie's medium for exploring the new aspect of her identity as a post-menopausal woman. Opie comments that, "blood has always been a medium that I personally have really valued, and it's really interesting when blood really leaves your life, even in that way that's on a monthly basis, where it's just like, 'Oh, that substance is gone'" (Ulaby, 2016, para.16). Opie considers this series to be a deeply personal body of work, exploring her interior world through photography was challenging, she remarks, "I'm really talking about this internal place that we inhabit as people, which is hard to try to figure out how to do in images" (Mizota, 2013, para.7). By the means of the indexical qualities of a staged photograph, Opie has figured it out, brilliantly portraying what menopause means to her and the stigma it holds in society. Opie has not labeled this particular photograph as a self-portrait, yet through her medium and without depicting any signs of her likeness, she has portray an intimate aspect of her identity in a photograph.

9.3.1 Photography- staged photography

The photograph *Kate and Laura* (2012) is presented as a 'portrait' of the Mulleavy sisters, yet the photograph, composed more in the spirit of a painting then a photograph, is not what we generally expect of a portrait. The intention of a portrait is to capture the likeness of it's subject, however, in this portrait, Opie reverses the intentionality; she points her camera in the direction of the sisters, but the focus is solely centered back onto herself. With Opie as subject, the sisters are merely actors in a play that facilitate in telling Opie's story rather then theirs.

The photograph *Kate and Laura* is reminiscent of Cindy Sherman's *Untitles Film Stills*. In Shermanesque style, Opie has created a fictitious setting and characters that enact a narrative. Like Sherman, Opie capitalizes on photography's realism, the scene, fabricated only for the camera is believable because it *is* a photograph and not a painting. As Waldon (1984) contends, "a photograph is always a photograph of something which actually exits…paintings needn't picture actual things" (p.250). This is because a photograph is indexical, it points to the fact that the photograph is a picture of an event that actually occurred, it is, "tangible evidence of a thing's existence" (Wells, 1996, P.348). Staging is also a tool used by Opie to tell her story. In staging the;

> Photographer consciously and intentionally creates events for the express purpose of making images thereof. This may be achieved by intervening in ongoing "real" events or by staging tableaux- in either case, by causing something to take place which would not have occurred had the photographer not made it happen (Colman, 1976, p.484).

Staging expands the photographer's creative practice beyond 'finding' a subject; instead they create their subject. As Robins points out, "The photograph, instead of being presented as a depiction of reality, was now something created to show us things that were felt rather than necessarily seen" (as cited in Wells, 1984, p.213). Staging is a powerful tool that allows a photographer to reflect and articulate ideas, thoughts and messages. We read it like a painting, but see it as a photograph.

9.4 Summery

For Dewey (1943/1980), objects of art are expressive, they speak many languages as they communicate through a medium. Dewey writes, "each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as completely in any other tongue" (p.100). In this last chapter I have presented three artists who specialize in three different mediums. I have elucidated how each artist utilizes their medium to express aspects of their identity, thus proving Dewey's statement. Although not all of the artworks I have presented are specifically labeled 'self-portrait' by the artist, they in some way reveal an aspect of their identity. I feel one last example is necessary in illuminating how powerful a non-representative portrait can be:

From 2010 until 2012, Catherine Opie shot the interior of Elizabeth Taylor's residence in Bel Air, California in a series titled, *700 Nimes Road*. Opie's photographs document the rich and plush lifestyle lived by one of Hollywood's most iconic legends (at the time sill living). When Opie was posed the question, "would you have liked to have made a regular portrait of Elizabeth Taylor?" Her answer was, "No". She explains, "No, I feel I've made the portrait of her by not looking at her and I like that idea of it" (Furguson, 2016, p.83).

10.0 Findings

Wonder is a good place to start this journey. Wonder is what drives me. Wonder is what leads the way when I become curious about something.

I sat at the library in a glass cubical that was made for private, quiet study. I was settled in for a long day of study, papers and books scattered around me, my computer in front of me, with the typical ten windows and two documents open. A teenage girl, light of foot, but eyes fixed on a mobile phone she carried walked past my cubical. She looked up only long enough to locate an empty cubicle just down the row from mine. She entered and closed the glass door behind her, half-sat herself on the chair and slumped over the desk, phone still in hands and eyes still on the screen. I figured she was streaming a series or watching something on you-tube, either way she was not bothering me. I went back to work. About ten minutes later movement from the girls cubical catches my eye. Just as I look up, the previously lifeless lump from the desk is now in the middle of the cubical, in mid jump. She lands and immediately goes to the desk, picks up her phone, studies it, puts it back down and proceeds to do the jump once again. This time, as she is on her way up into the air, she grabs her hair and flings it upward adding to the action happening before the camera that I assume she has set on her phone. This orchestrated jumping and flinging of hair goes on for at least seven or eight more times before she seems satisfied. Throughout the entire séance she never once looked in my direction, totally fixed on her efforts to capture the best version of herself while in midair. The last selfie must have satisfied her because she promptly left the cubical, and at the same time left me wondering.

My wonder goes to the fixation with the selfie. Capturing pictures of what we look like, at least the best out of seven or eight. I am guilty. I have been known to take a selfie or two as well. I cannot be a hypocrite and say that the selfie is a terrible thing, but at the same time I know that a photograph can communicate more than what we look like on the surface. After the girl left, I have not been able to work. I'm left looking at the empty cubicle, thinking. Do we really know who we are among all of the pictures we take? Are we really the face in the selfie, or is there more to us? And lastly, how then can we take a picture of the *inside* when we are always focusing on the *outside*. What I come away with during this study time is a knowing that I want to start my research journey working with the photographic image. I want to explore the possibilities of depicting the image of who I am on the inside and start to expand the definition of the self-portrait.

10.1 Photography

Before I even think about taking pictures, I know I need to have a structure, like the scaffolding that supports improvisation (Sawyer, 2011); I need scaffolding to support my work, symbols that will communicate my message.

The genre of photography I intend to work with is not about taking pictures of a pretty landscape or finding a subject in something interesting that captures the eye, it is about painting a picture purely for the camera, a staged photograph. Before I can paint that picture, telling the camera who I am, I need to dig deep and ask myself, who am I? How do I portray myself? What aspect of myself do I want to portray? And how can I portray them? I turn to two of the artists I have chosen to research, Catherine Opie and Tracey Emin. Both Opie and Emin[8] have used their art to reflect aspects of their aging. Their art influences me. I feel a connection to their work and know that I have most likely chosen these artists because of this connection. I turned fifty the last year. A milestone. I reflect quite a bit about age, and what it means for me. Reflecting in my thoughts is one thing; I look forward to handing them over to the creative process and letting that take over.

10.1.1 A chair

It is hard to say how the thought comes into my head, but it does. I realize that I want to use a chair as my main symbol, the scaffolding in the creative process. My chair, (actually four) is special to me. I feel it represents my life in Norway. It has supported me, as is a chairs main functional job. But it is also a sentimental object that represents support. It is interesting how an innate object can be given meaning, in this case a functional object that has been part of my life.

10.1.2 Clothesline

It is an unusually nice day. It's the kind of day where it is impossible to be inside and work. It's the kind of day where you drop what you are doing and enjoy the outdoors. I took advantage of the warm weather and hung a load of laundry on the cloths line. The load I hung just happened to be made up entirely of kitchen towels. Sitting in the sun, enjoying a cup of coffee I couldn't help but look at the newly hung towels. There was something about the clothesline, something more than the aesthetically pleasing symmetry of the towels hung neatly side by side or how they imposed order to the otherwise chaotic nature found in my backyard. It is kind of interesting how a realization enters the mind. It happens suddenly, the spark of intuition, or what Dewey (1934/2005) calls the "flash of revelation" (p.277). The intuitive spark of revelation that made me realize that what I saw hanging on the clothesline was a picture of my domestic identity. It was a simple picture of me, the mother, the wife, the woman who chose to stay at home and raise her kids, the back to basics, me.

In reviewing my notes, I was made aware of a connection to a basic teaching of Maxine

[8] Tracey Emin's exhibit from 2014, *The Last Great Adventure is You*, is a collection of self-portraits that address the subject of aging (Cooke, 2014).

Greene (2001). She was a staunch believer that an aesthetic experience had the ability to bring about a state of wide-awakeness, She explains that, “breakthroughs…occur, to the upsurges of the unexpected we may experience at certain moments of engagement with the works of art” (p.116). For Greene, the aesthetic experience was not only limited to engagement with the arts, but extended to experiences in nature as well (p.187). During an aesthetic experience, Greene (2001) believes, “We experience a sense of surprise oftentimes, an acute sense that things may look otherwise, feel otherwise, *be* otherwise than we have assumed–and suddenly the world seems new, with possibilities still to be explored” (p.116).

Halfway 2017 Karen Aarre

10.2 ‘Halfway’

The clothesline in itself could be enough for a self-portrait. I am reminded of Opie, who after shooting *700 Nimes Road*, a series of images of Elizabeth Taylor’s personal belonging, felt confident that she had captured Taylor’s portrait without having to actually *see* her (Furguson, 2016).

My journey on this day starts by taking pictures of the clothesline itself, next I brought out my chair and placed it in front of the clothesline, in the end I set up a tripod and start adding myself into the composition, experimenting with numerous poses in various states of dress and undress. The digital camera gives instant feedback. After every image I take, I evaluate and critique, looking at both the composition of the image, the technical settings and most of all how I feel the image captures something about me. Every picture I take is based on what changes I feel are necessary from the previous image, a perfect example of Schön's (1983) concept of *reflection-in-action*. With each shot I came closer to what I feel tells my story. Like starting on an uphill journey, it is hard to see the top of the mountain, until you actually reach the peak. Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) term *flow,* best describes my state during the days shoot, "like being carried away by a current" (p.181), totally absorbed in the task at hand and losing all track of time.

Sontag writes that, "to photograph people is to violate them" (p.14). In a similar vain, Barthes (1980) describes how he feels when he finds a camera pointed in his direction, he writes, "I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death" (p.14). Each time I lay on the chairs, waiting for the self-timer to release I think about what Sontag and Barthes have written, I ask myself, do I feel violated right now in this moment? No, I don't. I feel it is my way of painting my picture (just faster) but unlike a painting, a photograph takes a picture of something that has happened. It is indexical. Bazin (1960) writes, "the aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its power to lay bare the realities" (p.8). Maybe what I am seeking is a way to look back after the fact and see myself, like looking in a mirror that reflects the *inside* instead of the *outside*. Not death but life.

Where I've been and where I'm going 2017 Karen Aarre

10.3 Where I've been and where I'm going

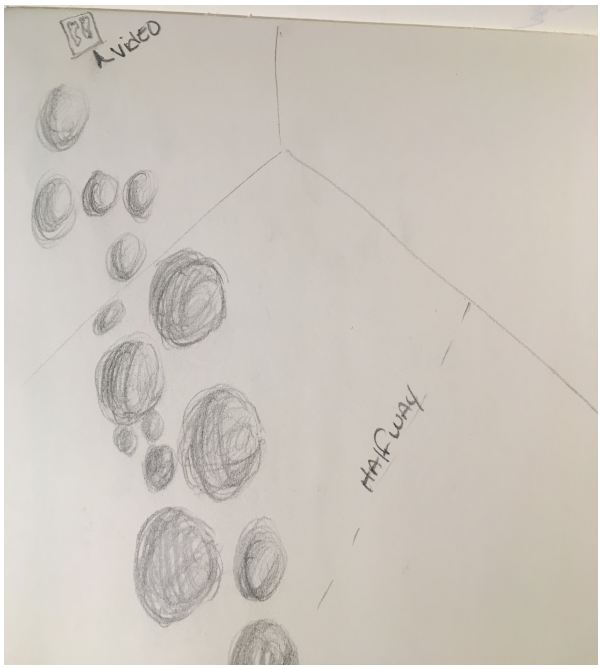
My next project in photography was a continuation in the same series as *Halfway,* but with a different approach. While *Halfway* was a spontaneous improvised photograph, *Where I've been and where I'm going*, was a well planned and thought concept. I chose to use a Zeiss Ikon Nettar from the late 1940's, and a Kodak Brownie Flash II (1957 -1960) that I found at a thrift store that happened to have film in it. Choosing analogue over digital meant that I could no longer enjoy the instant feedback digital technology offers; rather, feedback would only come after the films were developed. Earlier in my graduate studies, I had experimented drawing with light using pinhole photography at dusk and dawn. This technique allowed me to move in front of the open shutter without my image being recorded on the film. The only evidence of my presence in front of the camera was the light of a flashlight I drew with. It is this aspect that I found particularly interesting, being visible, yet invisible.

In the dark I set up the tripod and readied the cameras. I placed the chair in an open spot in the garden, happy for the thin layer of snow that covered the ground. I recruited the help of my daughter, her job was to open the shutter of the camera and shine a flashlight on me while I sat on the chair. After exposing my figure, with the shutter still open I walked around the chair turning the flashlight on and off to create the effect of small lights, representing the visible and the invisible.

Of the pictures taken, the most significant for me was from the Kodak Brownie's last unexposed frame on film that could easily be the same age as myself. Photoshop can never match a photograph taken on old film in affect or poignancy. The grainy quality, a fact of the physical aging process of the film, references my aging symbolically in the photograph. It is the punctum that has pricked me. McNiff (2007) writes, "in the creative process, the most meaningful insights often come by surprise, unexpectedly, and even against the will of the creator" (p.40). Borgdorff (2009) also talks about how we sometimes, "stumble across unexpected outcomes or surprising insights and far sights" (p.4). The outcome of this photograph was not a product of the careful planning I had taken, instead serendipity stepped in and took me by surprise and its result have again filled me with wonder. The photograph spans time and at the same time that it freezes time. When Barthes (1980) writes, "death is the *eidos* of [the] photograph" (p.15), he is referring to the fact that a photograph captures a moment that is no longer. The instant the shutter opens and closes the image is already part of the past; a glimpse of death is captured in a photograph. This photograph informs me of where I've been, it freezes a moment when I am, and it hints toward the future, which for every living being is eventually death.

10.3.1 Summary Photography

The photographs *Halfway* and *Where I've Been and Where I'm Going* were both products of intense thought, demonstrating that the creative process starts long before any images are shot. Reflective thinking about myself, digging deep to look for the 'things inside' was an integral part of the journey that not only informed me in my photographic practice, but spurred other projects as well. The creative process behind the making of each photograph played a role in my reflection. *Halfway* was a process of reflection-*in*-action, reflection during the process not only informed me of the qualities of the image, but also gave me incites about myself *in* the act of creating. *Where I've Been and Where I'm Going* is better defined as reflection-*on*-action, reflecting on the work that had taken place, informing me after the image was developed. Here I am reminded of Bergdorff's (2006) warning that we should not forget the end product of artistic research. I also feel a little like Matisse, who, according to Dewey said: "When a painting is finished, it is like a new-born child. The artist himself must have time for understanding it" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p.111). Even though I have focused my research on the process, I find that it continues even after the product is finished. Wesseling (2011) tells us that, " The work of art is not the end product of the artist's thinking, or just for a moment at best; it is an intermediate stage, a temporary halting of a never-ending thought process" (p.12).



Promise to myself 2018

Video/sound installation

sketch of *Promise to myself*

10.4 Promise to Myself

I touched upon a memory today. I am not sure how it was suddenly pulled from the archives of my memory, but I feel it has something important to tell me. The memory that surfaced today is a promise I made to myself.

At the time I'm not more than four years old. Bath time for me was always something I looked forward to. I could never wait for the bath to fill before getting in, and never got out until every last drop left the tub. On one of these occasions when I was waiting for the water to fill the tub, I realized that putting my toes in the stream of running water felt wonderful. Almost fifty years later I can still remember the feeling of the water between my toes, this unforgettable sensation is my connection between my four-year-old self and the person I am today. We are the same, yet different. The reason I remember this memory so vividly is because it was during that particular bath time my four year old self made a promise to herself, A promise that she would never forget the feeling of the water gushing over her toes, that she would always remember this particular bath time, and I always have.

After I latched onto this memory, I started thinking about how we form ourselves through our lifetimes. What events have molded the four-year-old into the woman I am today? When do we start making those life-changing choices for ourselves? I believe my promise was the pivotal moment where I made one my earliest cognitive decisions. Promising myself to never forget was the moment I took control and started shaping who I am.

Memories are our personal histories, Funch (2013) writes, "memory links one moment with the next in a lifelong chain of self-identities, so I am never the same, and yet I am always the same" (p.168). More than just our memories, I see the memories of the decisions that I have made throughout the coarse of my life as the chain that links who I was to who I am. Like stepping-stones, these are the moments that changed the coarse of my life, some more significant than others, some so challenging I had to jump a large distance, others where placed so close together they formed an easily walked path and there are still many more to come. Rollings (2004) calls this a persons 'archeology'. I like the idea of archeology because it references an interest to uncovering our history, to dig deep in order to find out who we are, as Kroger (2004) reminds us, "identity is what gives one reason to be" (p.63). We have to be willing to explore, willing to dig, because as Hamachek acknowledges:

> Knowing oneself, deeply and fully, involves facing oneself squarely and honestly. It opens the door to a simple, psychological truth: the self is not something with which individuals are born but something they create out of their experiences and interpersonal relationships (Hamachek, 2000, p.230).

A conceptual work that opens a path to understanding the importance of exploring our archeology is what I propose. Conceptual art is the vehicle that enables me to express this idea, LeWitt (1967) writes, "in conceptual art the idea becomes a machine that makes the art" (para. 2), he continues by saying, "the idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product" (para. 11).

10.4.1 Summary

Emin proclaims, " My work isn't about art, it is about life experiences…[my art] is about me, and I'm getting to know me much better" (Lewis-Smith, 2013, 12:20). Like Emin, I have focused only on me. Feeling somewhat egotistical, but at the same time understanding that being focused, or more correctly, in the state of wide-awakeness, I am able to dig deep, and face myself squarely and honestly. I am on a mental journey that takes me from the bath time such a long time ago to my present self who sits here writing, writing because I made a decision to seek a higher academic degree. All of the stepping-stones between the these two milestones have been my personal journey to where I am today and informs me of who I am, my personal identity. I am again remained of the last sentence in Nunez's (selfportrait.eu) definition of a self-portrait, where she states, "the self-portrait is a profound dialog with oneself, guided by the author's vulnerability". Conceptual art is an artistic process that is not based in a medium but rather in the mind. The 'punctum' hit me when I realized that *my secret* held more significance than a mere childhood memory, it informed me of who I am.

Uncovering-woodchips Process Uncovering

10.5 Uncovering

During my undergraduate studies in art education, my class was given an assignment that would launch us into our next topic of study, the three-dimensional world of sculpture. Our mission was to pick a work of sculpture on campus and experience it with every sense of our body, a full engagement with the artwork. The entire class left the classroom like second-graders going outside for recess. What I learned that day was that sculpture is haptic. Barbara Hepworth, the famous British sculptor insists that, “every sculpture must be touched. It is part of the way you make it, it is our first sensibility, the first one we have when we are born” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018). I felt that if I was going to investigate the process of a creative practice, it was important to include a medium that was tactile, one where I could work physically with my body.

Louise Bourgeois once said, “Sculpture is a problem to be resolved, it is a pleasure to find a solution! But after you have found the solution, you let go of the object- so that the purpose of sculpting is really self knowledge” (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 4:00). Bourgeois’ statement inspires me to ‘find myself’ in a sculpture. I want to locate a problem, find a solution and know myself.

My journey starts with two wood carving tools, a hammer and one large piece of the stem from a plum tree my neighbor cut down several years ago. My idea is to ‘uncover’; I wish to uncover the nature of the tree, to see what is under the bark, discover its rings, smell its wood, and find it’s core. The tree was at one time a living organism. It has its own history, a history that started as a seed then grew from a sapling to a full-grown fruit-bearing tree and is now the material I use to express myself through the creative process. Like the tree, I too have a history, in the process of ‘uncovering’ the trees history, I hope to ‘uncover’ and discover a little more of what is found under my bark, and within my core, a peice my personal history.

I start without a sketch, or pre-planned vision of what I intend to create; what is important is that I let the wood dictate how I will proceed. I start pealing the bark, taking away the trees protective layer, that reminds me of the visage we present to the world. It protects us, but it doesn't always tell our story. I dig deeper. The outer layer of wood is soft and gives little resistance to the carving knife. I go from the earthy smell of the bark to the fresh clean scent of wood. There is actually a touch of plum smell as well. The wood is light in color, but as soon as I carve a little deeper it turns darker, more compact. As I work I recall a documentary of Louise Bourgeois where she calls sculpting an aggressive act (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 1:59). I understand her statement now as I violently chip away at the wood. As I carve I reveal special qualities the wood has hidden from view, each new discovery is reflected back onto myself. I notice the rings that begin to grow closer together as I reach the core, they are not always symmetrical, thick in some areas more compact in others, a sign that the tree was a dynamic living organism. I think about what growth rings I might have, adaptations, growth spurts, and lean times all recorded in my lines. I uncover a vein of red, a beautiful line that runs longitudinally up the trunk like the linea nigra of pregnancies past. A crack forms, instead of deeming it ugly and unwanted I try to elevate its beauty. I reflect over my aging, I think about my imperfections, the wrinkles of age that get deeper with every year. When I come to the core the tree makes me work harder. The wood is compact and not easily worked. The process is slow, but meditative. I have time to let my mind wander as I carve. It is important that I have no distractions, no music, only the sounds of nature and hammer to chisel. I make sure I am in a wide-awake state. I stop often to put my tools down and feel with my hands the progress I am making. Nimkulrat (2009) writes that, according to Merleau-Ponty, "the tactile experience gained through touching the material could establish a connection with [the] consciousness, thus recalling memories of experiences from [the] past" (p.66). Carving incorporates more then touch; it engages all of my senses, multiplying the connections with my consciousness, making me more aware of my memories, my surroundings and myself.

Each time I am done for the day, I save the woodchips that have accumulated during my work. It is an important reminder of the tree that was, and the work accomplished, both physical and mental.

10.5.1 Summary

Tin (2013) writes, "making is the practical dimension of culture, it transforms matter, and it articulates meaning, making has a cognitive dimension: it makes sense" (p.1). Making a sculpture made sense to me. It gave me a dimension that I did not find in photography or conceptual art, it also gave me a new dimension in which I could learn about myself. During the creative process I was able to reflected both *in* and *on* action, I easily found flow, and appreciated the meditative qualities sculpting offered. The 'thinking' was centered within the practice of actual creating. I let wonder engulf me, "took a step back to let things speak to [me]" (van Manen & Adams, 2010, p.442), and I listened. All forms of creativity are engaging, but I agree with Burton's statement that:

> Materials bring responses into focus for the mind, so they simultaneously act as vehicles of reflection provoking new shades of meaning and enriching the immediate significance of the originating thought, memory, or event. This on-going dialectic between action with a material and reflection on the outcome engages [the makers] thinking, feeling, and sensing" (Burton, 2001, p.38).

Having a material to physically work with meant that I had a direct line of communication through the creative process between the tree and myself. As I carved I 'uncovered' special attributes hidden in the tree. This in turn triggered my feelings, emotions and wonder.

Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2008) philosophy places the body as the primary site of knowing the world as opposed to the consciousness, he writes, "it is our interactions with the world and our bodies that place us in the world" (xvi). Tactically forming and handling a material engaged all of my senses. It was my body informing me of who I am.

11.0 Conclusion

Pinar (1998) recounts a lecture he attended by Maxine Greene, he remembers that in mid speech she stopped and paused and then asked the question, "who am I?" the question was phrased in such a way that it was both to herself and the audience, she answered, "I am who I am not yet" (Pinar, 1998, p.1). Her words echo Socrates who is attributed to have stated, "The unexamined life is not worth the living" (Scholtz, 2006, p.2). Socrates believed that Self-knowledge was the most important knowledge one could pursue, "he knew that he didn't know" (Scholz, 2006, p.2). The French renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne mused that man often looks everywhere else rather then at his own self for knowledge. He and surely Socrates as well found inspiration in the aphorism chiseled above a doorway of the temple of Delphi that read, "know thyself" (Scholz, 2006, p.1). For Montaigne, the commandment from the god at Delphi, "look back into your self; get to know your self; hold on to your self" (Kramer, 2009, para.4) was his lifelong passion. Louise Bourgeois obviously inspired by Montaigne, amusingly commented that, "if he had been given to talk a little bit more he would have said 'know yourself- *and you will be happy*'" (Cajori & Wallach, 2008, 4:20) She added the '*you will be happy'* to Montaigne's proverb because she knew firsthand the benefits of self-knowing through her lifelong art practice. Her art was always about getting to know herself and that made her happy. Tracey Emin's oeuvre is all about herself, getting to know herself and learning about herself. Catherine Opie as well uses her practice as a sounding board to issues that she finds important to her identity.

After studying the art and art practices of Emin, Opie and Bourgeois I have learned that exploring aspects of identity through art does not mean that you must confine yourself to the traditional self-portrait. These three artists have shown me that a non-representational self-portrait, or as I have argued, an expanded definition of a self-portrait, is a powerful means of expressing the ineffable qualities of our personal identities. An expanded self-portrait lets us break away from the stereotypes that can categorize and 'box' us in, it informs us of our personal identities rather then only focusing on social identity and gives us freedom to explore in any medium, through any material, using any method.

I found in my research that the communicative properties within the creative process has the ability to 'speak to us' and inform us of aspects of our identity. Each medium and material and even the approach can change the communication between the artist and artwork. Dewey (1934/2005) explains, "for each art has its own medium and that medium is especially fitted for one kind of communication. Each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as completely in any other tongue" (p.110). Engaging in the creative process, working with different mediums that allow us to communicate beyond ordinary discursive language, we are able to learn about ourselves, if we are willing to listen.

Through the concept of the expanded definition of a self-portrait, art educators have the opportunity to continue the teachings of Socrates, Montaigne and Greene. Becoming bilingual, trilingual or even multilingual in the languages of the arts gives students a greater opportunity to express themselves and hopefully at the same time get to know themselves a little better.

12.0 References

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