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A CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE IN ART THERAPY

by


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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of a client's experience in art therapy and to demonstrate a research approach that could be useful in gaining knowledge about art therapy phenomena .

A phenomenological study was designed and implemented. A purposive sample of one client was selected who fit the criteria of: having participated in art therapy and experienced it as being therapeutic, being able to articulate her experience, and having completed her art therapy program.

Descriptive data were generated using an unstructured, in-depth interview approach which consisted of the client viewing and discussing individual artworks she had created in an art therapy group over time. The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed. The focus for the interview was on the client's retrospective accounts of her experience in art therapy including her experience of: the art therapist and group members, the making, the looking at and discussing the art object, and how she experienced art therapy in her day-to-day life. Following an exhaustive description in the presence of each painting the client was also asked to describe her present experience of the artwork. The researcher strove to attain an attitude of openness, and set aside assumptions as they arose throughout the phases of the data generation and analysis. A phenomenological analysis of the data was conducted that included methods adapted from Giorgi, Wertz, and Colaizzi. An elemental structure was imposed on the data and the findings presented both in a unified structural form and as thematic and descriptive constituents of what the client experienced and how the experience occurred for each element of a client's experience in art therapy. The findings are as follows:

1. Through the art therapist visually and verbally guiding the client out to the art object and repeatedly demonstrating acceptance, respect and care (for her art object as well); the client experienced the discovery of a new point of view and a location within herself from which she could interrelate.
2. In making the art object through intentionally and physically engaging in contacting and expressing her inner experience, making a transition between inner and outer, opening to other objects through an analogical process, and through forming meaning; the client experienced temporality, spatiality, connection, contact, being visible and vulnerable, being motivated to act, dynamic energy and increasing awareness.
3. In looking at and discussing the art object through separating from the art object, discussing it with others, looking at the art object in various ways, and forming meaning; the client experienced a sense of self and other, discovering and receiving

awareness, an ordering and integrating of experience with a possible change in world view, and having an inner and outer connection.

4. In looking in the present the client's previous experience with the artwork gave her a starting point from which she could vary her point of view or locate her experience. She experienced relationship between (relationship or lack of relationship), increasing awareness and understanding, an evolving sense of self, becoming visible and wanting to be seen.
5. In her day-to-day living in the world through using some of the processes that she used in art therapy the client experienced a heightened awareness, a flow and connection to her experiencing, being intentional, being located (having presence of mind, being physically embodied), having visibility and being visible.

The findings were discussed and interpreted in the context of psychodynamic and humanistic art therapy theory and the significance of the research approach.

The results of this study have implications for art therapy theory, research and practice, and for counsellors who use art in a therapeutic context. The findings validate and illuminate various art therapy theoretical viewpoints, refine or more accurately describe art therapy phenomena, and allow new understandings to emerge. The study contributes to understanding of a client's experience in art therapy and demonstrates the usefulness of a phenomenological research method in exploring this experience.

Exam

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The research process involved three different participants. The first two did not continue because of ill health but contributed in some way to the study, the first participant in particular. The woman whose art therapy experience this research seeks to understand, was a wonderful participant and I have learned a lot from going through this process with her.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my foundation - my beloved companion, Colin Bradley and Dr. E. Smit. Spike, my faithful dog for 18 years, did not pass away during the last few days of writing the thesis - thank you Spike.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### IMPETUS FOR THE STUDY

Research often arises from an interesting, curious or anomalous phenomenon that one observes, or stumbles across and that the research then seeks to explain, explore or describe (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

The initial impetus for this study arose out of my own lack of understanding and inability to articulate what art therapy is and how it occurs, even though I have both studied and practiced it. In addition to this, I observed that art therapy as a profession does not seem to be able to interact with other professions in a significant way and is generally not taken very seriously. I undertook my research to address these problems but found that it became increasingly clear that the main motivation for doing the work has risen from my personal past.

My personal experience of art includes growing up with a parent who - to this day - continues to make and populate the house with weird, wonderful paintings and clay pieces of his mind creatures. He appears to have a strong relationship with everything he makes and becomes intensely absorbed when he stands and looks at his art work. Although he looks, and is interested in art in the world, he does not objectively judge what he does by an art world standard. My perception is that he does not see his art in the context of the larger world. This is, instead, a deeply personal experience and expression; however, his motivation and interest is no less significant. Doing this research has something to do with my perception and my changing experience of my father's involvement with his art work. I originally did not view what he did as art because he did not objectively view it in a larger context. I now look beyond the finished product and see his devotion to making these unique expressive pieces. I see him as an artist because of the personal integrity of his pursuit. In doing this research, I have become aware that some of my motivation is not, as

yet, accessible to consciousness. It has, however, given me a deeper appreciation of my father's pursuit and a broad multi-layered experience and concept of art.

My own experience of art has included a reverence for ART, an elevation of art to an almost sacred level. I saw my own art in a larger context, and what I did was never good enough for me. I strove to create a sacred object - ART. As I worked with form and structure in one of my own paintings, I experienced that doing this took me somewhere on an infinite journey of molding and forming. To follow this path would require that I surrender my day-to-day world and all its responsibilities, and enter a different realm. At the time, it did not seem like I could exist in both. Although I chose to remain in the "real" world, this experience gave me a personal glimpse of an entry into another world through art. Even though I did not make this commitment, there have been periods in my life when I have needed to make and be involved in art. This need often was preceded by intense involvement in highly structured or intellectually challenging situations that drained my personal stamina. In these instances, the doing of art felt balancing and sensually satisfying. It was also interesting but not only in an intellectual sense. It gave me some sense of an existence beyond intellectual pursuits or personal problems.

My involvement with art therapy includes some experience of a personal process with art while I was in training, learning theoretical concepts and looking at and discussing art products created in art therapy, and working as an art therapist with others. In my own art therapy process, I felt deeply connected to my art work. I did not see it in the context of the larger art world but had a deeper experience of my self through looking at my art. In working with others, I could see how involving and meaningful an art therapy experience could be.

In examining the art therapy literature, it is clear that there are different ideas about the role of art in the healing process. Some art therapists believe that therapy lies in the doing of the art. They emphasize the mobilization of creative forces, working with images, and the non-verbal formulation of meaning through the art experience (Kramer,1971;

Adamson, 1984; MacLagan, 1989). Art therapists that call themselves art psychotherapists use the above as a starting point for verbal discussion and the promotion of insight and understanding. (Naumberg, 1966; Landgarten, 1981; Wadeson, 1980b).

Beyond but including my personal motivations, the impetus for this study is rooted in the human experience of art and the attempts to understand this in terms of its potential for use in therapy: to help people experience themselves and exist in the world more completely.

In the rest of the research study I refer to myself in the more traditional form - the researcher - to assist the reader in assuming their own point of view.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In examining the literature, and from personal experience in trying to explain art therapy to others, it is clear that a problem in art therapy is that it has not yet been articulated in a way that captures its own "*essence, nature, and being*" (Rubin, 1984, p.193). This problem is illustrated or reinforced by the following:

1. The essential principles of art therapy remain vague and ill-defined (Byrne, 1986; Fuller, 1984; Robbins, 1987b; Rubin, 1984). There is a tendency to use the theory and language of more established disciplines such as art education, aesthetics, psychology and psychiatry to make sense of and communicate what art therapy is (Dalley, 1984; Fuller, 1984; Rubin, 1984). "*Meaningful theoretical constructs have not yet been developed from the matrix of art therapy itself*" (Rubin, 1984, p. 190).
2. Controversy over the function of art in therapy has led to some polarization within the profession. The art-as-therapy orientated art therapists believe that the healing process takes place in the mobilization of creative forces and the formulation of meaning at the non-verbal pictorial level (Adamson, 1984; Kramer, 1971). In contrast, art psychotherapists believe in the value of the creative process and art products to promote discussion for insight and understanding (Birtchnell, 1984; Naumberg,

1966). They tend to focus more on psychological processes. The difference between the two appears to lie in the degree of emphasis placed on the art experience and on verbal discussion. Whether art therapists choose to do art-as-therapy or art-in-therapy seems to relate to the personal identification of the art therapist as an artist or as a therapist. *"The question of how to relate one's identity as an artist to one's identity as a therapist has always been critical for art therapists"* (Rubin, 1987, p. 316).

3. The complexity of the art therapy experience (see Figure 1) makes it difficult to grasp as a whole. The essential elements of art therapy consist of the element of art, the element of therapy, and the myriad of relationships between (Rubin, 1984). The element of art consists of the materials, processes and products. The element of therapy consists of understanding development, dynamics and deviations, and therapeutic relationships and guide-lines. Art therapy takes place with different populations, in different settings and in different modes, such as the individual, group or family. The complexity in art therapy has led to a tendency to isolate and examine the parts (Rubin, 1984). Art therapy, however, is a human event. *"Human events are generally characterized by vastly complex, interdependent elements which work together or against one another within a world structure of constant movement"* (McNiff, 1986, p. 283 ).
4. The tendency to isolate and examine the parts is reinforced by the desire to prove the effectiveness of art therapy *"using research designs and methodologies based on mainstream, quantifiable, reductionist scientific thought"* (Junge, 1989, p. 75). There is a call to develop research approaches more suited to the nature of art therapy (Gantt, 1986; Junge, 1989; McNiff, 1987; Rubin, 1984).

A relevant source of information may lie in the subjective experience of those involved in art therapy. In examining the literature, the client's experience of art therapy is often described in terms of the therapist's observations and theoretical framework. The non-verbal aspects of art therapy, and the creation of a concrete art product lend themselves

to being described and articulated from the viewpoint of the therapist (Rubin, 1984). *"It puts us on the wrong track if we put the 'observers' thinking on the centre of the stage instead of the 'makers' thinking."* There is a need to be cognizant of both (Byrne, 1986, p.31-2). There is a need to understand the subjective experience, otherwise objectivity will be in *"danger of fatal distortion"* (Field, 1957, p. 147).

#### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this study to gain understanding of a client's experience in art therapy. The study is based on one adult client's retrospective accounts of her experience in art therapy. The descriptions were obtained in a series of in-depth interviews while having the client look at each of the art products she had created in an art therapy group. This created an interactive situation between the client and the art work, as well as with the researcher. The client therefore was engaged with the art so that one aspect did not preclude the other - a parallel to the original art therapy context. Understanding implies apprehending, *"it allows for grasping of patterns and structural relationships, usually held together by some qualitative grasp of 'wholeness'....it represents an attitude more congenial to connecting 'knowing' with 'art'"* (Beittel, 1973, p.7). In trying to gain understanding of a client's experience in art therapy the researcher apprehended, constituted and described the structures and qualities that emerged from the client's verbal descriptions.

The purpose of this study is also to demonstrate a research approach that may be useful in gaining knowledge about phenomena that occur in art therapy that are presently recognized and articulated in language from other disciplines. There is a need for exploratory research studies that contribute to an understanding of art therapy that arises out of its own nature and essence (Rubin, 1984).

The elements of art therapy (see Figure 1) experienced by the client that are considered in this research study are: a) the making of an art object, b) looking at and discussing this art object c) and the presence and participation of an art therapist. The

meaning that arises from the interrelationships between these essential elements is explored and described. The mode of art therapy, in this case group art therapy, and the specific issues that the client brings to art therapy are mentioned but are not the focus of the study. For example, it is not the purpose of the study to examine the effect of group art therapy or to look at the use of art therapy for issues having to do with sexual abuse or developmental trauma. It is the purpose of the study to focus on the client's experience of the art and the art therapist, the essential elements of art therapy.

The Research Question is as follows:

What meaning is revealed in a client's descriptions of her experience of artworks that were created in art therapy over time? Specifically:

- 1) What is a client's experience in art therapy? (When a client is in art therapy what does she experience in making art, and in looking at and discussing her art in the presence of an art therapist? What appears to the client?)
- 2) How does a client experience art therapy? (Through what activities [behaviours, mental processes etc.] does she come to have this experience? This question does not imply cause and effect but rather represents the movement, interrelationships or style through which the experience comes to be).

The researcher explicated thematic and descriptive constituents of a client's experience in art therapy. A constituent is concerned with structure and remains mindful of the whole. This differs from a part that stands in isolation, just as the apex is a constituent of a whole triangle and implies the rest of the triangle (Giorgi, 1990). In discovering the constituents, the researcher remained mindful of the coherence of the experience.

The importance of doing the research, lies in the need to disclose the foundations of phenomena for the purpose of understanding (Colaizzi, 1973). Understanding is important, not only to articulate what art therapy is but also for therapeutic practice. *"The therapists ability to convey to the client that they understand something of his/or her experience in the way he or she experiences it can be seen as crucial to the client thriving"*

(Kegan, 1982 p. viii). Empathic responding by the therapist is necessary for the client's development in therapy (Rogers, 1951). Understanding can also help the art therapist to be more intentional in the practice of art therapy.

### Significance and Implications for Art Therapy

Art therapy is not well defined (Byrne, 1986; Rubin 1984, 1987; Ulman, 1975). However understanding based on descriptions arising from a client's art therapy experience may contribute to a new articulation of art therapy in language that grasps its "*essence, nature, and being*" (Rubin, 1984, p.193).

The most common type of research approach in art therapy is the narrative case study (Rosal, 1989). Although the narrative case study approach provides rich descriptions and often contains the qualities of the experience, the experience itself is not explicated from the data, and the client's experience and artworks are often interpreted through the observations and theoretical framework of the researcher. For example Kramer (1987) recognizes and describes a client's experience in art making as sublimation, a psychoanalytic concept. As in this example, research and literature in art therapy appears to be grounded in the observations of the therapist. The non-verbal nature of art therapy, the difficulty many clients have in articulating their experience, and art therapists vital use of visual perception and observation in art therapy may contribute to this.

There is a call for research that respects the emergence of meaning and allows the phenomena to speak for themselves (McNiff, 1986). The need for new research approaches is frequently discussed in the literature (Junge,1989; McNiff, 1986, 1987; Rubin, 1984, 1987; Rosal, 1989; Wadeson, 1989). This study represents a contribution to a research approach in art therapy that is grounded in the experience of the client. The researcher constitutes the meaning from a client's verbal descriptions and does not translate it into another profession's theoretical viewpoint.

### Significance and Implications for Counselling

Both art therapy and imagery-based approaches to verbal therapy, as put forward by Farr (1988), focus on the imaginal mode of imagery processing (Lusebrink, 1989). They are thought to be similar in the way they contribute to therapeutic effectiveness in that (a) they can provide access to unconscious processes and evoke physiological and emotional reactions, (b) they can produce therapeutic change without the mediating effect of verbal interpretation, and (c) they can motivate and be predictive of behaviour in that ideas can be presented in imagery before they become manifest in behaviour and verbal cognitions (Kramer, 1971; Levick, 1983; McNiff, 1981; Naumberg, 1953; Rubin, 1984; Ulman, 1975; Sheikh and Jordan, 1983). However, there are two fundamental differences between art therapy and imagery-based approaches to verbal therapy: The client must engage more with the world as he or she deals with the physical properties of art media, and the organization and elaboration of artistic forms requires a more expressive and perceptually structured level of activity in that there is a complex interplay of perception, kinesthetic action, sensations, cognition, emotions and imagery (Lusebrink, 1989).

This research study will contribute to counselling through increased understanding of a client's experience of art that has been created in a therapeutic context. This is of particular relevance to those counsellors who use imagery and art in their counselling practice.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will examine the theoretical context in which art therapy is currently embedded, and the status of research in art therapy.

Currently art therapy phenomena are usually understood and articulated from the theoretical viewpoints of other disciplines, particularly psychological or psychoanalytic theories. Psychodynamic approaches continue to dominate art therapy (Rubin, 1987).

This

*.....may be due to either a developmental lag in the translation of theory into therapy or it may be due to the very nature of art, which makes theories assuming the existence of a dynamic unconscious intrinsically appealing. Artists, after all, often feel as if 'inspiration' comes mysteriously from their own depths, and most art therapists are artists themselves, as well as trying to inspire creativity in others. (Rubin, 1987 p. xx).*

Humanistic orientations have also gained some popularity. The emphasis on creativity, the potential for self-actualization and view that a person must be studied as a whole, are also in harmony with those with an artistic bent (Garai, 1987). The behavioural, cognitive, and developmental approaches are not prevalent in art therapy. They share an emphasis on learning or educational aspects and the development of new skills and behaviours and are more likely to be used with those clients who have significant intellectual or sensory deficiencies as well as social and emotional problems (Rubin, 1987).

A brief overview is provided of the theoretical constructs of the psychodynamic and popular humanistic art therapy approaches with a particular frame of reference for viewing the individual - whether treated alone, with family members or in a group. These will be discussed from the viewpoint of some of the "founding persons" and theoreticians of art therapy. The cognitive, behavioural and developmental approaches will remain beyond the scope of this study. These approaches are not as commonly used as the psychodynamic and humanistic orientations, and did not appear as applicable to the participant in this research study because she had emotional problems, not a physical or intellectual handicap.

The psychodynamic and humanistic approaches do contain developmental stages in their understanding of personality development as well (Rubin, 1987). The purpose of this overview is to provide examples of how some of the phenomena that occur in art therapy are understood and articulated. The overview is broad and some of the concepts are not described in detail. This is in keeping with the way the research proceeded. Theoretical concepts were examined after the research was completed in order to remain open to the phenomena as it was experienced by the participant. A more in-depth discussion of some of the art therapy concepts is found in the interpretation of the findings to illuminate what has been found.

Following this, a review of the status of research in art therapy demonstrates the need for new research approaches that are grounded in the experience of the client in order to develop a body of understanding that springs directly from the source.

#### ART THERAPY IN THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The psychodynamic approaches in art therapy include those that draw from Freudian theory, Neo-Freudian theory with a focus on object relations, ego psychology or self psychology, and Jungian theory.

1. The Freudian oriented theorists believe that art provides a concrete visual object which, through discussion can enhance the analytic experience of insight (Naumberg, 1966; Rubin, 1987). The development of the capacity to symbolize can also assist in bringing unconscious mental representations into conscious awareness (Henzell, 1984; Wilson, 1987) and can serve a cathartic as well as a communicative purpose. The emphasis is on uncovering and integrating the underlying conflicts and dynamics. Therapy also takes place through the sublimation of aggressive and destructive drives in the creative activity of art making (Kramer, 1971, 1987). Almost from its initial theoretical beginnings, there has been an emphasis on art-as-therapy through non-verbal sublimation of energy and development of symbolization through the art making process, or on viewing the art

making and the art product as a helpful addition to developing insight and understanding (where more conscious and verbal cognitive processes are likely to occur). Ulman (1987) has integrated Kramer's art-as-therapy and Naumberg's art psychotherapy and both remain within a Freudian tradition. The proportions of art and of therapy in art therapy are viewed as varying within a wide range, not only between individuals but also from session to session.

*Communication and insight may take priority over development of art expression. On the other hand when no fruitful consolidation of insight can be foreseen, the exposure of conflicts may be deliberately avoided in favour of artistic achievement. (Ulman, 1961 p. 20)*

2. The Neo-Freudian oriented art therapists have found the more contemporary analytic outlook contained in object relations theory, ego psychology and self psychology, particularly helpful in working with developmental disorders of childhood that result in borderline or narcissistic personality formations. As their concepts are also useful for viewing healthy development, creativity, and art as a personally useful symbolic object, they will be included in this overview. Theorists such as Robbins (1987a), Lachman-Chapman, (1987). and Weir (1987) appear to incorporate elements of object relations, ego psychology and self psychology in their approaches, although they may place a stronger emphasis on one theoretical orientation.

In object relations theory, the art form is viewed as a container or organizer that mirrors internal object relationships and their associated defences and developmental problems (Robbins, 1987a). The term "object" refers to the other, that which is not the self. The art object is considered to be useful not only for the development of insight and understanding, such as cognitive awareness, but also for exploring and developing relationships between self and other. The art is seen as being particularly useful in helping to build and not just uncover psychic structures.

Both ego psychology (Weir, 1987) and self psychology (Lachman-Chapman, 1987) theorists discuss the importance of the development of the capacity to create a

symbolic object - a transitional object (Winnicott 1971) - to protect the ego from the initial pain of separation and, through this creative ability, to give more autonomy to the self. This moves the self from an initial fused state with an external object such as mother, to more of a differentiated and individuated state. The spatial relationship with the art object is viewed as a potential or transitional space where the mind can play with various relationships and the ego has the capacity to shift in levels of fusion and differentiation. A self-psychology theorist (Lachman-Chapman, 1987) also focuses on the mirroring aspect of the art object and art therapist but with more of an emphasis on the empathic relationship that the client develops with the self and the therapist. This is based on a belief that at some point in normal development a child must feel that exhibitionistic display is safe and effective. The child is assured of this by the mirroring or gleam in mother's eye (Kohut, 1978), or in this case, the gleam of approval in the therapist's eye. The multiple layers of meaning in an art object provide the potential of a deeply empathic response on a non-verbal level. The art work serves as a transitional object and investment in the art as a self object, serves the purpose of building internal psychic structure. This is viewed as reinforcing the primary relationship to the inner self and fostering a sense of self-cohesion which can aid in development. Thus, art and creativity are seen as a way not only to relieve tension but also to build ego strength. A self object is defined as a person or thing that is valued for its function in enhancing oneself. This differs from a true object, which is valued and related to in his, her or its own right .

3. The use of art in therapy with a Jungian orientation (Edwards, 1987; Robinson, 1984; Wallace, 1987) affirms respect for and trust in the imagery as a symbolic and potentially insight-provoking synthesis of internal and external realities. The symbolic image is considered to be neither wholly transpersonal nor wholly personal, but deriving from and bridging many levels of the psyche. Looking at images in many contexts is encouraged, such as viewing images in terms of collective unconscious archetypes, or cultural images and myths. The Jungian perspective treats images as communications from

the psyche to be understood on their own terms and on many levels. The image is "personified" and a client is encouraged to accept it as having a subjective reality that can speak for itself. The client is encouraged to enter into an active relationship with the image by actively stimulating imaginative inquiry and dialogue, the essence of "active imagination" (Edwards, 1987, p.98). However an image can never be adequately described or explained, no matter how true certain interpretations may be in some sense. The image is not viewed as a symptom or a work of art but a living thing to interact with. In this way, one can never interpret and close down an image because one can never know it in its entirety. The art work serves as a mediator between therapist and client, inner and outer reality, and past, present and future. Wallace (1987) conceptualized looking at the art work as following three steps: (a) looking at the art work, (b) noticing, perceiving it in more detail, and c) seeing, truly recognizing its meaning.

Gestalt-based theoretical orientations (Rhyne, 1984; 1987) and those based on phenomenology (Betensky, 1987) appear as two of the main humanistic art therapy approaches.

1. A phenomenology orientation (Betensky, 1987) is interested in the study of phenomena as they present themselves in consciousness as immediate experiences. This approach emphasizes the act of seeing as being of vital importance for authentic experiencing. The client is guided by the art therapist into the intentional perception and study of their art, as truly seeing the art object may introduce new possibilities for them. The concept of intentionality implies a directional focus and, because of it, man can intentionally look at things and discover that they are meaningful to him. Intentionality also means that our consciousness always relates to somebody or something. It is always directed toward the world and is in dialogue with the world. One cannot exist without the other. Intentionality of consciousness resides in the body and is not separate from our body. Our whole body sees along with our eyes. The structural components of artworks are viewed as conveying emotional meanings more acutely and representing the inner

reality of the client more accurately than the symbolic content which is presumed to be more on a disguised level. Descriptions rather than explanations or interpretations are sought and, in this way, the therapist assists in the unfolding of private meanings contained on various levels in the art object. The ability to perceive patterns in and between artworks is believed to lead to the ability to discern patterns of behaviour and to present possibilities for change. Self discovery through looking at one's own art expressions can lead to integration and increase intentional involvement in the world.

2. Art therapy with a gestalt orientation (Rhyne, 1984, 1987) emphasizes the enactment of forms and ideas through different sensory modalities. The kinesthetic, and visual senses would be emphasized in the making of and looking at the art work but not to the exclusion of other forms of sense perception. For example, someone may be asked to give sound to something they had made as well. The structural characteristics of drawings are viewed to be isomorphic, similar in form, as inner psychological structure and, therefore, exploring and manipulating these outer structures is viewed as a potential way to access and change the inner self. Visual language through form and movement is emphasized through art which sends and receives messages through the senses. Gestalt art therapy is interactive and here-and-now orientated, with the art therapist participating in an authentic way in aiding the client's own interpretation of her art work. In this way, it encourages individual responsibility and self actualization. The focus is on increasing awareness through the activity of the art making and through the discussion and interaction with the finished art product and the art therapist. This provides an opportunity to complete a gestalt, to make a whole, by experiencing directly in the present "unfinished business" from the past and by integrating unknown and fragmented parts of the self.

Although the above are some of the major theoretical approaches in art therapy, in practice an eclectic blend of approaches and techniques are often used (Rubin, 1984; Wadson, 1987).

Rubin (1984 pp.193-198) made an attempt to initiate a process of collaborative theory-building. She views this as a necessary and important development for art therapy to undertake. Her theory will be included here because it is an attempt to describe art therapy without using the theoretical concepts of other disciplines.

Involvement with an art object facilitates a new way of seeing oneself and having some agency. One has both a sense of self and a sense of otherness about these objects that are created by the self. This is similar to the concept of the transitional object but not quite the same. There is both a sense of fusion and loss of boundaries with the art object along with a heightened sense of separateness. This is extremely important in constructing an internal self-representation, as the self is seen in relationship to its environment. The art object can be objectively viewed as non-self, identified with, or dealt with in any way that can help the person maintain their psychic equilibrium. The creative situation in art therapy provides for an experience of freedom of expression, yet also an experience of channelling energies in a constructive way. There is a natural sense of movement and rhythm to the art process.

The creative process allows one to experience all parts of the mind. It encourages more imagistic holistic thought processes and also uses the organizing part of the mind to give it form. These modes of thought must be integrated or synthesized for art to be successful. This is perhaps art's greatest value to therapy- that it requires the integration of so many separated, isolated parts of the mind and aspects of human experience. This can be viewed as

*.....an integration of inner and outer worlds, of self and non-self, of good and bad, of primary and secondary processes, of matter and mind, or of any other such polarities (Rubin, 1984, p. 196).*

Art in therapy takes place in the presence of someone else in a unique and varied role. An art therapist may at times teach, observe, analyze, reflect, support, guide or be a symbolic object onto which the client projects. The art therapist facilitates the client's journey into the self and out of the self, and in a very concrete way, into the world.

Art therapists make available a wide range of experiences through which the client can make visible and eventually accept aspects of self that have been denied. The work requires acting on and trying to represent using physical things so that the client is engaged in trying to come to grips with aspects of the real world. The art therapist is there to help with distorted perception so the client can accept what is really there. There is an integration of the physical self with the more intellectual images of the self. The body is always present and active in some way. This multi-modal aspect of art therapy, with physical, cognitive and affective modes, contributes to the potential for an integrating experience.

The concrete art product allows for sitting back, looking and reflecting on something that the client has just been engaged with in a very active experiential way. This allows for an experience of two ways of being in interaction with the same object. Both ways of being are essential for healthy living and development. One needs both to be able to let go and engage fully in an activity and to reflect on the outcome of that activity, to find and express some meaning and order in things. The ordering of one's thoughts is similar to the ordering that takes place in the forming of the art work only now it takes place in the intellectual rather than in the physical realm. Both "*involved doing*" and "*relaxed reflection*" are important to help clients achieve an "*integrated*" and "*an integrating experience*" in art therapy (Rubin, 1987, p.198).

The main theoretical concepts have been provided to give an overview of how art therapy is presently understood and articulated and also to provide an example of an art therapist's attempt to come up with art therapy's own theory. Art therapists have based their current understanding on their own observations and, in most instances, on the theoretical concepts from other disciplines. This research study sought the verbal descriptions of a client's experience in art therapy. This will be presented in the form of the activities through which the client came to have her experience and through a discussion of

what a client experiences in art therapy. Although the purpose of the research was to discover rather than confirm, one of the discoveries was that the findings describe art therapy phenomena that are similar to several theoretical concepts; however, they also present them in a living form which illuminates them. At times the findings point to a need for further refinement of these concepts. Most importantly, the findings demonstrate that art therapists can turn directly to descriptions for access to what art therapy is and how it occurs versus triangulating the experience by observing a phenomenon, and then recognizing it and articulating it from other theories.

#### THE STATUS OF RESEARCH IN ART THERAPY

In order to support the importance of this study, the literature has been selected and reviewed to show the status of research in art therapy. This review will include: (a) problems which affect the development of research (b) types of research methods in use (c) the focus of research investigations (d) the call for new research approaches (e) the status of research grounded in the client's experience.

##### Problems Which Affect the Development of Research.

Art therapy education has been oriented toward the development of clinical skills versus research skills (Rubin, 1984; Wadeson, 1980b, 1989). Art therapy training programs do not usually include courses in how to do research. Doctoral programs in art therapy in North America are still in development so there are few doctoral dissertations to contribute to the theory and research that the field needs (Wadeson, 1989). Wadeson and Rubin also mention how doctoral level study by art therapists is usually done through other disciplines such as psychology or art education.

There appears to be a paucity of individuals who understand both art therapy and research methodology (Rubin, 1984). There is a tendency to make use of research being done in other disciplines. For example psychological research studies in the drawing of human figures have contributed to the present body of knowledge (Harris, 1963;

Machover, 1949; Swenson, 1968). However, borrowing from the understanding of other disciplines does not always result in knowledge that is specific to art therapy (Rubin, 1984).

There has been a need to prove the effectiveness of art therapy, to justify its existence to more established professions and to assure employment for its practitioners (Dalley, 1984; Junge, 1989; Rosal, 1989; Rubin, 1984; Wadeson, 1980). The adoption of the scientific paradigm, the seeking of one truth and the desire to control and predict outcomes has led to research approaches that are of little interest to many art therapists (Rubin, 1984). These research approaches and their results seem to be at odds with the essential nature of the realm of art (Junge, 1989; McNiff, 1986, 1987) where *"multiplicity, individual perspectives, and contradictions are valued"* (McNiff, 1986, p. 282).

Clinicians in art therapy have naturally tended towards the case study which is a qualitative and descriptive methodology (Junge, 1989). However, these case studies are usually based on the therapist's observations of the art therapy process: what they observed about the client and the art, how they interacted with the client and their interpretations of these observations. In art therapy training, the desired result may be to increase the observational skills of the clinician rather than to contribute to a body of understanding (Wadeson, 1989). Although case studies can and do contribute to understanding, there is a need for other types of research approaches.

*"The research problems posed in the study of art therapy are extremely complex"* (Wadeson, 1980, p. 318). Research methodologies may have to be refined, modified and adapted to particular problems posed by this field (Junge, 1989; McNiff, 1986; Rubin, 1984; Wadeson, 1980a).

*Whatever the cause, much of the research being done in art therapy is of mediocre quality, and is generally inadequate in both quantity and scope (Rubin, 1984, p. 181).*

The American Art Therapy Association has recognized the problems not only in the development of sound research but also in the individual's ability to access what has

already been done. They are presently formulating a research manual under the guidance of a research committee chaired by Nancy Mayer Knapp.

### Types of Research Methods used in Art Therapy

The most common form of investigation in art therapy is the narrative case study (Gantt, 1985; Junge, 1989; Rosal, 1989). This form of study is based on descriptive case material that provides a global view of the art therapy process (Rosenberg, 1965; Dalley, 1984). The researcher describes a client's history and problem profile, therapeutic plan and description of the art therapy process. Treatment is evaluated and ideas are substantiated through the use of art therapy and psychological literature. The focus of a case study may vary with different populations, modalities, settings, phases of the art therapy process, and approaches to art therapy ("Research and special," 1985, p.197-201). The individual case study is the most common (Gantt, 1985). However, case studies are sometimes *"best perceived as providing material for interpretation"* or are *"sometimes referred to as the 'stories' that therapists tell and these stories often change with each telling and over time"* (McNiff, 1987, p. 288). Those that wish to establish therapeutic outcomes that find acceptance in the larger scientific community, find case studies to be lacking (Hersen & Barlow, 1976; Rosal, 1989). Anderson (1983) points out that the case study has no generally accepted, systematic format for conveying information and, without this, researchers from outside the art therapy field are not as willing to accept it as an appropriate research methodology.

*"Feedback from patients has been found to provide material that, although subjective is useful in establishing how art therapy operates and for whom it is most effective"* (Dalley, 1984, p.xxv). She goes on to provide a client's verbal description of their art therapy process and then adds that

*.....this type of comment can give some indication as to how and even why art therapy is effective. However, it is essential that the effectiveness of art therapy be evaluated by specific data in the future, in order that the field may develop more productively and so that we may determine how much emphasis should be placed on it in treatment (Dalley, 1984, p. xxvi).*

This implies that the client's descriptions are not specific data. The research study presented here will illustrate the value of client's descriptions as specific data worthy of use in further research.

Experimental and quasi-experimental research designs appear to be the other most common research approaches and are often used to evaluate efficacy either through measuring outcomes or comparing differences. Examples of this are group outcome studies which try and measure the effectiveness of treatments (Greene & Hasselbring, 1981; Silver & Lavin, 1977; Walker, 1980) and group studies to determine the usefulness of drawings and projective tests for assessment purposes (Davis & Hoopes, 1975). According to Anderson (1983) and Rubin (1984) these studies are not always well designed or adequately described and reported. There is a need for better, more systematic study as there are many knowledge gaps in the field (Anderson, 1983). Group outcome studies are not as popular as they used to be because they are time consuming and can be expensive (Rosal, 1989). Criticisms of the usefulness of results of group outcome studies has emerged from the field of psychology (Bergin, 1966; Kratochwill, 1978) as these studies sometimes appear to generalize outcomes instead of reflecting the variability and individuality in responses i.e. some got better, some stayed the same and some appeared to get worse. Bergin and Strupp (1970) advised researchers to return to an idiographic approach so that more specificity could be obtained. Marcia Rosal (1989) encourages the use of single case experimental designs to measure therapeutic outcomes. She taught this research method to her students in the master's program in art therapy at the University of Louisville, Kentucky. Her students produced research studies that evaluated the effectiveness of various art therapy interventions (Menne, 1987; Darrah, 1987; Bizzell, 1987) targeting specific behaviours, feeling states or attitudes. There is a movement towards using self-reports in this research approach because many researchers feel that the client's view is overlooked by the research process (Rosal, 1989). However, the self-

report method is specific to the particular issue being addressed and may be limited to questionnaires or check lists. The participant in the research study undertaken for this thesis took part in an open-ended interview situation so her responses were more free ranging. This allowed her to bring things up that had not been considered by the researcher or were not contained in a questionnaire.

A combination of research methods are also used in art therapy. For example, Rhyne (1979) and Wadeson (Wadeson & Carpenter 1976) have both examined art expressions in their research and made use of quantitative methods and statistical procedures which analyze the data they obtained from their numerous participants. Rhyne was looking for signs of a shared visual language in examining the structural components of art expressions of emotionally laden mind states, whereas Wadeson was examining art expressions of schizophrenic clients to discover the nature of the subjective experience of schizophrenia. However, both of them felt it was important to include the qualitative aspects of this experience from data based on the verbal descriptions of the client because of a common value for the creators own experience of their artwork. This is in keeping with the idiosyncratic nature of art and the potential for works of art to contain multiple meanings. Rhyne (1979) discovered common themes of structural components of different mind states but she also discovered idiosyncrasies.

McIntyre (1987/1988) stated her research design was of an artistic nature for it involved a combination of phenomenology, participant observation and image interpretation. Her study was a qualitative investigation of the experience of art therapy for bereaved children. The purpose of the study was to seek an answer to "What is the experience of art therapy for bereaved children?" Ten children, ages 9 to 12, five parents and five staff of a Hospice Art Therapy Program were interviewed using a phenomenological approach. The art therapy program was observed using participant observation methods for an eighteen month period and children's images were analyzed by the children and the researcher. The researcher chose to use a variety of qualitative

methods to stay open to the experience and so as not to limit the information obtained (McIntyre, 1987/1988). However the findings appear to be of a broad and general nature. For example, the underlying theme of the experience of art therapy by bereaved children is darkness to light; this is illustrated with artwork and verbal description but the transitional processing is not revealed. An in-depth single case study as is presented here has allowed some of these processes to emerge. Although McIntyre's question sought to answer "What is the experience of art therapy for bereaved children?", the children took part in a creative arts program of which art therapy was one of several therapeutic modalities used and what seems to be illustrated more in McIntyre's study is the resolution of bereavement issues that are expressed in the artistic and verbal descriptions of the children, rather than revealing interrelationships between the children, their art and the therapist: the children's experience of art therapy.

Wadson (1980a) mentioned she finds the observations of emerging data to be the most exciting and natural sort of research. In this way she leans toward qualitative methodology whose aim is not to impose on or manipulate phenomena but rather to describe and explore so that meaning can emerge. An example of a qualitative study was recently completed by Marrion (1990). She obtained qualitative descriptions from art therapists of the methods they used in the treatment of body-image distortion and guilt in sexually-abused girls ages 4, 8 and 13. The observations and experience of the therapists were the source of the data and the purpose was practically oriented toward increasing understanding of clinical skills and techniques used by art therapists in treating sexually abused children. Marrion's research was directed to a specific audience of clinicians who work with a specific population- sexually abused children - and offered a thematic content analysis of such things as the choice of media, use of time, directives, opinions on the function of art in the sessions etc. to contribute to understanding of clinical issues. In contrast, the approach of the art therapist in this research study is revealed through the descriptions and experiences of the client and the constitution of the data by the researcher.

The purpose of the present study is to gain understanding of art therapy phenomena as is experienced by a client, the foundation of art therapy, and aims at trying to grasp and describe the experience itself rather than analyzing and categorizing descriptive content. This research hopes to create possibilities for discussion and to explore the potential of a phenomenological research approach for contributing to art therapy understanding.

Rubin (1984), Rhyne (1980), McNiff (1986, 1987), Dalley (1984), Wadeson (1980) support variety in research methods and realms of inquiry. This orientation to variety reflects the interdisciplinary origins of the profession.

#### Focus of Research Investigations.

Common areas for research investigations in art therapy are: the art product and its potential usefulness for assessment purposes, and the effectiveness of art therapy.

It is quite common for research in art therapy to focus on the art product, whether one is measuring or scoring some aspect of it (e.g. Cohen & Phelps, 1985, looked for incest markers in childrens' art work), judging its normality/pathology (e.g. Wadeson, 1971, looked for characteristics of art expression in depression), or evaluating it in some other way (e.g. Golub, 1985, looked at symbolic expression in post-traumatic stress disorder). However, reliable and/or valid ways of scoring or evaluating art products have not been established (Rubin, 1984; Ulman & Levy, 1984)). One of the problems seems to be that those who have developed most of the existing evaluation scales for drawings are not artists or art therapists, but are more likely to be psychologists with an experimental bent. Meaning and quality are often sacrificed in the name of quantification (Rubin, 1984; Wadeson, 1980). Rhyne (1979) has focused her research on trying to establish a form syntax of visual language. This research was a systematic attempt to establish a link between graphic representations and certain mind states or emotionally laden experiences. Art therapists tend to use art products as descriptions of experience and often make interpretations or assessments of meaning from what they see. Rhyne (1979) attempted to see if there were graphic forms that convey common meaning to give some systematic basis

to what otherwise takes place through personal observation, description, and interpretation (Ulman & Levy, 1984). She did discover some commonalities of structure in terms of mind-states amongst the participants such as the dimensions of being excited are that it moves upward, is dynamic, dominates the space and the relationship of parts is repetitive, but she also demonstrated that individual expressions can be comprehended only within the context of that individual's personal construct system.

A focus of investigations in art therapy research is also on the effectiveness of art therapy. However, it is one of the hardest things to measure, as it is always difficult to isolate influences in this (Rubin, 1984). There is a tendency to consider experimental designs as the most valid format for investigating therapeutic outcomes (Rosal, 1989).

Rubin (1987) edited a book on approaches to art therapy which included psychodynamic approaches, humanistic approaches, behavioural, cognitive and developmental approaches and an eclectic approach. Perhaps it is significant that with the exception of the authors of *A Developmental Approach to Art Therapy* (Ach-Feldman & Kunkle-Miller, 1987), none of the fifteen other contributing authors cites any testing or research by others on applications of their theories (Lusebrink, 1988).

Other areas of research include the use of art therapy with specific problems, such as sexual abuse or anorexia nervosa; with specific populations, such as the elderly or adolescents; in particular settings, such as hospital or community; or in different modes, such as individual, family or group.

#### Call For New Research Approaches

There is a call for the use of new research approaches in art therapy. Gantt (1986) suggests drawing on research models from other fields in the systematic investigation of art works. Rather than the natural sciences, she suggests using models from art history, anthropology and linguistics. McNiff (1987) suggests that research approaches using a historical analysis might be useful in art therapy. He mentions possibilities for research

studies such as biographies of leaders within the field, a history of the arts in mental health or longitudinal studies of art therapy programs.

Gilroy (1989) has been conducting a longitudinal study for her doctoral studies which considers the development of art therapist's and art teacher's experience of art from childhood to their current art practice. She conducted the majority of her research via questionnaires supplemented with interviews.

McNiff (1987) also discusses the writings of two psychologists who have been involved with artistic themes, Rudolf Arnheim (1962, 1972, 1974) and James Hillman (1975, 1978, 1983), as role models for inquiry. Arnheim's methods have involved direct observations of art works and detailed studies of the journals and observations of artists. Arnheim's analysis of Guernica (1962) demonstrates how the methods of psychology, art history, art, and aesthetics can be combined within a study. Hillman (1983) recommends that we look at images as phenomenologists. With the assistance of the phenomenologists, one can approach interpretation as a process of "intersubjectivity" or what Arnheim describes as "interplay" between the person and the image (McNiff, 1987, p.290). According to Hillman (1978), psychological interpretations often make images less intelligible. He believes that psychological language is impoverished, without imagination, and incapable of giving good descriptions of phenomena. Hillman (1975) addresses the need for methods that reflect the episodic, changing, and multi-dimensional nature of artistic experience.

McNiff (1986) calls for the creation of research methods that emerge from the artistic process. By this he suggests it is important to retain some of the qualities of art (flexibility, openness to multiple points of view, the formation of imaginative relationships) in establishing a research tradition in the creative arts therapies. He suggests that research

*.....should have the 'smell of the studio,' stay close to the practice of art and the statements of artists, respect images, and allow themselves to present themselves in ways native to their being (McNiff, 1987, p. 291).*

Wadeson (1980b, 1989) and Rubin (1984) also call for the development of new research approaches. Junge (1989, p.78) proposes that

*.....we encourage the development of a wildflower garden of our own creatively conceived conceptual paradigms out of which can come a wondrous bouquet of appropriate research methodologies.*

#### Status of Research Grounded in the Client's Experience

Wadeson (1980a), Rhyne (1979), and Dalley (1984) included the verbal descriptions of their client subjects to augment their research studies. Although Wadeson's research designs were mainly experimental, she found that sacrificing some of the precision for descriptions that preserved the rich meaning of the art therapy material was worthwhile. She was interested in subjective experience but did her research through art therapy rather than in art therapy in that she explored the subjective experience of psychiatric disturbances such as schizophrenia and manic depression rather than the client's experience of art therapy. She used the art expressions as part of her descriptive data of what the subjective experiences of these disturbances were like.

Dalley (1984) appeared to value the subjective experience of patients involved in art therapy. However her unpublished thesis "An Investigation of the Efficacy of Art Therapy In Psychiatric Treatment " (Dalley, 1978) was not available to review so it is not possible to evaluate her study.

Rosal (1989) mentioned that there is a movement towards having clients complete self-reports on their progress in an attempt to include the client's view in the research process. These self-reports would often limit the clients experience to specific areas defined in questionnaires and check lists.

McIntyre's (1987/1988) qualitative investigation into the experience of art therapy for bereaved children also attempted to ground itself in the experience of the client. She conducted interviews with the children which asked them about their experience, and the children contributed to the analysis of their pictures along with the researcher. She states

that she used a phenomenological approach in the interviews and in the analysis and synthesis of the data.

### Summary and Implications for this Study

In summary, a review of the research literature indicates that there is a lack of systematic research in most areas of art therapy.

*One of the really exciting things about research in and through art therapy is that it is so very undeveloped, that the possibilities are endless and stretch in multiple directions. (Rubin, 1984, p. 185).*

There is a general lack of expertise in the use of research designs and methodologies. Research investigations into interpretation and assessment of art products and the effectiveness of art therapy have not produced substantial results. There has been very little research done that is firmly grounded in the experience of the client.

It is the purpose of this study to explore and describe a client's experience in art therapy. This represents a significant contribution to research in art therapy in terms of a research design that uses the verbal descriptions of the client as the main source of data, subjects them to a systematic analysis and tries to stay close to the experience and meaning systems of the client. This research study will explore and describe the 'interplay' between the client and her experience of paintings which were created in an art therapy group over time. This research differs from previous research in that it attempts: to overcome the tendency to focus on the art object apart from the person; to explicate the art therapy experience from the rich detail of the narrative, and to describe what is given versus interpreting it from a particular theoretical perspective; to ground the study in a client's verbal descriptions of her experience in art therapy versus an art therapist's observations; and to focus on the art therapy experience itself versus a particular issue or mode of art therapy.

## CHAPTER 3

## METHOD

## RATIONALE FOR THE USE OF QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The researcher chose to use a qualitative methodology based on the following five axioms (basic beliefs) of the naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The rationale for doing so was based on the researcher's own view of reality and the particular nature of the phenomena to be studied.

Axiom 1: The nature of reality (ontology).

*There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding can be achieved. (p. 37)*

This study investigated a client's reconstructions, here and now constructions and projections while viewing paintings which were created in an art therapy group over time. It is significant that the 'interplay' between client and paintings, as is given in her verbal descriptions, was the focus of the investigation. This was an attempt to study the phenomena as lived versus focusing on the art product as representative of the client, or the client as representative of the art products. It was not the purpose of this study to prove the efficacy of art therapy, but rather to achieve some level of understanding of a client's experience of art therapy. This study is exploratory in nature. Rubin (1984) states that the field of art therapy needs exploratory research studies more than anything else. Art embodies multiple constructed realities that can be experienced holistically (Wadeson, 1980a). Artistic inquiry seems suited to the naturalistic paradigm (Beittel, 1973).

Axiom 2: The relationship of knower to known (epistemology).

*The inquirer and the "object" of enquiry interact to influence one another: knower and known are inseparable. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.37)*

In art therapy, an interactive relationship exists between the client, their art work and the art therapist. Mutual influence, shaping of experience, quality of interactions,

prolonged contact, exploration of dialectic relationships, the use of tacit, subjective experience as well as intellectual knowledge are aspects of the requirements of the research situation (p. 101-108) that are similar to the therapeutic one. Some aspects of the design of the research emerged from unanticipated interactions in the research context and with the data obtained from doing the research. (p. 102-103)

Axiom 3: The possibility of generalization.

*The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of "working hypotheses" that describe the individual case. (p. 38)*

The focus of the research study was on one client's experience. The study was bound by her experience in the therapeutic context (see Figure 1) and the research context (see Figure 2). This research study makes no claim to generalizability to all cases, or to a universal truth. "*Thick descriptions'...everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings*" (p. 125) is provided of all aspects of the research context and was also sought in the research interviews so that an appropriate base of information is provided. Hypotheses work in interaction with this particular research context. They are transferable only when there is similarity between contexts. The research context was similar to the phase in art therapy after making, when a client views and discusses their artwork. It is recognized, however, that each situation contains conditions which are unique. This research study was done in the spirit of contributing some openings for understanding or discussion.

Axiom 4: The possibility of causal linkages.

*All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. (p. 38)*

It was not the purpose of this study to prove that art therapy had a positive effect. It was recognized that the client and her environment were in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping. This study sought to understand the mutual shaping that occurred in art therapy as it was experienced by a client. The research context imposed a purposive structure that emerged from the interaction between the researcher and the subject and her artwork. What

emerged from this was a constructed reality that was shaped both by the researcher's purpose and the way the phenomenon presented itself. (p. 152)

Axiom 5: The role of values in inquiry (axiology).

*Inquiry is value-bound in at least five ways, captured in the corollaries that follow:*

- 1. Inquiries are influenced by inquirer values as expressed in the choice of a problem, evaluand, or policy option.*
- 2. Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the paradigm that guides the investigation into the problem.*
- 3. Inquiry is influenced by the choice of substantive theory utilized to guide the collection and analysis of data and in the interpretation of findings.*
- 4. Inquiry is influenced by the values that inhere in the context.*
- 5. With respect to corollaries 1 through 4 above, inquiry is either value-resonant (reinforcing or congruent) or value-dissonant (conflicting). Problem, evaluand, or policy option, paradigm, theory, and context must exhibit congruence (value-resonance) if the inquiry is to produce meaningful results. (p. 38)*

The researcher attempted to be aware of personal values that influenced this research study. This included her personal experience with art and art therapy. The researcher attempted to be aware of how her own interests influenced the choice of the subject and the nature of the problem explored. The researcher's value judgement in favor of the naturalistic paradigm influenced the doing of the research. An interest in existential-phenomenological psychology and philosophy influenced this inquiry in the way the problem was approached and in the analysis of the data. The research context placed value on the clients experience and description (versus explanation) of her artwork. The researcher has attempted to demonstrate congruence in terms of problem, paradigm, theory and personal values in designing the research context.

#### RELEVANT PHENOMENOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS / CHARACTERISTICS

Within the naturalistic paradigm the researcher chose to use a phenomenological research method. A phenomenological approach (Giorgi 1985, 1989c; Osborne, 1988; Rose, 1988; Speigleberg, 1982; Wertz, 1985) is discovery oriented and offers a way of explicating the essential qualities and structures of art therapy phenomena as experienced by a client. Other traditional qualitative approaches were considered but did not appear to have

the same potential to access various levels of understanding as a phenomenological method, or to be as an appropriate fit to art therapy phenomena and where art therapy is in the development of its own body of understanding. The following phenomenological characteristics and assumptions (Giorgi, 1986, 1989b, 1989c, 1991; Spiegelberg, 1982; Strasser, 1980) were foundations for both conceptualizing and doing the research:

1. Phenomenology is the study of how things appear to consciousness, or how phenomena are given in experience. Value is placed on a person's experience of her world versus her theoretical knowledge of it. For example, a phenomenologist would base her understanding of light on how light is immediately experienced by a subject i.e. bright, warm, comforting etc., whereas a natural scientist may understand light as a series of mathematical equations. Phenomenologists believe that all things start with the life-world of subjects, the world as it is lived and experienced before it is abstracted into theory or explanations. There is a call to return to this as a guide to human understanding.
2. Intentionality of consciousness implies being directed toward something that is not consciousness itself or which is beyond the conscious act to which it appears such as a memory or an immanent object. There is a tension, a stretching between the object of consciousness and the consciousness that beholds it. This implies how things and events are for the consciousness that beholds them and not how they are in themselves. There is a mutual co-existence between the subject and her world, a necessary unity versus a natural scientific tendency towards subject object dualism. The essence of consciousness is not awareness but intentionality, it is essentially relational.
3. The client's descriptions are considered valid data. Unprejudiced, prereflective (prior to interpretation, theory or explanation) verbal descriptions of a client's experience of a phenomenon are sought. It does not matter if the account is retrospective and lacking in facts of the actual occurrence. What is important is that the subject have experienced what is sought and is able to illuminate this experience through their description. The

existence of the phenomenon, the literal meaning and the facts are not as important as the sense or presence of the phenomenon embedded in a subjects descriptions. The researcher needs as many participants as is necessary to illuminate the data. A single case is acceptable if the subject can do this.

4. Phenomenologists seek the logos (patterns, structures) of the phenomena they are studying. Forms, essences and structures emerge from the data and are not imposed on it. An essence is the most invariant meaning for a context. It is not the literal meaning that is sought but the essential structure that arises and distinguishes it from other experiences.
5. The concept of the phenomenological reduction plays an important role in this research approach. The researcher strives to attain an attitude free of presuppositions. This is achieved through two mental exercises (a) bracketing- an attempt to set aside opinions, theories, explanations of what may appear and (b) a suspension of belief in the existence of what appears, so that one does not fixate on this and keeps open to what can emerge. Some phenomenologists (Colaizzi, 1978) recommend that the researcher explicate and make known their own presuppositions prior to doing the research. However, this researcher believes that it is difficult to be totally aware of personal motivations and assumptions and, as presuppositions often arise as one does the research, the important emphasis lies on adhering to an attitude of trying to remain open and, as one becomes aware (usually through reflection and discussion), of setting aside assumptions throughout the research study.

#### VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

Issues such as validity and reliability are considered in a different manner in research studies following a phenomenological approach than in traditional scientific inquiry (Giorgi, 1989b; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Osborne, 1990).

Giorgi (1989b) mentions how such things as having an inter-rater judge to check on the researcher's factual achievements, as might be used in a content analysis method, steps out of the phenomenological framework which emphasizes essential meaning rather than facticities. In phenomenology, one is also dealing with structures and totalities rather than discrete units of data. The judge would therefore need to convince the researcher of a wholly new way of understanding the data. Phenomenology concentrates on the sense of the empirical rather than its facticity.

In phenomenological research, no reality claim is being made and

*....instead each reader of the research report becomes a critical evaluator of the researcher's essential intuition.....Validity is considered to be a temporally unfolding process that possesses a certain quality that happens to an individual. The theory is that if it can happen to one individual, it certainly must be able to take place in another and so each reader is invited to participate in the process (Giorgi, 1989a p. 83-84).*

Lincoln and Guba (1986), Giorgi (1989b), and Colaizzi (1978) also suggest that trustworthiness is established through the researcher's ability to present their research in a thorough and convincing manner and through demonstrating worthwhile results in terms of the original aims.

To increase the validity of the research the following procedures were used by the researcher:

1. Faithfulness to the experience of the client was accomplished through the use of an open ended interview approach, verbatim transcripts and checking with the participant for clarification or elaboration when necessary.
2. The researcher assumed the phenomenological attitude, remaining open to what was presented and bracketing presuppositions as they arose throughout the data collection and analysis. The researcher also did a more in-depth examination of the theoretical assumptions of art therapy after doing the research and developing the findings, rather than before to contribute to the attitude of openness.

3. The presentation of the constituents of a client's experience in art therapy contains examples of the client's verbal descriptions. Giorgi (1989b) stated that descriptions can be used as possible actualizations for an essential characteristic and therefore can be used by the researcher to intuit the appropriate essence. The presentation of the descriptions allows the reader some access to the researchers intuitive processing.
4. The methodology is carefully described including: theoretical assumptions of the phenomenological research approach, the constitution of the research situation, the selection and protection of the participant, the constitution of the data and the method for analysis.

Although the researcher did show the interpreted findings to the participant and received validation that, to her, this was her experience; Giorgi (1989b) states that the primary role of the participant is to provide the unprejudiced descriptions of their experience. He notes that seeking validation from a participant of the researcher's interpretations puts them in a different role, the role of interpreting their experience. He also states that the researcher brings a certain skill to this which allows them to proceed in a more informed way than the participant who is presumed to be more naive in doing research and in the topic of investigation. The participant's perceptions of the interpreted experience as accurate and true to her own are therefore not offered as a criteria for validity.

#### CONSTITUTION OF THE RESEARCH SITUATION

The research context (see Figure 2) consisted of the participant being interviewed in the presence of individual artworks that she had created in a 16 week art therapy group. In having the participant view her individual art works as she retrospectively described her experience in art therapy there was an attempt to keep the person and the art together. This is in keeping with the phenomenological assumption of intentionality, the stretching and tension between subject and object rather than the natural scientific approach where the subject and the object were viewed and discussed separately. This also demonstrates some

coherence with the therapeutic context where the client is in a situation of dialogue with her art and her experience is allowed to unfold and emerge.

### The Participant

A single client's experience in art therapy was the basis of this research study. Purposive sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), where the researcher selects the best possible participant for the study, was used in the selection of a participant. The criteria that were considered essential for this study were (a) that a client had participated in art therapy and experienced it as being therapeutic (b) that the client be willing and able to articulate her/his experience in the form of descriptions (c) that she/he had completed her/his art therapy program so as not to confuse either the therapeutic or the research process.

The subject of this study was a client who was not known to the researcher previously. She volunteered as a participant after hearing about the study from a professional she was involved with and to whom she had previously mentioned how helpful an experience in art therapy had been for her. She had completed, within the last two months, a time limited art therapy group for women who had been sexually abused.

The participant initially met with the researcher who explained the nature of the study to her and asked her to take part in a small pilot interview while viewing one of her paintings, a simulation of the research context. It was determined that the participant was articulate and willing and able to describe her experience in art therapy.

### The Protection of the Participant (Ethical Issues)

The participant was given an outline of the research study (see Appendix A). The purpose of this outline was to inform her of the nature and purpose of the research study and what her participation would involve. She was informed that her participation was completely voluntary and that she could withdraw at any time with no negative consequence. The researcher had the participant read and sign a consent form (see Appendix B), which indicated that participation was voluntary and that confidentiality was assured. Confidentiality was also ensured in that a pseudonym chosen by the participant

was used on the transcripts and no names appeared on the audiotapes. The participant requested that she be given the transcripts following the research and the researcher will destroy the audiotapes. Confidentiality is also ensured in that some of the personal history of the client has been omitted or altered enough to protect her identity, but reveal relevant details to the reader.

No potential risk was anticipated to the participant. Following the research, the participant stated that it was interesting for her to go through the process of having had the original experience in art therapy, then reviewing this in the research context and then reviewing the researcher's intuited interpretations of her original experience. The research process allowed her to continue to participate in an evolving process which was rooted in her own experience.

#### The Rationale for the Procedures

The procedures and rationale for the research situation are based on a phenomenological method for viewing and discussing artwork, research methods in art education that try and remain close to the artistic and aesthetic experience, and recognition and description of the experiential phase in the art therapy process that the research context parallels (Betensky, 1987; Beittel, 1973; Rubin, 1984).

The research situation is also similar to the one used by Giorgi (1990) in obtaining retrospective accounts from artists of their artistic process in the presence of the completed art work. The researcher and the artist sat before the art object and the researcher asked the artist to describe, to the best of their ability, the experiences that went into the drawing of the picture.

The display and the discussion of the paintings were a variation of Betensky's "*phenomenological intuiting*" (1987, p. 158). This dealt with the participant's direct experience of her painting, in two phases. Phase one facilitated its perception through (a) visual display, (b) distancing and (c) intentional looking. This involved placing the painting where it was conveniently viewed at enough of a distance to gain perspective, and

a request that the client actively look and engage with the painting in silence for awhile. In phase two the researcher invited the client to share her living experience of the painting while she was in art therapy, a process described in the following section under interview.

The research context fit the following criteria described by Beittel (1973) as being important to maintain in the research situation: (a) experiential mode, (b) artistic serial, (c) special participant-observer relationship, (d) contextual perspective and (e) respect for idiosyncratic meaning, artistic causality and intentional symbolization. This touches more centrally with the original artistic and aesthetic experience. The aesthetic and the artistic are *"locked in the particular, in the situational, in the experience of the 'live creature.'* *The aesthetic, to the person involved with it, is phenomenological, and not philosophical"* (Beittel, 1973, p. 6).

The research context is similar to the stage in art therapy after making, when a client sits back and looks at what has been made, reflects on and experiences the process and the external object. Although in art therapy, the reflection often attempts to find meaning and order in the experience, the client in the research context was asked to describe her experience rather than reflect on it in an interpretative or analytic way.

Doing the research was a learning process for the researcher and there were some minor adjustments to the research situation as we proceeded. The concept of emergent design is accepted by the researcher as

*.....what emerges as a function of the interaction between inquirer and phenomenon is largely unpredictable in advance. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.41).*

## CONSTITUTION OF THE DATA

Prior to the research interviews, the participant was asked to select 5 paintings that were representative of her experience in art therapy, which were significant and meaningful to her and that she would like to discuss for the purpose of this research study. The participant had difficulty selecting only 5 artworks as she felt that they were all important to her experience; she gave equal weighting to good and bad experiences saying that they

were all valuable. The researcher decided to include all 13 of the client's artworks created in the art therapy group because it seemed to be representative of her whole experience in art therapy and because the participant experienced this as a whole and did not want to include some aspects and leave out others.

### The Interview

The art objects were viewed individually in the approximate order in which they were created to parallel the client's experience in the therapeutic context. Two or three art works were viewed and discussed in audiotaped interviews of approximately one to two hours duration. There were a series of five interviews which were spaced to give the participant and the researcher time to assimilate the experience. The interviews were in-depth and unstructured with both the client and the researcher in the presence of the artwork in a triangular spatial situation. They were held in a chosen site of the participant, one in which she felt comfortable and safe. The interviews continued until the participant felt she had completed everything she wanted to say. The interviews initially began with the request that the participant describe her living experience of the artwork in art therapy, what she could recall and describe of the making of and looking at and discussing the art work, the art therapist and group members. She was also asked to describe how she had experienced the art works and art therapy in her day-to-day life. After each painting had been fully described she was also asked to describe her experience of the painting now, at this point in time, in the research context. The researcher only interrupted the flow of dialogue to ask the client to clarify or elaborate on what she was saying. The participant was informed that the descriptions of her experience, rather than her interpretations or explanations were sought. Her reconstructions of her past experience, her here-and-now constructions and her projections intermingled in the unfolding. Although the direction to describe the living experience of the art work in art therapy seems less direct or perhaps an imposition of the researcher on the client to include the art, the client's descriptions

unfolded in a way that indicated that this did not limit or interfere with her describing her general experience in art therapy.

In the interview phase, the client assumed the role of co-researcher (Colaizzi, 1978) in investigating and describing her experience. The researcher would review the audiotapes after each session and would begin each new session with particular questions from the previous session that needed clarification or elaboration. The researcher also returned to the participant at times during the data analysis to seek further descriptions of her experience. For example, the way the experience of making the art object had been interpreted by the researcher felt stagnant; in obtaining further descriptions from the client of her experience some of the energy and movement was recaptured.

#### CONSTITUTION OF THE METHOD

The method went through a series of transformative steps during the analysis of data. The phenomenological attitude was assumed by the researcher as she proceeded through the following methodological steps:

1. The audiotapes were transcribed verbatim by the researcher.
2. The written transcripts were read several times to get a sense of the whole.
3. Following Giorgi's method (1975, 1989a, 1989c), the transcripts were read and noted in the form of meaning units every time a transformation in meaning occurred. These were placed in categories of what the client experienced and how the client experienced art therapy (through what activities or processes did she come to have this experience).
4. Procedures described by Wertz (1983) for reflecting on phenomenal descriptions were used to slow down and dwell with the data and to discover implicit and deeper meanings.
5. Each session of art therapy that the client described was drawn out in diagram form in order to get a sense of the movement and to see each session as a whole, captured on one page.

The main thing accomplished through the above procedures was familiarizing the researcher with the data and beginning to interrogate it for levels of meaning. Giorgi (1989c, 1990) stated that many of the methodological procedures serve the main purpose of immersion in the data and not closing down on it too quickly. As the inherent complexities contained in the art therapy process and the large amount of data made it difficult to grasp coherent meanings and pull things together, the researcher continued with the following methodological procedures.

6. A structure was imposed on the data that was in harmony with the elements of her art therapy experience and with how the art therapy process would normally proceed. Descriptions were extracted from the transcripts of the client's experience of (a) the art therapist (b) the making of the art object (c) the looking at and discussing of the art object (d) being in the world between art therapy sessions and for a few months following (e) looking at and discussing the art object from this point in time (this was done in order to illuminate the original experience of looking in art therapy and to give it a context of then and now) .
7. Colaizzi's (1978) suggestion of extracting significant statements was used for each of the delimited areas above and these were then clustered into themes under each category.
8. Descriptions of the essential themes were written and rewritten, and organized and reorganized several times always being mindful of the whole (by returning to the transcripts). In this way, the thematic statements are viewed as being constituents of the whole experience. The constituents were also organized into the structure of the experience (what the client experienced in art therapy) and the style of movement of the experience (how the client came to have the experience).
9. Statements of the thematic constituents with descriptions from the client as examples of a possible actualization of an essential characteristic were written for each delimited area of experience. A formulated structure was then written for (a) the client's experience of

the art therapist (b) the client's experience of the making of the art object and (c) the looking at and discussing the art object (d) the client's experience from art therapy into the world.

The analysis of the data took place over several months. This was not a linear process, although it is presented in this way. The researcher continually returned to the original transcripts to ground her intuitions in the experience of the client. This is an example of intuition through tuition, learning from the data through a familiarization with the material in more than an intellectual sense. The essential structure and coherence emerged from the data and from within the researcher. The process could not be rushed or drawn to a quick intellectual conclusion. The essential structures and essences of a client's experience in art therapy were co-constituted by the researcher and the descriptive experience of the client and they are presented in this way in the interpretation of the findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION

As previously stated, the purpose of the research was to discover and describe the meaning of a client's experience in art therapy to gain understanding of that experience. The nature, the structural essence of what art therapy is and how it occurs for a client was sought. Data was constituted by the researcher and the participant in a situation of dialogue in the presence of art objects created in art therapy. The interviews were transcribed and the data was subjected to an evolving methodology based on phenomenological concepts and procedures. The participant was contacted a number of times during the analysis to clarify and elaborate her descriptions. The participant generally remained in the role of provider of descriptions of her experience of art therapy phenomena.

The first part of this chapter provides relevant information about the participant. This includes some pertinent historical data and the client's experience of the world as she entered into art therapy. This experience is described in terms of the four existential realities of lived space, lived time, lived body and living with others. It is provided in this format as these particular themes emerged in the data and will be presented in the findings. They are presented in this way here in hopes of providing the reader with a starting point, the context from which her experience in art therapy began.

The next part gives a brief description of the therapeutic context including the mode, the population and the approach of the group leaders so the reader is aware of the art therapy context out of which the client's experience arose.

Following the above, the findings will be presented and discussed. They are presented in sections in the order in which the data analysis proceeded and, except for the client's experience of the art therapist, proceed in the temporal order of the art therapy

process. Each section is followed by a discussion of the findings in the context of the theoretical orientations presented in the literature review. The reader can assume that the same "founding persons" or theoreticians of the various art therapy theories are the references used for this discussion unless otherwise mentioned. To enhance the readability of the discussion sections the theoreticians will not be continually referred to.

The sections are:

1. A client's experience of the art therapist in art therapy.
2. A client's experience of the making of the art object in art therapy.
3. A client's experience of the looking at and discussing the art object in art therapy.
4. A client's present experience of looking at and discussing the art object that she had created in art therapy. (This is presented to illuminate and provide a context for the original experience).
5. A client's experience of art therapy in her day-to-day life (from art therapy into the world).

The essential constituents of the experience are presented in a thematic and descriptive form in terms of what the client experiences in art therapy and how the experience occurs i.e. the activities and processes through which the experience emerges. The client's experience of the art therapist, making the art object, looking at the art object, and in her day-to-day life are each formed into a unified structural description.

It is a limitation of this study that a unified structural description is not formed for the whole of a client's experience in art therapy. It is beyond the scope of the researcher in both time and energy. It seems appropriate, however, for it to remain in this broad but detailed descriptive form of the elements of art therapy, as each section has something to contribute to understanding a client's experience of art therapy phenomena. It also seems appropriate in terms of the young developmental stage of art therapy research and the need to remain open to possibilities and not close down our understanding too quickly.

Following the presentation and discussion of the findings in terms of the elements of art therapy, the findings will also be discussed in terms of the research approach used and suggestions for further research.

#### PORTRAIT OF THE PARTICIPANT

In interviewing the participant and in doing the analysis, the richness of the narrative of her "story" or lived experience of art therapy remained powerfully present to the researcher. A fundamental description of this story, as presented by the participant and summarized by the researcher, is provided in Appendix C as are pictures of the art objects she created in art therapy.

Only the details that are deemed important for the reader to know about the participant and the art therapy context as they have contributed to this research study will be provided by the researcher.

The participant is an intelligent, articulate and artistic woman. Developmentally, she suffered from an imbalance in her family dynamics, having a strong alliance with her father and a lack of relationship, other than an antagonistic one, with her mother. Her mother was critical and physically abusive. Her father very passive and long suffering. There is a possibility she was sexually abused although not necessarily in her family of origin. She has a sense of this but no memory as of yet. She had a history of being involved in violently physically abusive relationships to the point where her life had been endangered. She has participated previously in verbal therapies, and belonged to a group for battered woman in which she gained significant insights that propelled her into making major positive changes in her life. She suffered from situational depression in the past due to several miscarriages and the stress in ending her relationship. During this time she frequently immersed herself in long baths, something she had never cared for before, and this provided her with some comfort. It is perhaps significant that while she was in her art

therapy process she felt a strong need to immerse herself in long baths following each session.

She is an artist and a highly creative person. In training at art college, she felt a need to make art, a drive. She believes some of the artwork she produced there was "*therapeutic*" for her although the way she looked at her finished product was different than how she looked in art therapy. In art college she looked at her art work in terms of artistic standards and formal qualities.

She entered into art therapy following a series of crises. She viewed herself as being "*rebellious*", a "*radical*" person and someone who had experienced "*just about everything*" except being "*normal*". On entering art therapy, she had assumed it was a group of dysfunctional woman "*of which I was one*" and in the initial interview discovered that it was a group to deal with issues of sexual abuse. In the assessment interview, a verbal assessment, she had an experience of "*knowing*" she had been sexually abused as a child although she had no specific memories. She had a profound experience of hearing herself at a younger age crying while she was being raped. She was greatly shaken by this experience and yet at the same time experienced herself as in her body rather than detached from it as she usually was. She felt comfortable and safe with the art therapist from this initial experience with her. She felt the therapist had anticipated her needs and provided for her safety and comfort.

In describing her experience of the world she believes in different levels of reality and has had altered experiences. She believes in Goddesses and Mythic forces. Her house is full of her creations, and odds and ends of materials for potential use in what she makes. It is visually a rich and complex environment.

The researcher's initial impression of her was one who had been buffeted by life; her eyes appeared sad. She seemed eager to please and yet also had an air of one who is in control. She was very articulate and open about her experience. She appeared to be

engaged or involved in describing her experience, by her expressions, her tone of voice and her gestures.

It is important to have some understanding of her experience of the world at the time of beginning the art therapy sessions. Her experience will be described in terms of *"four fundamental existential themes which probably pervade the lifeworld of all human beings, regardless of their historical, cultural or social situatedness"* (Van Manen, 1990, pp. 101-104). It is described in this way as the interpretation of the client's experience in art therapy contains these four fundamentals, although this was not imposed on the data as a way of organizing it, but rather they naturally emerged.

1. Lived space (spatiality)- *Lived space is felt space*. On entering into art therapy, the client felt that the world beyond her room was not safe, there was danger everywhere. Her lived space had shrunk. Her own home was also in chaos and crisis. She felt like the troubles in her life were entering into and overwhelming all aspects of her life. In an attempt to separate her stressful life experiences at home from her life at work she used an outside physical space to provide her with an inner psychological boundary. As she drove to work each day she would purposefully drive on a circular road, do a relaxation exercise and separate her life experience outside the circle from the world of work inside.
2. Lived body (corporeality)- *Lived body refers to the fact that we are always bodily in the world*. She felt detached from her body and had little care for it. She felt herself to be somewhere behind her body, over her shoulder, especially when she was in the company of strangers. She had recently experienced two altered body/reality experiences, both in times of personal crisis. In talking to a counsellor, she experienced herself at two being beaten by her mother, she felt a throbbing pain in her neck and began slipping out of consciousness. She did not want to come back, she wanted to stay out there; it was dark and there was nothing there. The other experience took place in the assessment interview and was previously described.

These were profound experiences for her and opened up a whole new way of experiencing. She felt more aware of her body and the meaning contained in her body. She also saw her separation from her body as - this is what happens in sexual abuse.

3. Lived time (temporality)- *Lived time is subjective time as opposed to clock time or objective time.* The client felt stuck in the present, continually dealing with crisis after crisis. She was living here under an assumed name to escape a violently abusive relationship. She was cut off from her past. She felt overwhelmed by her present situation and had no sense of future or hope of a "normal" life. She could not see beyond the immediate. She felt confused and frightened.
4. Lived human relation (relationality or communality)- *Lived other is the lived relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them.* Her relationships with others were intense. She was considered a rebel, a radical, a leader when she was in school. She had always felt different than others, abnormal. Lately she'd been noticing an impulsiveness to her rebelliousness that she was not comfortable with.

She always felt that her mother treated her differently than her brothers and sisters, she felt criticized and unloved by her mother. She recently noticed herself criticizing her son in the same way her mother criticized her. They were constantly fighting. This horrified her and spurred her on to get help.

At a party lately she had experienced a certain look from a man. It was a familiar look, hypnotic but she sensed something dangerous about this for her. She realized her father had given her that look and her uncle and some relationships had started as a result of that look. This had real significance for her. It frightened her to think of how powerless that look made her feel. She felt like her whole life was in danger "*that look was a real common feeling through my whole life*".

## THE THERAPEUTIC CONTEXT

The art therapy group was for women who had been sexually abused. It took place over 16 weeks and was led by a female art therapist and a female movement therapist. Between 4-8 women attended. The theoretical orientation of both therapists is humanistic and eclectic. The art therapist has many years experience working with sexually abused women in groups. Each session would begin with some form of direction focusing on a particular theme, through either a movement exercise or a visualization or both. The directions are described by the client as she remembers them in the fundamental description of the sessions in Appendix C. The group members would be in comfortable chairs in a very private space while they participated in the visualization. They would then enter into a large art room, collect their materials and begin to make their art object. The art therapist would walk around the room while they worked and would let them know when their time was up. The group members would then go back into the private room and, one at a time, put their art object on the board to be looked at and discussed.

## SECTION 1: A CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE OF THE ART THERAPIST

### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The essential constituents of a client's experience of the art therapist in art therapy are the experience of being facilitated and guided to a new point of view and the experience of being accepted, respected, and cared for. What makes this experience different from verbal therapy is the presence of a concrete visual art object (see Figure 3) that both the client and the art therapist are intentionally directed to.

The client experienced the art therapist in art therapy as someone who visually and verbally guided her out of her inner world to new ways of looking at and seeing her art object and herself. The art therapist helped her to look (to turn her eyes toward) and see (to discern visually/mentally) and be seen through her art. She experienced the art therapist as someone with vision, as someone who was visually and intuitively perceptive and who

gave this to her. The vision of the therapist included: seeing in the natural world (visual particulars, colours, form, space etc.), seeing qualitative aspects of the whole, seeing over time, seeing imaginatively, and intuitively (grasping the meaning). In opening herself to this experience, she discovered a new point of view both toward what she saw and what she understood. The active guidance of the art therapist facilitated her own perceptual interpretative process in looking at and seeing the art object, and helping her to make sense of her experience.

The client experienced the art therapist in art therapy as someone who repeatedly demonstrated acceptance, respect, and care for both herself and her art object. She felt valued and cared about through this experience. She opened to the art therapist and could accept what was being given to her. She experienced her own existence and located herself within herself. Having a standpoint within allowed her to see beyond herself and gave her a sense of her own agency, being able to act on and have an effect. This standpoint was a starting point from which she could move. She experienced more of an interchange between herself, others and the art object.

The client's experience of the art therapist in art therapy will be thematically and descriptively elaborated in the process or activities through which the client came to have the experience (how the experience occurred) and what appeared to the client, the meaning that she lived through (what the client experienced).

### The Experience of Being Facilitated and Guided to a New Point of View

#### How the experience occurred:

The client's experience of the art therapist in art therapy occurred through the art therapist visually and verbally directing and guiding the client's attention out toward the art object as seen and/or interpreted by the art therapist:

1. through visual description either of:
  - an aspect of the art work -colour, form, spatial characteristics,

*.....there is a white space left in the painting....*

- or a whole scene.

*This very shadowy figure with no face or anything in that little space in the painting.....*

*.....she pointed out that the figure had no clothes on and it wasn't detailedly (sic) naked.*

## 2. through interpretation:

- the therapist "bringing out" or "bringing up" meaning from the painting,

*....you painted this happy, bubbly painting....*

*There was this beautiful pose and pathos to this piece of sculpture, it had this incredible sort of 'Here I am', this feeling of dignity, vulnerability and yet this strength, she pointed out this strength to me.*

- or through linking the art object to self (viewing and talking about the art object as if it were the client).

*Her pointing it out to me and saying 'Look, you feel one way but obviously what's really going on is okay. You're really okay'.*

*Her pointing out 'God look at those legs for somebody that doesn't feel they've got much strength in their legs'.*

## 3. through pointing out themes and patterns:

- that occur in the same painting,

*.....that this space matched the space in the child's chest and that it seemed like the child could be put into that space.*

- or differences and/or development over time.

*She pointed out that this face looked a little older than the last one.*

*....brown seemed to be again a significant colour....*

*She pointed out the wings and that it was a recurrent theme.*

## 4. through the way the therapist interacted with the image:

- the manner in which she described the image

*.....how she'd say things.*

- or by enacting the role of the image, personifying it, making it come alive. For example, the therapist assumed the pose of an image of a child in the painting, cautiously peering out to the world, and said "Is it safe out there?"

5. through direct questioning or direction:

*What does the yellow mean to you?*

*Take another piece of paper and paint the anger.*

6. through tacit guidance:

*She never said one way or the other whether we were supposed to put ourselves in there or not but she made comments in the last one about other people doing that and whenever somebody would put themselves in the painting for the first time she'd make some comment about, 'Well there you finally are.' Although it wasn't a conscious effort to put myself there it was starting to happen.*

What the client experienced:

She was amazed to discover a new point of view, one that superseded her own view or forever altered it. By hearing and seeing what the therapist intentionally pointed out she began a co-constituted (mutually formed) subjective experiencing of the art object. Implicit in this experiencing was the guidance and direction of the art therapist.

1. The client experienced amazement at the visible appearance, the existence of something she had not seen before. She experienced a new point of view. Through hearing and seeing what the therapist had drawn her attention to she discovered something she had not seen before, a new reality "*as I looked I could see it really was*" that made sense to her and also felt right "*it felt right that that was in there too.*" She was amazed by this discovery and interested and excited by the appearance of something she was not aware of.

*.....that was me in there. I hadn't put myself in there but there I was. I didn't think about or paint myself in there but I saw that.*

2. The client experienced increasing awareness. Through the therapist bringing something up she discovered "*something else that I didn't even know.*" This knowledge or awareness was experienced as something visible, a sense of knowing, a body sense, a feeling, a thought or a behaviour (in becoming aware that she was putting herself in her paintings).

*I had an awareness when looking at the painting of feeling 'where am I?' It doesn't make sense logically but it feels right, it's a knowing.*

*I could see that, I never saw that, I hadn't even thought about it.*

*I thought, that's right.*

3. The client experienced being motivated to act.

*I remember sitting there for quite awhile knowing I had to make this damn face and there was real resistance to that.*

4. The client experienced positive feelings toward the art therapist and the art object. She experienced the therapist as someone who had knowledge and who was perceptive; as someone who saw things and knew things. She was "amazed" by this, "her noticing things which I never even noticed", and felt an "affection", a "fondness" towards the therapist. However the perception of the therapist was not what "made me feel good" but, rather, it informed her own perception, and influenced her experiencing of the art object. When the therapist enacted the role of the little child peering out into the world saying "Is it safe out there?" the client started to feel something toward the image.

*It was a kindly feeling that I had, like it was okay for this little child to start coming out. That was kind of cute.*

5. The client experienced being given something, taking something in and experiencing it from within. She experienced the therapist's guidance and direction as giving her information which she took in (she openly received) or which the therapist "plants" within her.

*The idea that it was a star but it wasn't complete, that was informative to me.*

*I recall getting a sort of sense of that inside, kind of an excitement. I could see it, it felt good.....it was becoming more and more clear as much as I felt it.*

6. This information transformed the client's experience of the art object and influenced her own perceptual interpretative process. The client lived an experience of change and evolution, a making sense of her experience.

*I started to think about it*

*.....by the time we were finished I loved that piece, gimped legs and all.*

*You get this information, like missing pieces and you just start to put it together and everything starts to fit and it's just great.*

## The Experience of Being Accepted, Respected and Cared For

### How the experience occurred:

The art therapist repeatedly demonstrated her acceptance, respect, and care for both the client and her art work in how she interacted with them:

1. Through her actions and words the art therapist repeatedly demonstrated acceptance, respect, and care for the client, her intention to be there for her and provide for her safety. This included:

*.....how she'd say things.....*

*.....tone of voice, body language.....*

*She never said anything unnice, or she was never shocked or anything it was really unconditional, she didn't object.*

- She kept things safe through her actions and guidance and monitored the emotional tone of the sessions.

*I felt really quite safe with her, I think it is really important.*

- When she was emotionally upset the therapist would physically come and be near her or actively intervene with suggestions or directions.

*As it gradually happened each time that she would be this way, when she came there, or gave me the teddy bear or being nonjudgemental.*

- The therapist was aware of and acknowledged that some sessions were more emotionally demanding and alternated with some that were not as intense.

*.....she commented about this session being a particularly strenuous one and said "Don't worry, next time you're just going to have fun."*

- She provided a conceptual framework and overview to prepare them for what they might experience.

*She gave us a sequence of things we might go through, an itinerary, that there was a pattern in this and that was helpful.*

2. The art therapist emphasized the value of the art object as an extension of self instead of valuing the art object as a work of art. She encouraged individual expression instead of emphasizing the formal qualities of the art object.

*She would always say "It doesn't matter, don't worry about it. No matter what line you put there or how you put it there it's something from the unconscious and it's supposed to be there."*

3. The art therapist showed respect for the images. The integrity of the image was maintained in that she did not alter them too much in their interpretation. The therapist demonstrated that she could see the image that the client had intended to make. For example, by describing what she saw, she validated the image's existence through recognizing it and interpreting it in an affirming way that both maintained the integrity of the image and linked it to positive aspects of the client.

*When I saw the image in my head it was completely complete. There was this brilliant beautiful star and then in the process of painting it, making this star was impossible. All this other colour and stuff came in and during the interpretation the idea that it was a star but it wasn't complete. The therapist brought that out and that was really informative to me. I had not thought of myself in terms of not having reached a potential or not being complete.*

4. The art object was interpreted in a way that was helpful to the client .

The art therapist interpreted it "lightly" because

*.....there was something positive about the individual she wanted to bring out.*  
- or by bringing an image of self to life in a way that was endearing to the client.

*The way she said things....."Is it safe out there?"*

#### What the client experienced:

Feeling accepted and safe, she opened herself to being cared for by the art therapist. She experienced her own existence and being in her body - "*I am in here*" - and a sense of staying in touch with the world. This standpoint within herself allowed her to see beyond herself, to see the other as separate from her and to experience her own agency toward the other, including opening herself for an interchange, a more interactive relationship.

1. The client felt accepted, reinforced and safe. She experienced this directly both in the therapist's interactions with her and her images. "*She tried to build me up.*" It "*felt really good*" to not be "*ridiculed*" , to have the image of herself as a star accepted, when she was anticipating "*repulsion*" re her "*egotistical*" image of self.

*She was always like that...I didn't feel ashamed...I felt like it was okay .*

2. The client opened herself to being cared for. She felt mothered and protected.

*It felt like mummy .....what I imagined the way it should be.*

*I felt she liked me in a mother-daughter way, that that's what she thought I needed.*

*I felt somehow protected, just getting and accepting it, allowing it and not questioning it.....Surrendering to it, just okay, look after me.*

3. The client experienced herself as embodied. Her existence in the world was affirmed and encouraged. She felt a sense of "it's alright, it's safe, you can stay here", and "a clear sense of being there", a staying present versus "disappearing". She experienced herself as "staying in my body" an "I am in here" versus being somewhere outside of and behind her body.

4. The client had a standpoint from which she could see beyond herself. She felt "more secure", more definite.

*It has to do with feeling more in control and I guess being able to somehow separate myself from the rest of world. I have a clearer feeling about who I am, what's me and what's beyond me. It's like okay that's your world and that's your perception, that's your problem, whatever. And this is mine, and there's like this separation, somehow a clearer identity.*

- Whereas before she had experienced rejection as:

*a sense of panic, a momentary loss of everything, confused, no ground, no footing, you're nowhere.*

5. The client experienced her own sense of agency, of feeling something toward, in doing with, or choosing to emerge.

*The feeling that I had I sort of transferred over to my child, I had somehow a kind of feeling that there was some sort of security in the way I felt.....It set an example for me because I started to kind of be that or do that with my kid and just seeing him sort of separate and not so much that my well being depended on his actions.*

- She felt a "kindly feeling" toward the image of the child in the painting "like it was okay for this little child to start coming out. That was kind of cute. I felt good about that." She could choose to become visible.

6. The client began to get an attachment to aspects of her self she had previously rejected. She experienced self acceptance, an integration, a getting things in place. She was able to be more accepting of others and was open to more of an interchange. *"I started to get an attachment to my emotions"*. She decided not to repress them as *"that wouldn't work for me. I am my emotions and my emotions are me."* The acceptance from others helped her to accept her own rebelliousness.

*Yeah alright...I get it. It's a good thing. I sort of put the whole thing of rebelliousness in perspective. A feeling like I had sort of got it all in place.*

- Accepting her rebellious self instead of extending it on to her son changed her relationship with him, there was more interchange back and forth, such as teasing each other, acknowledging their foibles but saying *"I accept you; it's okay"* at the same time.

- The acceptance, respect and care she received from the art therapist helped her to accept her images, to enter into the process of making without being concerned about formal qualities and to see her paintings and be connected to them in a different way than she had experienced before as an artist. There was more of an open interchange between herself and the art object.

#### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings will be discussed and situated in the context of psychodynamic and humanistic art therapy understanding of the role and intention of the art therapist. The discussion will include what the client experienced: the client's experience of being guided to a new point of view and of developing a standpoint within herself to engage with the world, and how the experience occurred: the activities and attitude of the art therapist through which these experiences emerged. The discussion also includes implications for further research.

#### A Client's Experience of Being Guided to a New Point of View

The findings indicate that the client experiences the art therapist positively as someone who facilitates, guides and supports her in her experiencing of the art object. There is the sense that she is continually being linked by the visual and verbal direction of the art therapist from her inner world to this external object. In looking out with this added

perspective, she discovers a new point of view toward both what she sees and what she understands. The experience of being guided out, and through visual perception developing understanding is different from verbal therapy which lacks reference to an external object.

How the experience occurs:

This thesis research notes that art therapist's visual description of the surface of the art object, i.e. colour, form or spatial characteristics of either particular aspects or whole scenes, could guide the client into deeper experiencing of the art object and its meaning. This finding is in keeping with those of gestalt and phenomenology oriented art therapists who particularly mention the structural aspects of the art object as being important indicators and access points for exploring qualities of experience. Gestalt art therapists view structural components of art work as isomorphic, of similar nature with psychological structures and encourage the client to look at this for self-understanding. A phenomenology orientation believes that the structural components of art carry and convey expressive qualities and embody qualitative meanings. Both gestalt and phenomenology art therapy practitioner's may tend to seek visual descriptions of formal qualities of the art work in hopes of unfolding deeper meaning. In both of these theoretical viewpoints the emphasis is on the current experience of the artwork rather than pre-established theory. Although Rhyne (1978) did a doctoral research study into whether there were graphic forms that conveyed common meaning to give some systematic basis to what otherwise takes place through the personal perception of the art therapist, there has not been any research done into the experiential processing of the client when the therapist guides them to view the structural qualities of their art object. This research study indicates the client's experience occurs through viewing the structural qualities of artworks and through other ways of viewing the art object. It is important for art therapists, particularly those art therapists who intentionally focus their client's on structural qualities, to investigate this area further.

Freudian and Jungian analytic oriented art therapists believe that at some point the client would benefit from some form of interpretation of the art object to promote insight and understanding. They differ, however, in the focus of the interpretation. In a Freudian perspective an interpretation of the art object usually means a connection or explanation of the latent meaning in terms of Freudian concepts, conflicts or dynamics ideally with some personal historical component. The purpose of this approach is to uncover repressed unconscious material which can be discussed with the therapist so that the client can gain insight. Jungian art therapists also interpret symbolic content, but do so in terms of universal archetypal forces and other Jungian concepts. They would, however, be more likely to try and assist the client to establish a relationship with the image as something existing in its own right, rather than viewing it as an indicator of something from the past. They also consider interpretation in terms of context, both personal and transpersonal and elicit interpretations in a form of hermeneutic with both therapist and client contributing to the discovery of a coherent meaning. Michael Edwards (1987 p. 102-103) a Jungian analyst and art therapist states:

*It is most important that the image be regarded by both patient and therapist in a variety of ways, from different perspectives, in different time settings, and in different contexts. The issue is not, or should not be, who does the interpreting client or therapist, but rather that a severely reductive stance by either party may miss subtle overtones and nuances of an image, which need to be responded to with nonjudgemental acceptance. It is the therapist's role to establish a therapeutic frame in which the image can be allowed its own authority, without overwhelming the client with its message, but also without being stripped of its iconological power.....It can be discussed as a brief impression, in detail, at length, manipulated in space, turned on it's side or upside down, discussed or regarded in silence. It can be compared with other images. Associations may be elicited by both patient and therapist in a hermeneutic style of interpretation. This is very different from using the patient's associations in a reductive way, leading to pathologizing of the image by treating it as a symptom.*

The humanistic theoretical orientations do not mention interpretation as an important aspect of their approach. It is important to note that the findings indicated that interpretation did take place, but not in the form of interpreting the symbolic aspects of the artwork in terms of past dynamics or transpersonal concepts. The research shows that the art therapist

interprets aspects of the painting and brings meaning "out" of or "up" from the artwork to be actualized in the perception of the client. The art therapist focuses on qualities of mood states or links the art object to the client by talking about it as if it were her. Interpretation in this sense appears to involve a figure-ground type relationship where the interpreted meaning would stand out from the background of the painting. This form of experience is more in line with the gestalt and phenomenology orientations even though they don't discuss interpretation. Rubin (1984) mentioned that interpretation as a concept seems to be misunderstood by many art therapists. She mentions that there are two meanings for this term which are related but not identical. She describes the first meaning of the art therapist interpreting the meaning of the art to the client, as was present in this research study, as the more narrow meaning, in that it is confined to the art product. She describes the second meaning of interpretation as being broader and more in line with the psychoanalytic understanding of the term; it includes any statement of an explanatory nature about client dynamics, which ideally contain some personal historical component. In insight-oriented therapy this form of interpretation explains, rather than simply translates. The various ways in which art therapists interpret art objects and the effect of this interpretation on the client is not yet fully explored or understood. The findings indicate however that the client was guided in this interpretation and that the therapist's point of view became part of her own. The research also points to the fact that the more "narrow" meaning of interpretation can also play an important role in art therapeutic experience. The researcher noticed that sometimes interpretation in the hermeneutic sense, in this case the client's experience was interpreted in the context of sexual abuse, tended to close down the experiencing between the client and the art object, to limit it in some way. However when the client interpreted the art object as a process, as she experienced it, she was more open to alternate interpretations. It is important to note that the client in this research study felt she had participated in an interpretative process with her art work where she was surprised to learn she was the major interpreter of her own experience, although the therapist's guidance was

implicit in this. Although the client was initially disappointed that the therapist did not interpret the art and provide her with a complete explanation of it as she had expected, she seemed to gain a sense of accomplishment and validation by interpreting her own experience for herself.

Probably all art therapists regardless of theoretical viewpoint, would agree that helping the client become aware of psychologically significant themes and patterns in the art work would happen over time. However the phenomenology theorist specifically highlights this process as an important aspect of integrating the client's experience and promoting change beyond art therapy. Mala Betensky (1987 p. 164) mentions:

*.... the search for similarities and differences in the same client's artwork over time. The client discovers certain recurrent components or themes in his work. The intraseries comparison leads to discernment of patterns, first in one's art then in one's responses to situations in life. The development of an ability to discern patterns in the art expressions leads the client to a further recognition of patterns in his behaviour. A questioning of such patterns by the client himself then follows and that eventually leads to change.*

The findings indicate that the intention of the art therapist and the manner in which she conveys what she sees can influence the client. The client has to be able to accept and be open to what the art therapist is directing her to. It is not only what the art therapist says but also the way in which she says it. (This will be discussed in more detail later.) The findings indicated that the art therapist varied her interaction with the image including bringing it to life through role playing. Enactment of the role of the image or encouraging it's personification is a focus of Jungian and gestalt art therapists. They believe that forming a relationship with the art object or a here-and-now experiencing of it is beneficial to the client by allowing the client to have a more authentic and spontaneous experience.

Many theoretical orientations promote free art expression and a non-directive approach during the making of and looking at the art object. For example, free association (used in the psychoanalytic approach), is a technique that encourages a client to try not to censor his thoughts so that aspects of the unconscious can be revealed. This approach uses

minimal comments from the therapist during spontaneous verbalization to facilitate the client's flow of thought; the client may react associatively to what she is doing or seeing.

Although the issue of whether a therapist is directive or non-directive is of particular concern to Freudian oriented art therapists, all orientations use a directive approach for certain therapeutic purposes such as when the client is feeling overwhelmed and needs outside intervention to mobilize coping mechanisms. Directing the client in the viewing and experiencing of the art object is specifically mentioned by the gestalt, phenomenology and Jungian orientations. Gestalt and phenomenology art therapists, with their emphasis on visual perception, direct the client to the structural aspects of the artwork - line, form, placement etc.- as an entry point to further meaning. Mala Betensky (1987 p. 159), an art therapist with a phenomenology orientation suggests:

*....guiding the client to notice specific structural components in his art expression and the feelings those convey to him; how certain components relate to one or more other components; whether they complement, clash or co-exist; what the organization of the art production is; whether the components of content may be grouped in any way, and what the groupings share in common, and whether that is seen in the art expression. Gradually vague feelings reach awareness and a new ability to identify and name feelings appears.*

Jungian art therapists direct the client to form a relationship with images in the artwork and to look at their artwork in various ways. For example, an art therapist with a Jungian orientation may direct the client to engage their image in a dialogue or write about the image as a form of active imagination and to further amplify meaning through both the activity and the relationship. The findings indicate that the art therapist was overtly directive and tacitly directive, and that the client was guided by both forms of direction. It is very possible that some art therapists are tacitly directive when they believe themselves to be non-directive in that they intend to create a safe environment for the client and expect the client to involve themselves with the art work. Perhaps in silence there are other forms of tacit direction. It would be interesting to explore further how clients experience those art therapists who profess to a non-directive approach but this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

What the client experiences:

The client experiences the new seeing as a revelation. This new awareness is accompanied by an element of surprise or discovery. It becomes an exciting and interesting experience and engages the client further in the process. This finding is similar to the psychoanalytic orientations that have acknowledged this excitement and surprise in the viewing of the image as having an affectively charged quality called "Id insight". Such discoveries, new insights into the self, are seen as critical in psychoanalytic treatment. There is therapeutic value in the combination of the affective experience and the sense of conviction that accompanies "id insight" because of the significant impact on the client, the meaningfulness of the experience. Gestalt orientations talk about the Aha! experience of leaps of insight and this too implies surprise and energetic insight. The phenomenology orientation discusses this as well, in terms of new appearances in consciousness and mentions the element of discovery as the experience of the phenomenon unfolds.

An increase in awareness is considered a therapeutic goal in many forms of art therapy. Consistent with these forms, the findings also note the experience of increased awareness, however this awareness occurred in a generalized way. The client experiences new awareness such as a feeling, an intuitive knowing, a thought, a behaviour or an insight at some point into particular issues and conflicts. This may indicate that becoming aware is a process that takes place at many different levels of experience and that insight may occur as meaning forms from these various levels of awareness (that insight is a multi-leveled and not just a cognitive experience). This is relevant for art therapists who view interpretation in the broader sense, interpretation that explains rather than translates, as being the major contributor to insight. This research study indicates that there are many levels of awareness that can contribute to the ultimate attainment of insight.

The client is motivated to act by the therapist's tacit and direct guidance. The client experiences the art therapist not only in a reflective way but also in a way that influences what she does. This is not discussed directly in the psychodynamic or humanistic theories

It is indirectly mentioned in all the theories in terms of goals for the client becoming more functional, or intentional, or carrying over into the world some of the interactions she learns in the art therapy session. These goals include a behavioural aspect that is not often discussed in the psychodynamic or gestalt orientations except in a general way. It is interesting to note that in the example given in the findings, the client was tacitly influenced to act, the therapist's will or intention was experienced and acted on by the client. Whether or not art therapy is effective in increasing the client's ability to function or contributes to the improvement of the client in some way is a major focus in art therapy research investigations, but the focus is often on the effectiveness of art therapy versus the effectiveness or influence of the therapist. This research study points to the client's experience of the art therapist of being motivated to act, another possible area for further research in terms of both how the art therapist influences the client and what the client experiences.

The findings indicate the client believes that the art therapist is perceptive and has expert knowledge. The client felt some fondness and appreciation toward the therapist when she shared this knowledge with her. She feels like she is being given something. It is important to note, however, that the client experiences the most satisfaction from her own subjective experience of the art object; this was central in her experience. The influence the art object has on the relationship between the client and art therapist is discussed from several theoretical perspectives, as described below.

The psychoanalytic perspective is concerned with the concept of the transference relationship, the transference of feelings from the past onto the therapist. The art object is viewed as something that diffuses the transference relationship between client and therapist because the client can also transfer or project feelings onto the art object as well. The gift of the art materials has been discussed as contributing to positive transference feelings between client and therapist (Rubin, 1984). The findings point to the fact that it is the gift of information or perception rather than the art materials themselves, which contributes to

the client's positive feelings toward the therapist. The art therapist also seemed to be able to facilitate the client's feelings or relationship with certain images by the manner in which the therapist engaged the art object.

In the Jungian analytic (Edwards, 1987 p. 99) perspective the artwork is viewed as "*a buffer, a screen, a filter or a container*" that mediates between client and art therapist. In the findings the client's experience of the art object remains central, however her own perceptual interpretative process is stimulated and influenced by the therapist's contributions. In object relations analytic theory this relationship between the therapist, client and art object is conceived as a therapeutic space which promotes new solutions and new potentialities and expanded levels of awareness as opposed to a pathological space which lies stagnant. All of the theoretical orientations recognize the importance of a therapeutic alliance; that the successful looking at and discussing of images can only be made through mutual understanding and insight between patient and therapist. Successful or meaningful translation or explanation of the art work is believed to lead to synthesis and integration of unacknowledged aspects of personality, and with increased consciousness, can assist in better functioning in life. The findings do confirm that through being guided to a new point of view the client had an experience of change and a making sense of things, of things fitting into place. This experience is elaborated on in the discussion of the client's experience of making and looking at the art object; which interrelate with her experience of the art therapist.

To stress the importance of the experience of being guided to a new point of view it is worthwhile considering the understanding of a Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin (Holquist & Liapunov "Eds.", 1990). He viewed the activity of perception as being the activity of the subject engaged in making sense out of the world by fixing the flux of it's disparate elements into meaningful wholes. Individual perception is uniquely situated in time and place from which each of us can see things the other cannot. We each have in this way, simultaneously, an excess of seeing in relationship to another and a lack, in that they

can see things that we cannot. Because of this we need to be able to interlocate each other, change places with another, to see where we are at. If we wish to overcome the lack of our own ability to see we need to try to see what is there together. According to Bakhtin, the situatedness of perception allows for our uniqueness but it also creates the need to interrelate with other unique individuals. We need the viewpoint of others in order to complete our selves.

#### A Client's Experience of Being Accepted, Respected and Cared For

##### How the experience occurs:

The findings indicate that the actions of the therapist, both verbal and non-verbal, help to make the client feel safe and supported. The consistency of the therapist, the fact that she repeatedly behaved in a caring and respectful manner, contributed to the client's sense of security. To the client, the therapist appeared to be sensitive to the emotional tone of the sessions, and the effect of her interpretations, always demonstrating awareness and respect for the needs of the client. This finding is similar to a general concept in all the theoretical orientations that suggest that a psychologically safe environment needs to be created by the art therapist. For example, analytic concepts speak of a holding environment, in which stable conditions and a positive, supportive relationship provide a safe framework so that the client can feel free and supported enough to experience things deeply. Rubin (1987) itemizes a continuum of helpful behaviours such as lending support, active intervention in the making stage, or inviting the client into mutual observing of the art object. The findings indicate that the educational interventions of the therapist are also perceived as supportive in terms of helping the client to place her own experience within a context, or to prepare her for what to expect. The therapeutic alliance is viewed as essential for good therapeutic work in all theoretical orientations. The client must learn to trust themselves and to have confidence in the therapist.

In the findings, the art therapist appears to demonstrate a positive regard for the client in the way she interacts with the art object. The therapist emphasizes that the

individual creation of the art object is of more value than its artistic appearance. This emphasis is similar to self psychology's understanding of a "*self-object*" where a person or thing is valued for its ability to enhance the self versus being a thing in itself. As an extension of self, an art object is then invested with the ability to mirror or empathically respond to the client, to validate their own experience. A Jungian orientation also views the art object as an extension of self but believes that the possibility of the art object having a life apart from the client, personification of the image, must be maintained to allow the client to imaginatively discourse with it.

*Depending on who the person is, I will usually try to convey the idea that the image has a life of its own, and that therefore whatever happens is right. If this works, the individual becomes interested in the unpredictable, and the ego learns to watch and relate to the process, rather than seeking to gain absolute control over it (Edwards, 1987 p. 103).*

Consistent with Jungian theory, the findings indicate that it appeared helpful to the client for the therapist to respect the images, to maintain their integrity, to acknowledge their existence, authenticity and value. In elaborating this point during the first art therapy session, the client described the art therapist as initially interpreting the star she had made, as a human form. This altered the image, although the general shape was maintained. In recognizing a human figure, the client saw it as bleeding and assaulted, which took her deeper into her own traumatic experiencing. This perspective changed when the art therapist stated that she saw the star and the star's incompleteness in a positive way. Then the client felt reassured by the star's existence; that it was not complete might allow her to have potential for growth. When the integrity of the original image was maintained, during the latter part of the discussion, the client experienced a sense of affirmation and validation. In the above, one can see how the client's description of their experience has the potential to illuminate a theoretical concept, how the concept as a process is revealed. These findings do support the Jungian perspective but, as maintaining the integrity of the image is an important aspect of a Jungian art therapy approach, further research in this area is required.

What the client experiences:

What the client experiences from the therapist's demonstration of acceptance, respect and active caring emerges as a developmental process.

The client feels safe and accepted, achieving one of the goals of most therapeutic approaches, as discussed above. As in the self psychology analytic orientation which views it as essential at certain points in development for a child to feel that "*exhibitionistic display is safe and effective.*" (Lachman-Chapman 1987 p.77), the client mentions it feels good to feel accepted in both the display of her images and in revealing herself through her actions and her words.

The client appears to experience transference, an analytic concept of the projection onto the therapist, of ideas, feelings, expectations, and of unresolved past conflicts with parent figures. Analytic art therapists may view the use of the transference, the symbolic way in which the patient perceives and responds to the therapist, as an opportunity for insight into how our past experience distorts our present experience. In this research study the transference was not used in this way by the art therapist, but instead was present in the experience of the client without exploration or explicitation (the therapist may not even have been aware of this). The positive transference feelings did seem to contribute to the clients ability to be open to and receive from the art therapist. The role of transference in art therapy is an interesting area for further research; for example, this research study indicates the positive feelings of the client toward the therapist were helpful to the therapeutic process even though the transference was not explored or utilized by the art therapist.

The supportive presence of the therapist also appeared to contribute to the client's ability to have faith in herself, to feel affirmed and validated. In most of the theoretical orientations, a client's experience of trusting themselves is not specifically described, although it is inferred. In the findings, the client experiences being embodied, having presence of mind and a physical sense of herself or being present within her physical

being. Presence of mind may be similar to the analytic concept of the observing ego where the client can maintain some objectivity about their own experience.

In feeling more secure in herself, having a location within herself, the client appears to be clearer about what belongs to her and what belongs to others. This relationship between self and other is explored particularly in object relations orientations but usually in terms of the theoretical understanding of this experience, rather than from the verbal descriptions from the client. The concept of beginning to separate and differentiate from emotionally important objects is viewed as taking place in normal development at a preverbal age. Those individuals who experience loss of boundaries or fusion states in adulthood are conceived by object relations and self psychology theorists as needing the task of building psychic structures rather than uncovering insight. However, the experience of developing boundaries or disengaging from a fused state is usually articulated in theoretical language and is not verbally described by a client, whereas this research offers some sense of this. The findings also indicate that the client could live this out existentially, to feel more able and more willing to take a stand. In accepting, consolidating herself she was able to be more accepting of others. It appears that she saw more of a separateness, between herself and others. The space between the self and the object is considered in object relations theory as a potential space, where the self develops symbolic capacities that assist with separation and differentiation, and that the ability to play or move freely back and forth between inner and outer is an important aspect of this. The findings indicate that the client was able to have more of an interchange with the other, including her son, friends and the art object. There is a sense of herself as being located or situated in amongst others. She could be open to an object, move toward it, accept it in or she could decide not to get involved. In Bakhtin's (Holquist & Liapunov "Eds.", 1990) formulation of the self/other problem he mentions how the interlocative self is one that can change places with another, that must change places with another to see where it is. There is a reciprocity to this experience that is similar to the client's experience in this research. In

helping her to have a standpoint from within herself that she can engage with the world from, the client becomes more functional in the world, a goal of all art therapy orientations.

## SECTION 2: A CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE OF MAKING THE ART OBJECT

### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

#### The Experience of the Therapist's Directions Prior to Making the Art Object

##### How the experience occurred:

As the client listened to the verbal directions given by the art therapist in the movement and visualization exercises, she closed her eyes and turned inward. The directions required the client to engage in either cognitive-affective (imagination, decision making, remembering, feeling) or physical processes (movement exercises). The intention of the directions was to focus the client on contacting and expressing her own experience.

##### What the client experienced:

The client experienced the intention of the art therapist as an outer force propelling her toward something.

*We had to move around and try and be....*

*.....we had to imagine....*

Although she sometimes experienced some resistance to the direction she would proceed anyway and would intentionally try and "get into it.". She would work at entering into the experience.

She would get or receive visual images that were sometimes accompanied by impressions, memories, words or thoughts.

*The first thing that occurred to me when I opened the box was Dong! this image, and I could see it just like that and then for some reason I got the impression that the image that I could see just this dark shadow and me hanging there and then I remember somehow I got the word or thought ragdoll in that visualization*

The image seemed at times to have a will of it's own, to be a living thing that she could interact with.

*It was coming out of the box and I'd imagine "No get in there and stay in there" and it'd still be coming out of the box. It was just like there and it wouldn't go away but I could make it recede and I could make it go away but it would be back again. Through the whole visualization it was like this little pink red thing was there, so*

*when I painted it then I thought "Okay you're there you want to be out here? Alright."*

After the visualization- she felt

*.....fogged out a bit, in a bit of a trance, some sort of altered state.*

*.....half in real, half in unreal.*

### A Client's Experience of Making the Art Object in Art Therapy

The client's experience of making the art object in art therapy was a complex and fluid process. The client intentionally worked at contacting and expressing aspects of her inner world. The work involved both the physical acts of looking at and making the art object and the mental and emotional processing that occurred with the creation of meaning.

The client let go of inner expectations and opened herself to what was before her, allowing herself to experience the colours, textures and images of the art making. The materials and activities of the making became analogues or mediums for expressing her feelings. They were transformed through meaning to aspects of self. This allowed the client to extend her being beyond her inner world, beyond her body to encompass the objects and activities of the art making. In the here and now, they assumed a parallel level of existence.

The meaning emerged and formed as she worked. This motivated and engaged her- she could make and mold meaning, aspects of self, through her activity.

The meaning emerged and formed in various ways. The deepest experience for the client was the dialectic forming of meaning when she discovered the existence of the opposite to what she had intended. The meaning also formed in an interactive (dialogal) manner where one aspect informed another or in a synergistic manner where the meanings worked together and the combined meaning superceded the individual meanings.

Through these activities and processes the client had an intense emotional experience. She felt deeply connected with what she was doing. She felt vulnerable and exposed, as if she were undressing.

She experienced the making as a temporal and spatial process. Certain points over time were more significant than others. She experienced the spaciousness of the process as the meaning expanded from being in her to encompass the activities, the materials and the art object. Through the meaning the client discovered experiences of other times, other places. There was a fusion of horizons between what was then and what was now, between what was her and what was the art object.

The client experienced increasing awareness and understanding. There was excitement, a sense of discovery.

How the experience occurred:

The client's experience of making the art object in art therapy occurred through the volition/intention of the client, the physical activities of making, the process of expanding the field of meaning through analogues and by forming meaning.

1. Through her own volition the client attempted to contact and express her inner experience: visual images, expectations, conceptions, meanings, feelings. This implicit experience was the "stuff" of the making, the ground of experience which the materials and activities helped to make more explicit.
2. Through the physical activities involved in making the art object- mixing the paint, moving the brush through space and on space, forming the clay, stopping, sitting and looking- the client engaged with external objects and attempted to bring forth her inner experience.
3. Through the tacit and direct guidance of the therapist and seeing that lack of concern for artistic merit was encouraged and accepted with other group members, she gradually experienced a transition in her experience of making. Through "*letting go of conscious concerns*" for accurate representation of her inner visual image; previous knowledge of the formal qualities of art; expectations about having a show, using canvas, and good paint; and other conceptions, ideas, and concerns for what other people might think of her and her painting.

*I noticed at the beginning of my therapy that I had real conscious concerns about composition, colour and all of the elements and principles of design that I'd been*

*trained with. To just let myself go and paint and not worry about organizing and planning my painting, I was aware of having to get past that and it's the next painting after this one where I didn't care and wasn't concerned about those things anymore and just let myself go.*

4. The client became more open and accepting of what she was involved with in the experience of making the art object. *"By accepting the materials, letting go of expectations and realizing I had to forget about everything...."*. Rather than trying to place her expectations on the objects of the art making, a seemingly one way process that blocked the flow of her experiencing, there was an interactive or dialogal sense of movement and energy; a flowing in as well as a flowing out

*....just letting feelings and emotions come and responding to them on the paper rather than before things would be coming and I would be concerned where to place them on the paper and how to make the colours work together and how to make the material do what I think it should be doing.*

The client's field of experiencing expanded. There was a sense of her experience, her existence, moving out beyond her inner world to encompass what she was looking at and what she was doing with the materials; that she had extended herself in the world through these materials and activities and forms; a sense of her being in psyche rather than psyche being in her. The client called this process *"getting into"*, as if she were entering into something with her whole being. She discovered analogues for types and levels of feeling and self in the qualities of the materials such as texture, consistency, and colour, and the activities of making such as mixing, painting, and forming the image. When this occurred there was a change in her relationship with the art object and the materials: In experiencing the art object as an aesthetic object she viewed it as having needs and wants and qualities as an object apart from her.

*....it needed red....*

*I thought, well I'll paint some white on it because it seemed really empty. All this blank paper was very empty, and it needed to have something in it. It needed to have some substance....*

*It's like this empty space that didn't want to be black and it wanted something in there.*

When the client began what the researcher will name an analogal process (a process of reasoning and experiencing from parallel cases), qualities of the art making and of herself appeared to intermingle - what was her and what was *"it"* became less clear.

*I had a good feeling about myself and the good feeling needed to be yellow. It's not all that bad, it's not all black, red and blue, there has to be something positive in there.*

These qualities of the paint or the activities of the making and image were elevated to a parallel level of existence with her, she could exist in them and they in her, she lived through them. As such, they could assume an intentionality which informed her.

*I started to paint this form, I was very unconscious of painting anything, I was just putting the paint on and becoming aware of what it was doing and where I was putting all this stuff.*

*This one wasn't part of that one it was just part of it's own process.*

*It was once again letting the material and what was happening happen rather than trying to manipulate it and make it do what I wanted it to do, just let it do what it was doing.*

She watched and allowed the experience to unfold, to flow, through her eyes and body, through something other than her intellect

*I remember just allowing the process to happen and being watchful of it and just watching the process and not really understanding it as it was happening.*

The process of analogal experiencing can be further illustrated as follows:

(a) "Getting into" the materials (colours and textures):

She put her inner previous experience with quality materials and disappointment about the poster paints behind her and opened herself to experiencing the qualities of the poster paint, the "smushing" and "luscious" texture of the paint. She liked it. The colour and texture, "the colourful lusciousness" were analogues for the feelings of peace and harmony that were going into the "safe space" on the painting.

*I remember with this painting realizing that I had to forget about everything I knew about materials paint previous to this because this was a different kind of paint and it was really a stupid paint but it really could do some things and I started to really get into the material and work with the material and it's really quite a sensuous material, I think of it in terms of lousy stupid poster paint but it really has an essence of it's own and in terms of properties it does have properties and I remember this painting as being the one where I got into the sort of smushing and lusciousness of the actual paint. I liked it, I really liked it and I think that's part of what, you know, the feeling that was going into what was happening in my space, you know, this colourful lusciousness.*

The colour green became an analogue for the feeling of humiliation. The green had qualities that felt "putrid" and "slimey".

*It seemed the green was humiliation because it felt putrid and slimey, the humiliation felt green. There was this incredible contact with this feeling of humiliation, it was rather intense, almost like you can taste it. How can you feel a colour and taste an emotion?*

The colour brown became an analogue for feelings of disgust.

*So I started with the brown and brown I don't even like.... brown is one of my least favorite colours and so I tried to make it the yuckiest brown that I could possibly make and it seemed to me that this body and this face was really rotten and really yucky and decayed and it was really horrible.*

b) "Getting into" the making (mixing the paint; the activity of painting, making, or forming and responding to the image):

The activity of "*schmucking the paint around*" and the texture "*like shit*" were analogues for destructive feelings. The activity of mixing took her deeper into her experience. She wanted to stay with this activity rather than moving into the activity of painting and forming the image. The continuing activity of painting became an analogue for her increasing feelings of resistance "*the more I painted it the more I didn't want to paint it*"

*Yeah, because I had to mix a brown, and I mixed a few browns, and I kept schmucking the paint around and around and back and forth, that I actually remember getting into that making that brown. It was like a concoction, and I really quite liked these stupid poster paints. They're really thick and there's something that I really liked about mixing that paint up and sort of like it was like shit and I was going to paint this face this brown. That was really how it was feeling and it felt like I was sort of like part of some sort of master mixing up this sort of like what I mean is um almost like what you'd think of what you'd imagine of someone mixing up a brew or a poison or a concoction or something, and the feelings of kind of a feeling of power in a way but it's almost like a glee or something, it's like you're going to do something harmful, you're going to hurt somebody or, you're going to get rid of somebody or something, and you're mixing up this stuff and it's ha! ha! ha! ha! I don't know what that is but that's kind of how I felt when I was mixing up the paint and I also felt kind of um kind of resistant to actually starting painting. I didn't really want to start the painting I just wanted to mix the paint um and I had quite a resistance and so anyway I started painting the face and then I got I put the eyes and the mouth on and the more I painted it the more I didn't want to paint it and the more resistance I felt and I kind of sat there for a minute and kind of um what I would call bored but it's not boredom it's just not wanting to do it.*

The activity of stabbing was an analogue for her feelings of anger and increased as the feeling increased. This is an example of the analogal process taking place in real time, at any instant the activity of the stabbing explicitly expresses the intensity of her feeling.

*Yeah it was really important that I have that red and I might have got it ...I must have got it before I was looking at those eyes because once I started looking at them there wasn't a break in there because I had that paint already and I was sitting there looking at it and it got real black and I got real angry and I just went with my brush right on the mid (front) of the face and then as I did that I was getting angrier and angrier and pretty soon I was just stabbing the whole thing and somewhere up at this point because I was going I stood up and I was stabbing the whole thing like that and I was pretty unemotional at first I was just mad and then as I started to really move around on it then I started to cry.*

The activity of the stabbing became an analogue for destructive feelings and feelings of disgust. The analogal qualities assumed a symbolic form which included both the destructive feelings and the activity.

*I had the impression as I was stabbing at this face that this face was like rotten and dead and just putrid and horrible and I felt like, when I was stabbing it, I didn't feel like I was stabbing it with a knife, I felt like what I was doing was like a crow like pecking at it, tearing at it, making it bleed. I can see it, half think it, it felt like that's what I was doing was pecking it.*

The activity of painting and forming the image "making her wild and crazy" was an analogue for her feelings of being critical.

*I just painted this one, never even thought, I was really into it, didn't realize what I was painting or stop and consider it. When I painted it, I was getting into the feeling of being critical and painting this and making her wild and crazy.*

In making a particular claypiece she let go of her concern for something "nice and smooth". The activity of patching was an analogue for feelings of being wounded and repaired. She experienced the reality of this process as being part of her existence, as being who she was.

*I remember as I was making this piece it kept, the bottom, back part here, the wings or veil or cape or something, always kept kind of falling apart and cracking and I kept putting pieces on it. One of my concerns was I wanted something nice, and smooth, and beautiful, and well crafted, but as I kept working on it it wasn't working out the way I wanted it to and I kept putting these pieces on it and at some point I gave up the idea of having this beautiful smooth piece and I realized what I was doing was patching up this shell, and I kept putting these patches on it and I thought "Well isn't that appropriate" that I kept doing that and that that's what it was...part of me was all these patches, and then I sort of made a joke about how I kept having to patch all these things up and of how I was rather tattered, and torn, and needed to have all these patches. The emphasis for me when I was making it was this shell part, I was really paying a lot of attention to that.*

The activity of sticking the tool up the clay figure is an analogue for feelings of being painfully violated.

*When we were making this piece we had to hollow it out and in the process of hollowing it out I had to stick this tool up here and it....There was something that really disturbed me about making this.....(she had read in the news recently how a man had raped and murdered a woman and shoved a pipe up her vagina).....it drove me mad it felt so terrible doing that in light of this court case and what was going on. I did not want to do that, I was kind of in a way making a joke about having to do that but I felt really sick about it and really sick about doing that to my piece and sick about the whole realization of sexual abuse and it was very appropriate because it was my own abuse that I was dealing with and it was terrible.*

The activity of the stroke of the paintbrush is an analogue for feeling powerful.

*It felt very powerful, felt like there was a lot of power in those wings. I do remember really intentionally doing some you know feeling power when I did that and really getting into that stroke.*

5. As the client made the art object meaning emerged and formed. The meaning emerged in a manner that was:

- (a) Dialectic - For example in painting an image of herself and experiencing being critical, the antithetical meaning emerges

*.....and it's like me and my mother because this is my mother as well and my grandmother and all of them and then at some point I could really feel this other feeling....which was a feeling of almost nothingness, just very close to nothingness....It's like being totally worthless, nothing.*

While attempting to make the image of a clear bright star that she saw in her head, she uncovers a contradictory meaning....

*.....when I saw the image of the star in my head it was completely complete. There was this brilliant beautiful star and in the process of making it, making this star was impossible. All this other colour and stuff came in, and during the interpretation the idea that it was a star, but it wasn't complete.*

- (b) Interactive (Dialogal) - For example the meaning can inform the painting,

*At the time of this painting I knew that I had a real physical need to have this height, and it was in order to actually make conscious choices about persons that were allowed into my space in regards to my safety, and so that's why I painted the stairs in there*

- or the making of the art object can communicate meaning,

*.....when I was making the model and she wouldn't stand up on her legs and I couldn't model them, I could not make the legs .....and it just really said to me - I've got a problem with my legs.*

- or the looking at the art object, during the making of it, can inform the meaning.

*And I went 'God, I don't believe it look at this woman, she's a tough, big woman, right?' I was amazed at how I put in these stripes there was like a muscle woman coming into form.*

(c) Synergistic - Where the meanings work together and the combined meaning exceeds the sum of the the individual meanings. For example, in starting to paint herself she found herself painting her ragdoll from childhood, then a scenario emerges of a time when her sister and her were alone at home with her father while her mother was in hospital. The painting immediately following was of the emotions of this experience:

*And I was getting those words 'You mother-fucker'...because I remember being very resistant to painting these emotions there was just so many of them, I never even identified them, I just decided there was so many emotions there and that they were all different colours and I was just going to paint them but as I was painting them anger was the main thing that had triggered it all off and then the words started to come it was sort of like this process of painting these emotions that kind of solidified them or brought them to some sort of focus in these words and when I got to 'You son-of-a bitch.' It was like 'Where's my mom?' and I never thought of that before, I never had any concern for my mother because I hated my mother.*

For example:

*I had felt very angry and it was a totally body kind of feeling it was in my body that I felt angry, in my heart in my whole body, in my stomach. And when I felt sad it was more like a mental thing. It was in my mind. It wasn't a thought, it wasn't that I thought that I was sad, I felt sad but it was like I remembered the sadness whereas I felt the anger but I remembered feeling sad and then I felt sad. And then the other thing was the green that was the humiliation and that was something that really came from nowhere, I felt really humiliated but I remembered the situation when it occurred, that this painting represented, and the humiliation was something that I remembered as well because then it reminded me of the original situation where the humiliation was a very distinct emotion at the time and I had completely forgotten about that I hadn't even thought of it, I didn't even remember it until I felt this humiliation. It was when I got the humiliation that I not only remembered but I refelt the whole original situation.*

(This can at some point, assume the form of a hermeneutic inquiry where understanding takes place where the meaning of the separate parts is determined by the global meaning of the context [in this case the art making experience is determined by the global meaning of sexual abuse]. In principle, a hermeneutical explication is an infinite process; while in practice, it ends when a sensible meaning, a coherent understanding, free of inner contradictions, has been reached.

*I thought because I had forgotten about that, and it was a really key thing, the humiliation was a key thing in me putting together the whole original situation that I had forgotten a lot of parts about ...I didn't understand why I felt humiliated because I'd already blocked everything out and so now when I get back in touch with the humiliation of that incident and I realize why I felt humiliated at that time and I put it all into context (of sexual abuse), I can understand it.*

Understanding appeared to close down the client's experiencing, she would place it in a context, contain it rather than watching, responding to the phenomena that appeared before her.)

What the client experienced:

In making the art object in art therapy the client experienced moving through time and space, a deep connection to the objects of the making, intense emotion and energy, being visible, increasing awareness, and being motivated to act.

1. The client experienced the making of the art object in art therapy as a temporal and spatial process. There was a sense of the spaciousness or fullness of the process, and also of things emerging in a point of significance, in Gestalt terms, a sense of "figure" and of "ground". The temporal experience is illustrated by-

*.....somewhere along the line.....*

*.....at this point.....*

*.....at some point in the process I could really feel....*

- which implies the existence of other points in time. The "figure" would be the emerging meaning: *"At some point in it I did know what I was painting because I realized....."* The spatial process occurred in the "ground" of experience in which the meaning arose and may have extended from being in her

*.....the image I had seen was a very clear star, it wasn't drawn, it was just a clear star.....*

- to being in the materials

*I really quite liked these stupid poster paints. They're really thick and there's something that I really liked about mixing that paint up and sort of like it was like shit and I was going to paint this face brown.*

- to being in the making

*I was having trouble translating the image that I saw in my head onto the painting and it just didn't want to be translated. It just didn't want to be there.*

-to being in the image

*By this time I realized that this (image) was me.*

2. The clients experience of making in art therapy was one of being or becoming connected, of contacting meaning in a significant way within that context at that point in time, yet going beyond it to connect with other points in time and space such as

- a living memory,

*As I was painting...I could remember the feeling of being there as a little child and just being bewildered by all this confusion and cattle that were crying and there was always a lot of people around....,*

- a physical object (such as an art object),

*I remember from the movement thing the feeling of power in my arms and somehow that also harkened back to the painting of the helper with the wings ...*

- or a person from the past.

*I was absolutely horrified when I finished the face and I just went "Oh my God this is my grandmother. What is she doing here?"'*

The client's experience of making the art object in art therapy was not separate from self, there was an emotional connection.

*It seems to me and that's what I've also noticed with my paintings and that when you're actually going through the art therapy process that you have this emotional connection and you've gone through this sequence and process and building up, the piece is so much bigger and the qualities of it are much more exaggerated then when you look at it later or pick it up later.*

3. The client experienced feeling exposed, visible, as if she was undressing. She felt vulnerable, being part of an intensely personal process which she did not want anybody to see or interfere with.

*For me it's like what I keep wanting to say it's like this process of undressing and I don't want anybody to see. Yeah it feels exposing, it feels like exposure, yeah any art.*

At the making stage she experienced irritation if the therapist watched her or came too close to her. Although initially she also experienced this when the therapist gave

her direction, she also found it to be helpful to her in facilitating further self-exploration.

4. The client experienced the meaning as being in the making. The meaning was in the doing; this motivated the client to act.

*...I knew that there was a reason why I wasn't able to make these faces. I wanted to do it and to keep making things and I knew I had all these faceless things here that somehow it was important to try and get a face.*

5. The clients experience of art making in art therapy was dynamic. The client had a lived experience of emerging and forming meaning. There was energy and excitement in this; a sense of discovery and increasing awareness. She experienced not knowing and coming to know through the living process of making. An example of not knowing would be when she was painting or involved in the activity of making without consciously thinking or knowing what she was doing.

*All of a sudden out of nowhere and for no reason I painted this other little scenario just painted this one, I never even thought about anything, I was just painting it.*

*I was really into it, I didn't realize what I was painting or stop and consider it or anything until I actually put it up on the wall.*

The meaning arose as an intuitive impression, an apprehension through the senses,

*I became aware that this was not a white bubble, that this was something else happening on this painting*

- and sometimes as an cognitive awareness,

*I didn't decide as I was putting the colour on what it meant except for the green and I knew that when I was putting it on it meant my material needs*

What she experienced as she became aware varied: It was an experience of direct and clear contact with a feeling, an emotional reaction,

*.....it became very clear how it felt ....*

*.....here was this incredible contact with this feeling of humiliation .....*

- a surprise,

*.....this was a surprise to me as was painting that little part a surprise to me.....*

- or an experience of apprehending, something coming into her possession,

*I got at some point or another, I got really angry about this*

*I got the humiliation through doing this painting*

*I got this sort of image of this grin and these eyes and for some reason or another this time I recognized it as this particular uncle*

- or a gradual experience of increasing awareness.

*I started to paint this form, I was very unconscious of painting anything I was just putting the paint on and becoming aware of what it was doing and where I was putting all this stuff.*

#### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

##### How the experience occurs:

The making of the art object is the physical working phase of art therapy. The need to be personally engaged and involved is mentioned generally in many theoretical orientations. It is evident in this research study that the client had to be intentionally persistent in trying to contact and express her inner experiences. The fact that this is not necessarily an easy process is mentioned in Freudian and Jungian psychodynamic theories which comment on how making the first mark on the paper, or beginning to mold and shape the clay to completing the art object is often fraught with ambiguity, uncertainty and unpredictability which can contribute to anxiety and elicit the defenses. This research suggests that despite a certain amount of "resistance" the client persisted with her art making; that being engaged in what she was doing contributed to her experience in art therapy. Art therapists from all theoretical orientations indirectly allude to this need to persist by making suggestions to help clients get started or proposing possible interventions if clients get stuck or discouraged.

Gestalt art therapists emphasize the physicalness of the art therapy experience as a way of communicating through the senses, and may tend to include movement exercises or some form of sensory experiencing in their art therapy sessions. There is also a focus in Gestalt on here-and-now experiencing versus reflective experiencing. Within this study the physical activities of the client involved in the art making includes mixing the paint, moving

her brush, forming the clay, stopping, sitting and looking. Involvement in the physical process of art making is described by Rubin in *The Art of Art Therapy* (1984) but in most theoretical orientations the physical process is assumed rather than explicitly discussed.

The client appeared to go through a transition from being preoccupied with her inner world to becoming engaged in the process of making. This research study illustrates the transition from inner experiencing to outer involvement, something usually discussed in theoretical terms. The findings indicate that this took place through letting go of conscious concerns, and opening herself to the materials, activities and objects of the art making through analogical processing (this will be discussed more later).

The loosening of intellectual controls and the promoting of spontaneous or playful experimentation is viewed in all the psychodynamic orientations as an essential aspect of creative work and a necessary condition for gaining access to the unconscious. Psychodynamic theorists encourage spontaneous art expression, viewing it as the art therapy equivalent to free association. The client is encouraged to refrain from censoring her thoughts and feelings and to allow them to honestly emerge in the art production. This client in this research study took part in directed exercises prior to the art making, rather than beginning with expressing whatever was on her mind. She stated she was able to relax her intellectual controls because of the value the art therapist placed on individual art expression and because of the emotional intensity of what she was involved in. She recalls it as a conscious decision to let go, however, and from that point on her experience of art making differed. She felt freer, not as critical of what she was doing or of what it would look like. This freedom from intellectual constraints was manifested in her artwork: that she did not feel obliged to fill the whole page with paint (every painting after this has some blank space on the page) and she could allow herself to do quick sketches or draw stick people.

On another level, the client appeared to open herself to experience other objects. The findings indicate that letting go of her inner expectations and being more open and

accepting of what she is involved with allows for an interactive sense of movement and energy. For example the client responds to what she sees on the paper rather than continually trying to place her experience on the page. The client's field of experiencing expanded through an analogal process. An analogal process is understood by the researcher as a process where one medium or activity is used to express another in real time (there is no time delay); at any instant the one medium or activity explicitly or uniquely expresses the other. For example, if the emotion of anger increased in intensity, so would the analogal activity of stabbing the page, or the colour brown would be similar either in amount or the type of brown to the quality or proportion of the "yucky" feeling. In an analogal process a parallel relationship exists between things that are otherwise entirely different. It was as though through this analogal process, the parallel relationships between the client and the art materials and activities, her inner world extended out beyond her intellect to encompass what she was involved with. This finding is similar but distinct from both Jungian and object relations orientations. Jungian art therapy theorists encourage the elevation of the image to a personified level so that the client can enter into a relationship with it. Jungian art therapists believe an image can hold several meanings at the same time and that assuming this attitude versus interpreting the image in terms of unconscious conflicts, can allow the experience of deeper and more complex meanings. Object relations theorists view the art object as a potential transitional object, which can be imbued with meaning. The concept of transitional object will be discussed in more detail later. The process of the object becoming imbued with meaning is not well described by object relations art therapy theorists but it seems similar to the analogal process presented in these research findings. Becoming imbued with meaning also implies relationship between the subject and the object.

A significant finding in this research study, that offers a differing viewpoint from the Jungian and object relations theorists, is that the relationship exists for the client not only in the images in the artwork, or the completed symbolic form, but also in the actual

materials and activities that went into making them. The relationship takes place through the analogal process whereby the materials, activities and images assume a parallel level of existence with her emotional state; there is an energy flow between self and objects which is variable but parallel and similar in intensity or quality. The client experiences connection, contact and energy through this process. This would indicate that the Jungian art therapists might consider beginning to encourage personification of the discrete units of materials and activities that together make up the image and not just the image itself. Art therapists commonly encourage this kind of linking through such comments as "Let a colour be a feeling" but this research study goes beyond what is vaguely articulated and explicates, describes and validates this from the descriptions of the client.

A phenomenology orientation mentions how through visual perception a client can move from preintentional experiencing where there are vague stirrings one is barely aware of, to becoming more aware and truly seeing what is there (having objects become meaningful) and assuming a fully intentional relationship with the object; implying a tension between subject and object, a dialogue and a mutual coexistence. It is interesting to note that at various points in time in this participant's experience in art therapy, the intention or the consciousness of the client appears to exist beyond her physical boundary in the objects of the making and the objects assume an intentionality that informs her. For example when she puts the paint on and becomes aware of what it was doing, or where something seems to have come to be through a process of it's own. The development of intentionality (tension, dialogue and coexistence between subject and object), appears to be similar to an analogal process in this study but it is only vaguely articulated in phenomenology art therapy theory. The research presented here remains more explicit and precise in the description of a client's experience in art therapy. Rubin (1984) mentions how the creation of an object that is both of the self but not self is an experience unique to art therapy but this experience is not yet well understood or articulated. The client's

experience and relationship with the art object in the making phase of art therapy is a potential area for further exploratory research.

The analytic depth oriented approaches have theoretical understandings about the mental processing that takes place during the art making process. The concepts of sublimation, symbolization and a transitional object will be briefly discussed here as they relate to the findings.

Freud believed that the mind and the psychic structures that comprise it evolve out of biologically derived tensions. Edith Kramer (1987) suggests that the therapy in art therapy takes place through sublimation - the transformation and channelling of energy - by the continued production of artwork. Sublimation is an analytic concept that embraces a multitude of mental mechanisms including displacement onto an outer object, symbolization of an internal wish or drive, the neutralization of drive energy (particularly aggressive and sexual drives), identification with the newly created object, and integration through the ego. As the energy binds or is controlled by the ego and the ego replaces blind drive, there is a similar and parallel (analogous) redistribution of drive energy. The energy is then available for use by the ego. This theory of sublimation entails the establishment of a symbolic link between a primitive need and another complex cluster of ideas and actions. Sublimation involves both primary process thinking, including the ability to perceive analogies, and secondary process thinking which is more organized, logical and stable.

In this research study sublimation in the complete sense of the word was not achieved in many of the instances described by the client. The experience that comes closest to sublimation appears to be Artwork #7 (Appendix C). The client describes working on a shell-like aspect of her clay piece and finding that it kept falling apart and cracking. She was continually patching it, wanting something smooth, beautiful and well crafted. As she worked she realized what she was doing and this said something authentic about her own existence; she experienced this as if she were repairing herself. She made a joke about how she was tattered and torn and kept needing to make these patches for

herself. Sublimation expects a change in the object on which interest is centered (in this case the need to identify with an ideal object changed to accepting the tattered torn and patched object as herself), in the goal (she surrenders her dream of perfection and accepts and reinforces what is), and in the kind of energy through which the goal is achieved (conflicting forces of striving for the unobtainable and feeling inadequate were reconciled and the energy became focused, constructive and positive energy which could be acceptably shared with others). What appeared to be most significant to the client in this research was the meaning she uncovered and the authentic experience and acceptance of self; in other words it allowed her to experience her existence in a fuller way. The cognitive awareness the client achieved is not always present in a sublimated experience, and is perhaps more evident in those clients who are able to participate in insight oriented art therapy.

The findings significantly illustrate how analogal processing allows the client to move her energy and engage with the art making process, to continue her immediate experience instead of close it down. In this research study full sublimation does not often occur. What appears helpful is for the client to remain open while art making as this creates possibilities for the appearance of new things and for forming and experiencing meaning. This is more consistent with the Jungian perspective where the interactive relationship with an authentic image permits access to different levels of meaning. The aspects of the analytic concept of sublimation that seem similar to the analogal process described in the findings are the energy flow and the use of analogy to broaden single-minded preoccupation. There is a blind obsessive quality to primary drive and the analogal process helps to broaden this. Both the energetic intensity and the broadening of her experience were important to the client in making the art object in art therapy.

The participant in this study was an artist and had attended art college for several years. She feels the making of her art at that time was therapeutic in some way; she was involved in a violently abusive relationship and she was able to channel her feelings about

that into her art making. This experience might be closer to sublimation than her experience in art therapy. In art therapy she stated she felt that looking at and discussing the art object (the insight) was more therapeutic than the art making. (It is relevant to note that the focus of the art therapy group was more insight oriented than art-as-therapy oriented.) However, she stated the building and energetic effort that went into the making helped her to be more emotionally connected to her artwork and the qualities of the artwork assumed significant proportions (became meaningful) because of this emotional connection.

The concept of symbolization is an important one for many art therapists. The mental processing involved is understood mainly in psychoanalytic terms and then adapted to the understanding of art therapy. The researcher believes that what occurred in the making stage is more accurately described as an analogal process because it involves the use of physical materials to express emotional energy. The analogal representatives of the client's feeling states or perceptions of herself change over time as she is involved in the art making. These analogal qualities may form and become aspects of a symbol which is seen and reflected on during the looking and discussing stage of art therapy.

Analytic oriented art therapists believe the development of symbolization can be encouraged through art production. The psychoanalytic ego psychology and object relations orientations have both put forth theories that discuss the mental processes which occur in symbolization and the role symbolization plays in development. Because the findings presented examples of mental processing these concepts will be discussed further here. A symbol, by psychoanalytic definition, involves a mode of indirect and figurative representation of an unconscious idea, conflict, or wish. (Weir, 1987 p. 110). The capacity to symbolize is believed to develop in infancy when a baby, in the absence of her mother, mentally accesses a transitional space. In this transitional or potential space, fantasy and reality are blurred. Through the mental mechanism of projection the baby can imbue an outer object - for example a teddy bear or a favorite blanket - with emotional significance, a mental representation of her absent mother. This symbol for mother is capable of

providing her with some comfort to help her bear the pain of separation. Because she is capable of creating this symbol herself, it makes her feel more secure about being apart from mother. This is very important for the child's development. The object that gets imbued with meaning is called a transitional object (Winnicott, 1971). In art therapy the space between the client and the art object is viewed as the potential or transitional space in which reality and fantasy exist simultaneously; the symbols in the art are viewed as transitional objects.

Symbols are also viewed as slowing down impulsive energy, making it more available for use by the ego. Symbols mediate between the inner psyche and outer reality. In this way, they play an important role in every aspect of the functioning ego.

What the researcher has called analogal processing, others may call symbolization. The analogous qualities are aspects of symbols. Although symbols can form during the making (e.g. the symbolic idea of being like a crow pecking [Artwork #4] arose from analogous qualities of her stabbing activity), they usually assume their final form in the completed art image. The concept of a transitional space and objects imbued with emotional significance are very similar to these findings, only this research illuminates this process. These research findings appear to offer significant descriptive examples of the mental and experiential processing that occurs between the client and her art object in the process of making.

Patterns to the formation of meaning appeared to emerge in the art making process. The structure of the appearance seemed to indicate different levels of experiencing in art therapy. For example, the client stated the interactive meanings, similar to a dialogue, were experienced as "more on the surface" than the dialectic which were "deeper". Gestalt art therapy focuses on interactions, particularly on aspects of communication, such as being aware and giving attention, and giving and receiving messages through thinking with your senses. Uncovering hidden meanings and conflicts or making the unconscious conscious is the focus of more depth-oriented psychodynamic approaches. Gestalt orientations,

however, talk about completing the gestalt, making the unknown known, but emphasize the interactions similar to a dialogue in which this can occur.

The dialectical uncovering of meaning is a particularly interesting one for art therapy. A painting or sculpture is capable of containing visible conflicting or opposing elements in a stable structure, for example Artwork #10 contains both the critic and the criticized. The client experienced and began to reconcile both aspects of this conflict while she was making the art object. If one considers a whole series of art works as a structure, such as the series of art works done in a complete art therapy process, one sees the emergence of dialectic meanings between artworks. For example, the client's painting of a safe space (Artwork #2) was grey, unformed and insubstantial in appearance; the client was barely visible. In experiencing this through making seeing and reflecting on it, she discovered that safety to her meant non-existence. This discovery amazed and angered her, and motivated her to create the next painting - the opposite of the previous one - a lusciously colourful painting of a safe space (Artwork #3) where the client is clearly visible, yet also protected.

The meanings can also form synergistically where the combined meaning exceeds the sum of the individual meanings that work together to compose the meaning.

There is an energetic quality to all of these formations; dialogue, dialectic and synergy involve such things as interaction, combination, reconciliation and integration all living possibilities in the process of making. This observation is consistent with Nowell Hall (1987 p. 168) who wrote

*Wholeness is about transcending opposites. I would argue that this potential for the holding and communicating of polarity and ambiguity is one of the therapeutic strengths of art therapy.*

How meaning forms and the client's experience of this, is an area worthy of further research in art therapy.

What the client experiences:

Edwards (1987), a Jungian art therapist, mentions that the dynamic of the client's interaction with the medium and with whatever images emerge in the making phase is something that is not often discussed. He offers the most complete description of this experience of all the theoretical orientations, based more on his own observations of the client's experience in art therapy rather than interpreting this from Jungian theory. Edwards mentions the private nature of this art making experience, the doubt and anxiety that often accompanies the initial attempts at making art, the entry into a relationship with the medium and the uncertainty that this involves, the inexact correspondence between what is inside the client and what is outside in the making of the art object, that subsequent stages of creation usually do not conform to will or expectation, and that the image often communicates unwelcome messages to the maker. He also mentions the demand for attention that the image places on its maker and its unpredictability so that the experience can vary from one of elation to disappointment. What clients experience in the making phase is rarely mentioned as noted by Edwards (1987) and Rubin (1984) except in terms of theories about creativity or in case study descriptions. The constituents, that were revealed in this research study, of what the client experienced as she participated in art making in art therapy were: temporality, spatiality, deep connection and contact, motivation, being visible and vulnerable, increasing awareness, and intense emotion and energy. What follows will elaborate on these experiences. The research attempted to capture the essence of what a client experiences in art therapy and the findings may appear nebulous or difficult to grasp hold of. However, this is perhaps in keeping with the phenomena as the making phase in art therapy is one of immersion and deep non-rational involvement.

The client experienced change while making the art objects through a process in which different experiences emerged at different points in time and space as she worked. The activity and the meaning that arose from the process allowed her to contact and connect with other times, people, places and objects. This experience was not just an intellectual

one but one that she experienced with her whole being. She would re-experience something from the past as if she were there or be amazed to discover her grandmother had appeared before her. In this way there is a fusion between reality and illusion, and the past and present.

The temporal-spatial aspects of this process are alluded to in many of the art therapy orientations because, no matter how involved with psychological processing art therapists get, they are continually dealing with a visual-spatial art object that is created in time. Gestalt art therapists focus on the immediate physicalness of the process and on learning to be aware of and interact with messages from the senses. There is an awareness of how the artist's physical and psychological processes are manifested in the work, or of how the rhythms of the body inform the way the image is built up. Ulman (1987) mentioned that art therapists are aware that we can know in different ways - that besides the logical, sequential and rational there is the intuitive, holistic and visual-spatial process but how this is experienced by the client needs further exploration. The findings attempt to discover and describe this experience at the level of the meaning that is lived through by the client. They provide a sense of the movement and fullness of the process.

There are similarities between what the client experienced in the findings and how this is conceptualized in an object relations analytic orientation particularly concerning the relaxation of intellectual controls, the transition through space from inner to outer, the flowing of her experiencing, the energy involved and the fluidity of the boundaries between self and other, and past and present.

*In order to recover early creativity and recreate the transitional space necessary to bridge outer and inner realities, both patient and therapist must be prepared to play. The essence of play in therapy involves the capacity to relax intellectual controls and to become non-goal oriented and open-ended in experiencing and working with the psychological space of patients, here images and symbols move into consciousness with their own logic and organization regarding time and place. Form and content become one through a synthesis of primary and secondary processes, also allowing the merging of bound and unbound energy and balancing between fusion and separateness, organization and loss of control." (Robbins, 1987 p. 71)*

Analysts have looked at the artistic process and recognized that the artist seems to be able to fuse with his work at various times and separate from it by experiencing it in different ways. The ability to move between these states at will is considered to be a sign of healthy ego development (Kris, 1952). In art therapy, this transitional space becomes not only the mental concept, but also the spatial relationship between the art object and the client. The amount of space between the art object and client is mentioned in art therapy literature (Rubin, 1984; Edwards, 1987) in terms of the close perspective while one is immersed in making and the effect that the distance between the art object and the client has on the client's experience of it when it is put up on the board, separate and apart, to be looked at and discussed. Edwards, 1987, states that it is as if the dialogue or interaction is within the image in the art making phase of art therapy. The findings indicate that the client frequently mentions "getting into" or entering into an experience or an aspect of the art making process similar to an experience of immersion mentioned by Rubin and the dialoguing within the image by Edwards above. The space is also viewed in analytic orientations as acting as an inner and outer boundary. Marion Milner (1955) mentions how the space between the art and the client allows for a dialogue between inner and outer reality. By placing the object (an inner representation in the form of an art object) outside of the self the individual is able to absorb and learn from it according to its own properties. This is similar to the Jungian concept of being aware of the image as an entity of its own which one can interact with and learn from and to the phenomenology concept of intentionality where a tension and directional relationship exists between subject and object. It appears that the space between the object and the person who created it influences, or says something about, their relationship with it.

The findings indicate that the client's experience of the spatiality and the fullness of the process evolved out of the emergence of meaning from within her to finding meaning outside of herself in the materials and objects of the art making. This concept of emerging meaning is discussed by Mala Betensky (1987) from a phenomenology perspective. She

mentions a gradual increase of intentionality of emotion in relation to the object and emphasizes the visual aspect of this experience. The client may experience the object as a vague state generated from an impression of something unidentified in the field of vision. The vagueness becomes intentional as it connects with the object, and when the object is fully perceived it is felt as part of the person's existence. The important thing about this rising intentionality of emotion is that meaning emerges through this process. Where something begins to exist more than other things in the field of vision, it begins to have some importance for the client and, thus, becomes meaningful.

*The emergence of meanings, even small subjective ones, when a line or a colour suddenly becomes visible, enables the client to see unrealized possibilities or untapped potencies (Betensky 1987 p. 153).*

However Betensky does not directly mention the spatial aspect to this experience, that the meaning begins to exist across space, beyond and through the client as these research findings illustrate.

Rubin (1984) in her theory discusses the need for art therapists to be sensitive to the temporal-spatial aspect of the art process engaged in by another. She acknowledges that there is an organic evolution to this process. A gestalt orientation mentions that when drawing or painting is experienced as a process, a person can become aware of an internal movement toward experiential wholeness and that a client can receive visual confirmation of such movement from the drawings that they produce. The structural components or the spatial aspects of the art, carry and convey expressive qualities, a completion of the gestalt of inner psychic structures and outer form.

The client's experience of increasing awareness and dynamic energy in the making phase in art therapy demonstrates that there is a field, a space between the art object and the client where meaning can arise, a spatiality from within her to outside of her. The findings illustrate the getting or receiving of meaning is experienced in different ways, as a direct contact, a gradual process of increasing awareness or as an apprehension, something which comes into her possession which she grasps ("I got"). Although gestalt orientations

mention the "Aha!" experience of insight, the experience of apprehending in the findings appeared to be less surprising and immediate and more like she was receiving something then discovering it, although sometimes the experience of surprise and discovery was there. Psychoanalytic theories mention the mental mechanisms of projection, introjection, displacement and identification: the client can project out onto the materials or art object; she apprehends or takes things in as in introjection; she displaces her energy and emotion onto other objects; she fuses and identifies with the art work. There is an implicit spatiality to these concepts that needs further exploration and explication in terms of the experience of the client in art therapy but the findings do illustrate experiences in keeping with these analytic concepts. Increasing awareness is often the goal of art therapy. Just how one becomes aware is focused on differently by various theoretical orientations. In gestalt, the focus is on here and now experiencing and processing through the senses; in the analytic more on discussion and interpretation of the experience. The findings indicate that increasing awareness is an ongoing, evolving and variable experience in art therapy.

The findings mention how the actual doing of the art therapy engages the client and encourages her to continue. Jungian and gestalt orientations mention this but it is acknowledged only in a general way that the making of art objects can be a satisfying process. Perhaps the value of this is emphasized more in the art-as-therapy orientations than the ones that view therapy as the discussion of the art object. This particular client did not get much sensual pleasure out of the art materials as she was used to artist quality materials. She also surrendered her value for an aesthetic art product. What motivated her was the discovery of meaning and that the making of the art object could inform and influence the meaning.

An interesting aspect of the client's experience of making the art object in art therapy is how exposed she feels, how visible and vulnerable; she doesn't want anyone to see what she is doing. The client in this research study feels like this not only in art therapy but in any art making process. Perhaps it is because she exists now beyond the boundary

of herself. She exists in the materials and activities and images that she is involved in making; artist and artwork are one. There appears to be more of a consciousness of this existence in art therapy than in ordinary art making as materials, activities and images are invested with meaning. Rubin (1984) mentions how one of the greatest abuses in art therapy is interference in this stage. The client experienced the therapist's presence as an intrusion here but her interventions in retrospect were viewed by the client as helpful.

In summary, the findings illustrate an analogical process in art therapy that allows the client to expand her field of meaning beyond her physical boundary to encompass the activities and objects involved in art making. The client experiences temporality, spatiality, contact and connection, being visible, being motivated, energy and becoming aware while making the art object in art therapy. The findings indicate that a client's experience in art therapy does have its own nature and essence and although there are similarities between theoretical interpretations of this experience, there are also subtle differences. This research conveys some of the movement and energy that occurs in a client's experience of making the art object in art therapy.

### SECTION 3: A CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE OF LOOKING AT AND DISCUSSING HER ARTWORK

#### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

After making the art object the client began the experience of looking at and discussing her art work. There was more interaction with others during this aspect of art therapy. There was less physical activity and more time to reflect. The client stated that she believed this part to be the most significant, that she learned the most from this.

The client was more involved with and aware of others as she finished the art making, put her artwork up on the board, sat down in the art therapy group and looked at, reflected on and discussed her artwork as well as artwork that other group members had created.

Putting some distance between herself and the art object altered her point of view from when she was involved in making it. In discussing the artwork with the art therapist and group members she was guided to discover new ways of looking at and experiencing her art object. The way in which she looked varied from: looking and reflecting on the art object by herself or in discussion with others, looking at the visual-spatial characteristics on the surface of the art work, or looking into the artwork to search for meaning, or looking for differences or patterns in her art work either in the context of artwork created by others in the group or in the context of her own body of artwork that she has created over time. She looked for significant connections, signs of her own development. She reflected on what she saw and experienced and formed meaning.

In looking at and discussing her art work in the art therapy group the client had an experience of self amongst others. She experienced being given to and she began to have feelings towards others. She was not as alone. Her experience of her art object was co-constituted by her own point of view and that which she received from the art therapist and occasionally group members. She had an experience of self in seeing and accepting her own difference from others.

The client experienced increasing awareness. She felt excited by and interested in this. There was a sense of discovery or rediscovery or an active search for information. She either clearly recognized what appeared before her or became aware of presences which reminded her of and took her into her own experiencing. The client experienced her increasing awareness as receiving something from the art object, as a gift.

Through forming and locating meaning through visual perception, cognitive processing and presencing (experiential processing), the client experienced her being as both temporal and timeless. In the here and now she could experience her past and present and have a sense of moving beyond now to a future. She experienced herself as developing and evolving. There was a sense of things fitting together; coming together to present a picture that was complete; an integrating of her experience in one structure. At

times there was a shift in her perception which she experienced as a total change in world view. She was located in, saw things and interacted with the world differently. Through looking at and discussing her artwork in art therapy the client experienced a connection between what was located inside of her and that which was located outside in the world.

The experiences described above are not separate and distinct from each other. There was an interconnectedness, an ebb and flow of experiencing, a forming and an unforming. The interest or willingness to engage in the looking at and discussing the art object interrelated, built on the thinking about and experiencing the meaning, which in turn allowed for a fuller experience of her own existence in the world.

How the experience occurred.

1. The client put some distance between herself and the art work through putting the painting up on the wall, stepping back and looking at it.

*The part that actually seemed to be the most important or the most significant or the most informative was the actual putting the work up on the board and looking at it. You had a chance to set it up there and step back from it then there would be these things that you had painted that didn't have any significance when you painted them particularly. There might have been some emotions but it didn't sort of all come into context until you put the painting up and had a chance to look at it and then you'd see something there and you'd go "Oh right now I get it."*

2. The client discussed the art object with others: the art therapist or art therapy group members.
3. The client looked at the art object and saw by :
  - (a) seeing into the painting, beyond the painting, seeing or searching for meaning (searching for information)

*I saw more into that painting than she brought out.*

- seeing an aspect of the artwork or all of the artwork as symbolic or as a sign, a reminder, or an indicator.

*It seemed to me that when I looked at this painting and I saw that line there that it indicated something about my throat.*

*So it suggested to me something about Catholicism.*

- (b) seeing visual-spatial characteristics and qualities of the artwork

*I put it up on the wall and I could see the fact that I had no connection between the top and bottom half of my body.*

*It's all patched and it's got chunks on the back of it and stuff like that. There's no face on it.*

- (c) seeing visual-spatial process

*It's neat in terms of this visual image that I see actually not only the image but the process. I see this sort of like you did dotted lines across and had a description that said "Cut this figure out and place it over here."*

- (d) seeing the artwork as not separate from self

*Where am I? Am I in the blackness or am I in the whiteness?*

*I remember being not amazed but quite interested and curious about the fact that I hadn't put myself in there but there I was.*

- (e) seeing in context of others, as difference from others

*When we looked at it later I was quite surprised because everyone else had paintings that had, they were either in rooms or they were on islands or they were on mountaintops or they were in their houses and they had a lot of detail and they all had all kinds of things that make them feel safe but my painting was completely different in that there was absolutely nothing there in terms of material objects or anything.*

- (f) through seeing from a point in space, different from when making

*So it was the putting it up on the board and stepping back and looking at it, coming out of it and looking at it from a different point of view or from an objective, I don't even know if it's objective but it's just from a different viewpoint.*

- (g) sometimes just through seeing, sometimes through seeing and talking

*Sometimes it was just seeing it before you even said anything about it that you would go "Holy Cow! Right!" You'd see something and you'd know what it meant and how it applied to things before but also the process of talking about it, or it could either be looking at it or talking about it that I would get either thoughts that would come in or memories of something.....*

- (h) seeing evolution, patterns, themes over time

*.....the brown seemed to be again a significant colour.*

*That was really good. It was very satisfying and felt somehow like a culmination of everything, like a sort of final creation.*

(i) seeing duality

*My face.....showed this real duality that happens to be something that I value and I didn't even know it was there. What it doesn't show is probably as important as what it does actually.*

- (4) The client continued to form meaning through visual perception, cognitive and experiential processing-through looking at, thinking about and "getting into" the art work.

What the client experienced.

1. Through the comments of others and having things pointed out to her, the client experienced an outside force which "made me" or "convinced" her or through "consensus" guided her to a new way of looking at and experiencing the art object and herself. She was always a bit excited, scared, and interested in what others would see and say about her artwork.

*When I saw it in the group I was more curious to know what it all meant. So I had sort of an eagerness, an excitement of having it interpreted and having it talked about.*

Through what others helped her to see she discovered new ways of seeing and experiencing her self.

She experienced being given something which stimulated her thinking, and increased her awareness "I realized...". In opening herself to receiving from others, she also began to have feelings towards others in the group "I felt kindly towards them as the group went on." It seemed to her, however, to take longer for the group to "bond" as "normally I would get to know them through their stories."

In seeing herself and her art object in the context of others' artwork she sometimes became more aware of her difference from others.

*When I looked I was quite surprised because everyone else had paintings that had a lot of detail but my painting was completely different.*

In seeing her own difference and acknowledging the meaning of her artwork she acknowledged and accepted who she was and was motivated to be that.

*.....but I saw more into that painting than she brought out but I didn't mention it. I watched the rest of them and just was observing and curious as to whether all these people knew why they were there. I started to wonder because I can't remember any of the drawings but I remember everybody being rather bland and I kind of expected that everybody knew why they were there and that we'd all get right into it. We're here about sexual abuse....let's talk about it. Obviously that leg has been abused .....*

*Although what was interesting when we did the interpretations and we looked at everybody crossways I think that was what freaked so many people out and made so many people cry was what they saw in that face yet. Even though they used the mirror, it still showed things like one side being really angry and the other side being some other emotion. That these people realized that they had these things happening. Mine wasn't like that it wasn't that overwhelming. To me there was this childlike side and there was this wise side. That's something I valued. So it was good for me. I didn't cry. Everyone else cried. I don't know where it was at for them but for me it was a really positive thing.*

2. The client experienced a sense of anticipation a "little girl eagerness", a curiosity, and interest in the meaning of the artwork, or the meaning of the process of making she had just been through "I was curious about why I had not been able to finish it." She engaged herself in:

- an experience of discovery

*I saw for the first time.....*

*I never even realized it.....*

*I noticed when I looked at this painting that it really looked like a nun, as much as it was supposed to be a crow it did not become a crow it was a nun.*

- a searching for meaning

*.....it's the looking for information.....*

- or rediscovery

*Although I didn't remember a specific time of doing that but it just reminded me of me having done that period.*

There may be a sense of recognition,

*I remember being not amazed but quite interested or curious about the fact that I hadn't put myself in there but there I was.*

- or reminder of previous experiences or knowledge.

*.....there was a feeling, not a feeling so much as a knowing that this is the whole reparenting process that I was already familiar with and that I had read about and so seeing this it just sort of hit the nail on the head.*

In looking she became aware of presences;

*I feel like I'm crumpled up and there's just this little bit of white in front of me have some kinds of images and feelings about it but it doesn't go "Oh Yeah! I know what it means.""*

- she saw things she hadn't seen before or thought of before.

*Then when it gets put up and then people go "Oh God! Look at this over here" and then I go "Holy Cow!" and I see all these things that everybody sees that I never saw before, I never even thought about it and I find that really quite amazing.*

She experienced this as being given something, receiving something either intellectually *"like getting pieces of information"* or emotionally *"this sort of inner strength that I feel from this painting"* or apprehending something deeply *"that was something I got really clear."*

3. In looking at and discussing her artwork the client experienced both reflective - a stimulation of her cognitive processing *"That was really informative to me. I had not thought of ....."* - and experiential processing or presencing - becoming present to immanent feelings and sensations, experiences that she would live, she would *"get into"*.

*"Before I realized what this meant in terms of how I felt safe I was reminded of being, when I was interpreting it or when I saw it up on the wall, and I was looking at it, it reminded me of sort of like a closet, and all of the things hanging and probably at that point I remembered hiding in closets although I didn't remember a specific time of doing that but it just reminded me of having done that period. I just knew that I had done that because I could imagine myself doing that some how. Strange kind of memory. So I recalled and I can recall it right now actually crawling into a closet underneath and getting way far back and this is almost what I would see if you were way back into the dark closet, Somehow I feel that I've been in that closet and crawled back into that closet and I can see the light from the open door and things are sort of clothes and belts and things are hanging there and that's kind of what it looks like from way back inside the closet. That was the other thing that I realized that it was some kind of a cavish kind of thing with things hanging and I'm in there.*

In presencing, her experiencing transcended time and space. She experienced her being as both temporal *"I was funnelled right back to being there"* and timeless. There

was an ordering, and equalling of some of her experiences, thoughts, memories and associations on a parallel plane of existence.

As she looked and discussed her art object and reflected on her experiencing at times the client experienced a sense "of things coming together", a fitting into place, "like the total picture had presented itself", an "ordering", "a lining up" or "making sense" of her experience, a "whole kind of knowledge", a completeness. Sometimes this was a sense that her experiencing or the information was fitting into a concept she had about herself a "putting things into context" and there was a temporariness about this although she was left with a "distinct knowing" that she had experienced this. She felt affirmed by this.

*When you get this whole kind of knowledge it's like a momentary knowledge when it all comes together and you just see this big picture and you go "Yeah that's it! That's how it was!" and it helps to build me up because it's a verification that I can't deny. It's there even if it's only for a moment that I had the real distinct knowing that all of these symptoms are there for a reason and that this actually did happen and that it all fits together it's like a moment where everything fits and you go right it all fits and then it sort of disappears.*

However, at other times the components "coming together" and "fitting together" allowed her to see and experience a total picture which was completely different. She experienced a shift in her perception, being able to see it all at once at the same time or being able to see the opposite. This inner shift resulted in a total change in world view.

*It was one of those perception shifts that happens. It's a major thing, it's just like it all shifts. You were one way before and you are not that way afterwards It's major and it happens very recognizable to me usually in retrospect that that was the shift. It's a perception or perspective or whatever, it's like you see everything from one way all this time, then something happens and it's like it turns and then you're on the other side or you're somewhere else or whatever or the world is all different or I don't know what happens, but it's all different.*

*So I found that through this picture and this painting, realizing how I felt when it happened to me, how my son was feeling when it happened to him and that I didn't have to be this critic and I was being this critic because I was so fucking afraid for one thing and because I was feeling like my child and everything is out of control. Not feeling so afraid that was very significant to me. I realize I was doing this out of my own fear. The thing about being in control - it gave me absolutely no control whatsoever. I really just wanted to be in control because I was so afraid and having that perception shift and then realizing that there was a different way to do this. There was a different way to feel like I had some control. Control wasn't the thing anymore. It went all back to "You can let go because you can hang on" and sort of that whole perception it just (whistles) shifted and all these components all came together and they went - they all just fit together and it went "Whoa! Wow! Yeah!" It's like being able to see it all I guess at once all at the same time and it just all fits and it's a total picture which is totally different. I like this painting, it's a good*

*painting. For this one in particular it was really enlightening. That was the whole perception change was enlightenment.*

*.....stunned is when I've perceived something one way and I get this realization that it's not that way and I go "Holy Shit!". It has an element of um it's like a shock but it has an element of as compared to enlightenment sort of a jarring effect to it and it seems to evoke some sort of strong emotion whether it's anger or excitement in this case it happened to be anger, and it's just that there's such a difference between what I thought and what really is, maybe not what really is but in these two realities there's such a difference contrasting in one reality compared to the other reality because I think both of those realities are valid that I just wasn't aware of that other reality.*

She experienced her own existence, and a sense of movement and progression, an evolution, and a perspective beyond now. She experienced aspects of her being more fully. She lived a fuller more dynamic meaning. She experienced a sense of accomplishment and inner strength.

*By the time we were finished I loved that piece, gimped legs and all. It was that feeling of dignity that thing had that I really connected with and this sort of bravery against all odds and I really liked that because that said something to me about me even though I have all these feelings of weakness and you know about not being able to hold myself up there was this strength that was coming through and I really loved it. ....It was another affirmation, it was becoming more and more clear as much as I felt it.*

*That's what made it so neat, was that in this process of doing this painting, and doing that that I had very clearly made a statement to myself that affirmed or reaffirmed all the other intellectual stuff that I knew that of a process that you have to go through to heal yourself and be healthy. Having done some of this but here it was this is what it's all about.*

*That was important to me and it wasn't just rebelliousness. It sort of put the whole thing of rebelliousness and everything into perspective. Yet there was this very wise and knowledgeable and strong person there as well. So it was like there was this blending and integration of these two parts of me. That was really good. It was very satisfying and felt somehow like a kind of alike a culmination of everything, like a sort of a final creation. Feeling like I had sort of got it all into place. Rebelliousness isn't even a good word for it but I don't have another word yet. It's not just being rebellious it's being creative and being interested and curious and you know.*

*Having done some of this but here it was this is what it's all about. Also, I also remember I think it was because I got in touch with how that little creature felt there that I realized how my son feels when I do that to him, that was something that I got real clear. It had to do with this really being able to identify both sides of this and being able to understand that and that perception shift because it just changed I mean it really made me feel different about this role of this critic.*

*That's happened over the process of the whole art therapy but really come to a point with this sort of inner strength that I feel from this painting as a result of this process.*

*It left me with a sense of completion, and a sense of strength and a concept of myself that I wouldn't have had if I hadn't done this painting. Sort of an idea of who I was and where I was at and what I had to do. Sort of like a starting point really but a much stronger and firmer and more complete sort of part. I feel real good about this and about who this person is. It makes me feel strong. I feel much more in control and I feel good about what I had managed to accomplish through all of this.*

4. In looking at and experiencing the art object the client locates the meaning within herself, as being embodied within her chest. Through the meaning she has an experience of inner and outer connectedness.

*It's like it makes a connection. It's sort of down here, it's not in your head really but you look at the painting and you get a feeling or not a body feeling or a pain or anything but it's like you get this sense in your heart that that particular symbol has a particular kind of meaning and you might think in your head okay what does it mean and you'll go "Does it mean this?" and you'll go "No. Does it mean that?" and you go "Oh yeah! That means that!" and you know it means that because it makes this connection somehow in the heart or down here anyway for me so if you're looking at it that way trying to find out what the connections where the connections are then you can trigger on some of those connections.*

In entering into the art object she transcends the world of the phenomenal, she goes beyond the "real" world. There is a fusion of horizons in that what is her and what is it becomes less clear.

*There's something about making some kind of a connection where you actually feel like this doll that you're holding... this image you're coming toward or whatever is you. It feels like it's me. It's the same kind of connection I felt with my mum when I said I felt mummy love. It's something that's in here ,it's in your heart somewhere. It's in your chest.*

*Yeah I remember because I sat there after everybody left and I sat there and I looked at that and I really got into that face and I just looked at it and it felt like it was going way back, way, way back. Yeah I felt good after.*

The client may also experience her own authentic meaning as being located in the art object rather than in what she is feeling at the time.

*I guess what was neat about it was that it would seem what I had painted is such a contrast to how I felt and it was totally opposite to the fact. So it was clear then that there was external pressures that were not really affecting deep stuff about me but it was just affecting how I felt and what I was doing and that, I wasn't taking time to get back to what I really was. That was really good.*

She experiences the outer as an affirmation of the inner, there is a sense of verification and a growing inner clarity and self acceptance.

*By this time I realized that was me....*

*There might have been some emotions but it didn't sort of all come into context until you put the painting up and had a chance to look at it and then you'd see something there and you'd go oh right now I get it. Or it would verify something, you have something on the painting that you look at and you just know that that verifies this that's in your head or makes it really clear.*

The space between allowed the client to have a visual and emotional dialogue, an interactive relationship, with the art object. The client could see and experience the art object in a different way then when she was involved in the making of it. In seeing she would:

- sometimes feel it, or have feelings towards it ,

*I loved that piece.....*

*...this little child that's peering out, it was a kindly feeling that I had.....*

- search for information,

*I saw more into that painting than she brought out.*

- experience something coming from the art object, affirming her, or giving her messages.

*I had very clearly made a statement to myself that affirmed or reaffirmed all the other intellectual stuff that I knew.....*

*It said to me.....*

*That seems to be what the message was from all this that I was getting.....*

#### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

##### How the experience occurs:

In the findings the participant acknowledged that the space between the art object and herself helps her see and discover new meaning in her artwork. This awareness of the importance of space and the relationships between self and other are particularly supported in object relations, Jungian, gestalt and phenomenology orientations, although it is acknowledged in a general way by other orientations. It is this gap between the inner world and the outer object and the opportunity this gap presents for one to relate to and

learn from the properties of the concrete object that is discussed by the theories, although the language of the discussions may vary. For example, in object relations the art work becomes part of the transitional space and is a transitional object which is imbued with meaning and then mirrored back to the client. A phenomenology orientation refers to a process of phenomenological intuiting where the visual display of the art expression and distancing to gain perspective allows the art product an existence of its own, with its own properties. In this way, the art work can be examined objectively, from a distance, and without preconceived notions and with a certain amount of detachment. Gestalt acknowledges the inter-relationships between the form of the object and the processes of the perceiver. Edwards (1987 p. 102-3) from a Jungian perspective discusses how the image that becomes an actual object confronts its maker with a host of possibilities. According to Edwards, it is important to regard the image from different perspectives, in different time settings, and in different contexts. He acknowledges

*.....the dialogue that was seemingly entirely within the image during the making as, changing to a more distant perception. The image as a separate object allows the maker to stare, step back move across the room. This can be a wholly new experience of the artwork. It is a moment when an image becomes part of the outer world, it inhabits the room and exerts its own influence on whoever happens to be there. It is a reminder of an inner existence and a reminder that it has an existence independent of it's maker.*

The participant recognizes the importance of this new perspective. She stated putting some distance between herself and the art object was almost a sense of relief from the close intensity of the making. The researcher concurs with Dr. Edwards and the Jungian orientation that varying the spatial difference between the art work and the client, and placing it in different angles, or different contexts appears to offer further possibilities for the client to experience her artwork. There is potential here for exploring this in further research.

The participant found that discussing the artwork with others, especially the art therapist, was a significant part of her experience in art therapy. (Her experience of being guided to a new point of view is discussed in the interpretation of the findings of the

client's experience of the art therapist.) The participant experienced the art therapist as someone who facilitated, guided and supported her in her experience of the art object. Besides being part of a safe and protective environment, this discussion with the art therapist, particularly in this phase, was a vital part of her experience. She would eagerly await the comments and perceptions of others. In this phase, for this particular client, the group members contributed mainly to reinforce a viewpoint or as a ground to offset the figure of her own experience. The participant acknowledged the significance of the therapist's comments but only occasionally other group members. This client did not feel emotional bonding took place with other group members until near the end of the group, feeling that her therapy was more of an individual intrapersonal experience than a group interactive experience.

The findings indicate that the client looked at the art object in various ways. The way in which a client looks is not discussed specifically in the art therapy literature although the intentions of the therapist aim at getting the client to look and see specific things. For example, the structural characteristics (visual spatial characteristics and visual spatial process) are focused on particularly in gestalt and phenomenology orientations while the psychoanalytic orientation may focus on uncovering latent meaning.

It is significant that these findings describe how the client sees and how the client looks. Her looking is situated in various ways. She looks at her art in the context of: other group members artwork or verbal interchange; whether her own viewpoint is united with the art object or apart from the art object; or in a series of her artwork in seeing themes, patterns, and signs of development over time. She also looks either on the surface of the art object or she sees beyond that to a meaning. As mentioned above, Edwards' (1987) Jungian perspective suggests that changing the context of how the art object is viewed can lead to new awareness. Besides altering physical contexts, he mentions regarding the art object in cultural or transpersonal contexts. Sometimes looking at structural characteristics appears to lead to other experiences. For example the client

inferred that a line indicated that there was something significant about her throat, and she associated this with previous trauma. The evolution of this process is demonstrated here and there in the findings but the number of times it would occur and the level of experience is not specifically discussed. (There are other times when what she sees is experienced as a total living phenomena as in when she sees her grandmother appear before her). This area is of particular importance to the orientations such as gestalt and phenomenology that believe that describing structural characteristics can lead to the unfolding and accessing of the qualities of meaning. They believe that exploring the structure of the artwork is of greater value than investigating the symbolic content. The art therapists intentions are described in the different orientations but what actually happens, how they guide and then how the client looks and sees, needs further study. Both qualitative and quantitative studies may be helpful in this area to help therapists become more aware of and intentional about what they do. The significance of the findings here lies in the the description and illumination of a client's experience of looking in various ways that creates a possibility for further discussion and understanding of art therapy phenomena.

In looking the client continues to form meaning. (This is only mentioned briefly in the findings and although it has been discussed in the interpretation of a client's experience of art making, it will be elaborated further here.) The meaning may have started to form in the making process and it may continue to form through the looking at and discussing of the art object and even out into the world. Visual perceptions, cognitive processes and experiential processes may all contribute to the meaning as it forms. For example, in creating her safe space in the black painting (Painting #2) she sat back and allowed the process to happen, just watching what appeared before her (visual perception and experiential processing) and *"not understanding it as it was happening"*. Looking at the painting, she was reminded of being in a cave or a closet; as she looked she experienced this (experiential processing). The therapist pointed out a shadowy little figure in the white part of the painting. She saw that as herself. This didn't make sense to her because she

felt like she was in the black (in the cave and closet) but she saw herself in the white. The totality of this felt "*totally right even though it didn't make sense rationally*". She thought about this over the week (cognitive processing) and was reminded of other experiences that contained the qualities of this one (experiential processing). She had a sudden flash of insight, she discovered a meaning which for her superseded all the others: to be safe meant not to exist.

Through the use of this research method various patterns of movement emerged from the data as the client formed meaning. This was a discovery for the researcher, and demonstrated that whereas this research showed the client had various movement patterns it seemed that theoretical orientations each emphasize a different psychological movement. The client in the findings participates in a dialogue or interchange, an uncovering and a fitting together. The way meaning forms is not mutually exclusive. For example, there may be some interactive movement as well as an uncovering or fitting together as meaning forms. Forming meaning is a continuing process and evolves from different levels of awareness. The various art therapy orientations appear to subscribe to certain forms of psychological movement. In a psychoanalytic orientation the client may be encouraged in sort of a loose and free movement as in free association, but the intention of the therapist would be to uncover and bring to light unconscious hidden conflicts so that the client can see in to themselves. The focus would be on seeing in to the depths and bringing things up or out to conscious attention and then restructuring. Attention is turned inward and down into the unconscious. In a Jungian orientation the client is encouraged to form a relationship with images and to dialogue with them and to see them in various contexts. This orientation recognizes the multi-levels of meaning and the focus would be on assisting the client to experience those multi-levels through a circular or spiral type of movement, a hermeneutic or circumambulation style of interpretation, where possibilities are sought and form together until some kind of coherent understanding is reached. The focus is on helping the client not only to see in to the self but beyond the self. In a gestalt orientation

the client is encouraged to interact, to dialogue and to enact in the here-and-now. The focus is on becoming aware through the senses as well as the intellect. The goal is to give the client an experience of wholeness, to become aware of hidden aspects, to complete the gestalt. The movement is more of an interactive, back and forth movement that takes place in the physical world.

The creation of meaning is only beginning to be explored in other disciplines: "*there has been no specificity as to what meaning-making involves or how to facilitate it*" (Clarke, 1989 p. 147). How this occurs in the presence of a self created concrete object is a fruitful area for art therapy investigations and one in which art therapists could have some expertise. The findings from this research approach demonstrate there is movement and structural form to meaning creation and suggest that there are other ways of exploring the creation of meaning than by viewing it through theoretical understanding.

What the client experiences:

The client's relationship to others in the presence of an art object is discussed in the psychodynamic theoretical orientations of art therapy. It is of particular concern in the Freudian analytic approaches where there is an interest in the effect of the art object on the transference relationship (the transfer of feelings attributes or states from the past onto the therapist). The thinking there is that it modifies it in some way. The Jungian orientation has also examined the role of the art object in relationship with the art therapist seeing it as a screen, a buffer, a filter. Gestalt and phenomenology orientations feel that it provides a focus for shared exploration.

The findings suggest that the participant's art object remains central in her experiencing of others. This confirms the view of the above orientations that suggest that the art object modifies the client therapist relationship. Although what the client sees is situated in the context of others, her attention is directed to the art object and toward what she will be led to discover in it. The findings also suggest that the presence of the art object effected the client's relationship to group members as well. The participant commented that

it took longer for her to bond with others, that she normally got to know people through the stories they told about themselves. This implies that seeing and discussing artwork was not as familiar a way to know others as was hearing their stories. The connection between herself and others took longer to happen because of this unfamiliarity. The fact that knowing and communicating with others through art is not as familiar an experience as talking, and that it may take longer for people to feel connected to each other, is important for art therapists to be aware of when they are conducting groups. To prepare group members they may mention that the way in which they will come to know each other may be different than they are familiar with and that it may take longer because art therapy emphasizes non-verbal experiencing even in the experience of others.

The art object allowed the participant an experience of differentiation; she was able to separate herself out from others and reaffirm her own difference. The concept of separation and individuation is discussed in psychoanalytic concepts such as object relations theory (Winnicott, 1966) where the ability to create a symbolic object can assist in helping a child feel more secure during a separation from the mother. This is also mentioned in a self psychology approach where the artwork can become a self object, something valued for its ability to enhance the self, and help with individuation. Seeing her symbolic object in the context of others, and as different from others, seemed to facilitate the client's experience of differentiation.

The findings indicate that the client experienced a sense of excitement and anticipation that accompanied increasing awareness. She felt like she was newly discovering things or rediscovering by being reminded of things that she had forgotten. She engaged in an experience of discovery and an active search for information.

The experience of excitement and surprise is acknowledged in all orientations although it is understood differently. The psychodynamic orientation might view this as "id insight", recognizing the affectively charged quality to becoming aware. The sense of discovery about the self is seen as critical for psychoanalytic treatment, and helps to

provide a sense of conviction and thus motivation. The excitement also may be viewed as a sign of displaced or sublimated energy. Jungian orientations may discuss the surprise as an acknowledgement that working with spontaneous images calls up the other side of the personality and that by seeing the image as a separate object, the otherness or hidden aspects of the self call for recognition. A phenomenology orientation remains aware of the visual experience of receiving messages embedded in the art object and how these new observations can strike one as discoveries. This new seeing would not be separate from the rest of the physical body, or being, and may result in general animation and state of excitement and increased intentionality (focused direction) toward the art object. The emergence of meanings enables the client to see unrealized possibilities or untapped strengths. The research study concurs with the phenomenology orientation that the client experienced a sense of anticipation, excitement, engagement, discovery, and participating in possibilities.

The findings indicated that the client experienced increasing awareness as: (a) the appearance of something new such as seeing something new or realizing something she hadn't thought of before (b) a sign or a reminder where she might recognize an image that appeared before her or have a sense of something familiar (c) a sensory experience that she would become immersed in or a sense of something in the form of images and feelings without cognitive understanding. Awareness for the client in this research study occurred in many forms such as visual images or vague feelings, and on varying levels from sensory experiences to cognitive awareness. Her awareness in art therapy usually begins with or contains some form of visual perception.

Psychoanalytic orientations of art therapy are concerned with levels of awareness and believe that the psyche is layered topographically from the conscious to the preconscious to the unconscious. The therapeutic goal is often focused on either assisting clients to become more aware of unconscious conflicts or supporting increased awareness of the outer world and reinforcing defenses so that the client does not become aware of

unconscious material too soon and become overwhelmed. The client in this research study did move through varying levels of awareness. There is some question by analytic art therapists whether the making of visual images changes the unconscious state of what they symbolize to a preconscious state, as sometimes it is evident it does not. For example, sometimes the production of artwork is filled with heavy symbolism with no increase in awareness and indeed it may even serve the purpose to reinforce a defensive position. An increase in awareness (as described above) does occur for the participant in this study; there is increasing awareness during the art production but also from the looking at and discussing of her art work.

A Jungian art therapist may consider awareness in terms of the difference between signs and symbols. Signs are images which refer to discoverable and specific events or fantasies in the individual's past. Symbolic images induce strong affects, while also defying complete or precise verbal description. Jungian art therapists (Edwards, 1987) consider there to be an archetypal quality to symbols which goes beyond the personal to contain elements of the collective unconscious. The findings show that some images served as signs or reminders of previous experiences and some were experienced as if they were existing there before her such as when she came face to face with the image of her grandmother's face. However there is an element of the unknown, of not being able to completely define a symbolic image (by this Jungian definition) and although the client did experience a lack of awareness in looking at artwork that she did not know the meaning of, the researcher does not believe this art in particular contained more of an archetypal quality than her other artworks.

Gestalt and phenomenology orientations acknowledge sensory forms of awareness. Rhyne, 1984, uses the term visual thinking, thinking with the senses. In gestalt there is consideration of kinesthetic and visual awareness and of sensory memories, reminders of past experiences that are triggered by similar sensory modes. There is a belief that non-verbal activities can bring into awareness those experiences that don't respond to words.

The goal is to experience and expand levels of awareness and integration of fragmented and unknown aspects of self. The experiential aspect of becoming aware, something that the researcher came to call *presencing*, is an important mode of the client's experience of becoming aware in this research study.

A phenomenology art therapist describes stages to becoming aware: an object becomes visible, then it exists, then it begins to take on some importance and then becomes meaningful. (She speaks of an unfolding of ideas and feelings and of a gradual progression to awareness where a new ability to identify and name vague feelings appears.) Phenomenology orientations believe that the unconscious is a marginal mode of consciousness and view the preconscious as preintentional where a person might experience an awareness of vague stirrings within them. The findings indicate that becoming aware is a process that has many forms, modes and levels. It does not appear to be a linear process in the findings but a multi-leveled one. Jungian, gestalt, and phenomenology are the orientations that seem to acknowledge the crucial role of visual perception of a client's experience in art therapy. The descriptions of the client regarding the experience of becoming aware in the looking phase of art therapy usually contain either explicit or implicit references to visual perception.

The client experienced the discoveries and new awareness as being given something either intellectually or emotionally or by apprehending something deeply (getting it, taking it in or incorporating it)

The fact that clients receive something from the art object is mentioned in the various orientations as visual messages or communications from the psyche, or unconscious. Self psychology approaches mention this as mirroring, an empathic responding of the art object which is viewed as having the potential to enhance the self. Receiving this type of mirroring from the art object and the therapist is believed to lead to the building of ego structures in something Kohut (1971) calls *transmuting internalization*. In this process the client takes the object in and then gradually becomes more identified

with it until it becomes a part of the person. A client's investment in the artwork is also viewed as sublimating and changing primitive responses into ego structures. The findings indicate that at times the client seems to really take in or to incorporate what is given to her and to identify with her art object in a way that appears to strengthen her ego. This is similar to the self psychology view that emphasizes the emotional aspect of receiving something from the art object as well as the communicative aspect of receiving messages mentioned in other orientations. The emotional aspects of receiving from the art object make it an experience of being given to, as a nurturing experience or as in receiving a gift. The client in this research study experiences this new awareness as receiving something both emotionally, as above, and intellectually. The receiving of new information which stimulated her thinking seemed to be an important experience for this participant as well. The experience of being given to by the art object, whether emotionally or intellectually is an interesting area for future research, as it seems to imply that there is an aliveness, or an intentionality to the art object as experienced by the client.

The findings indicate that the client's cognitive and experiential processing was stimulated through looking at the artwork, and became more elaborate. Even though she was not physically active during this phase, her visual perception facilitated both types of processes.

Some orientations place emphasis on reflection and some on experiencing. The research findings indicate both processes are aspects of the client's experience in looking at the art object in art therapy. Psychoanalytic orientations consider the importance of reflection in therapeutic work in terms of using secondary process thinking to elaborate and revise primary process material. A gestaltist encourages a progression from active experiential process to using the mind to observe and reason our way to some conclusion that helps us function. They encourage experimentation and exploration through sensorimotor activities, as they believe that enactment often facilitates the recognition and clarification of problems.

When looking at and discussing her artwork the participant in this study experienced an ordering, or equaling of some of her experiences, thoughts and memories on a parallel plane of existence. She experienced a sense of things coming together; she was being presented with a holistic view or knowledge which made sense. This experience sounds similar to Bakhtin's (Holquist & Liapunov "Eds.", 1990) concept of the activity of perception as being the activity of the individual engaged in making sense out of the world by fixing the flux of its disparate elements into meaningful wholes.

Psychodynamic theorists have discussed an ordering or integrating of experience in various ways. They all mention their belief that the use of art in therapy has the capacity to organize thoughts and perceptions, to perhaps move unconscious experience to levels more accessible to conscious processes thereby shifting energy patterns. Art is viewed as having the potential to bring order out of chaos. Ulman (1987) mentions that one can know in intuitive, holistic visual and spatial ways, as well as in logical, sequential and rational ways. Jungian orientations believe that there is an inner desire for wholeness and point to the developmental production of pictorial wholes by children as they evolve an inner order. Creativity is often viewed as a new synthesis between the inner subjective world of the artist and an external reality and that integration between the two can give a sense of reconciliation and resolution

A phenomenology art therapist, Mala Betensky (1987), notes how the search for similarities and differences in a series of art works over time allows recurrent themes and patterns to stand out. She also notes how the discernment of patterns in the art work can lead to pattern recognition or parallels in behaviour or life situations. This is similar to the client's experience in the findings of elevating things to a parallel plane or existence, an ordering or lining things up.

A gestalt orientation subscribes to organismic theory which believes in the unity, integration, consistency and coherence of the normal person. True understanding is believed to result from the placing of a phenomena within the context of a total system, to

be viewed in the context of a whole. In this respect when the client in the research study experienced having things fit together or seeing the total picture it was an experience of understanding.

The participant in this study at times had a sense of her experience fitting into a concept or context. There appeared to be a temporariness about this sense although she was left knowing she had experienced this and this knowing validated her understanding.

The context of understanding is not really discussed in the art therapy literature except in global terms. For example the Jungian orientations believe in arriving at understanding through allowing it to emerge versus looking to place it in the context of underlying conflicts and dynamics. The findings here are particularly relevant for any approach that starts with an assumption, that if the assumption is known to the client, there may be an attempt to fit the experiencing into that context. For example, this client, although she had no direct memory of this particular trauma, took part in a sexual abuse art therapy group. The reasons for the temporariness of the participant's experience are unknown but would be examined from various perspectives in different ways. For example the psychoanalytic viewpoint may choose to view this as repression of unconscious experiences that may threaten to overwhelm the ego. It may also be that the context chosen to fit the experiencing is in some way lacking or not a good enough fit for the particular experiences. It appears that for whatever reason the mental concept as a whole did not hold for this client, although an inner knowledge remained. According to Wallace (1987), Jung (Collected Works Vol. 14 p. 524) mentions that

*.....all that matters is that one is gripped by something. A person does not possess it more, or in a more perfect way, if they can formulate this possession. Intellectual formulation becomes important only when the memory of the original experience tends to disappear or when its irrationality seems incomprehensible to consciousness.*

It would appear that the participant has been "gripped by something" that requires more formulation or the development of mental structures or pictorial structures to support it's existence.

At other times, the components coming together or fitting together allowed her to see and experience a total picture which was completely different. In looking at and discussing the art object the client experienced a shift in her perception, being able to see it all at once at the same time or being able to see the opposite which resulted in a change in world view. The client's descriptions clearly elaborate this process which has artistic characteristics. A piece of art can hold and maintain several layers of meaning in one structure, which can be captured with one glance, whereas a narrative unfolds in a linear and temporal fashion. As the client stated "*It's like being able to see it all at once, all at the same time, and it just all fits and its a total picture.....*". The client's perceptual experiencing appears to match the artistic nature of the therapy she is involved with.

Some experiences noted in art therapy orientations have similar but subtle differences to the appearances the participant describes in the findings. The Jungian orientations describe the profound effect this integrating experience can have on a person as being gripped by something of an archetypal nature. Edith Wallace (1987, p. 121) describes her experience of

*Seeing. This is a true recognition, a revelation: there is more to it than meets the eye. This hits me, it has meaning, it tells me something that I did not know before. I receive a message. I see the world anew, my world; I perceive a truth. Only this third step is a step into depth. It is another way of making contact with the deep, which is the aim. The whole process is a far cry from analyzing and diagnosing; these are only surface procedures compared to this third-stage process, which leads to understanding in the true sense. It requires patient but relentless observation, while awakening a kind of perception different from a deliberate procedure of analysis. Such manifestations from the unconscious need constant circumambulation to be understood.....*

A phenomenologist believes that experiences in art therapy will effect how one is in the world, that clients will recognize patterns and parallels and have a belief in their ability and assume responsibility for coming up with some solutions. Betensky (1987) believes that as they recognize patterns of relating to others, they can transcend their self-centeredness and be more intentionally directed in the world.

Gestalt means the ability to perceive whole configurations, to perceive aspects of personality as parts of a whole. This is similar to the client's experience of

*.....being able to see it all at once, all at the same time and it just all fits and it's a total picture which is totally different....*

The client appeared to achieve an experience of a gestalt at times in art therapy, and would feel a sense of completion.

The client experienced aspects of her being more fully, a sense of movement and progression, an integration and a broadened perspective and being able to see beyond now. In most viewpoints, there is a recognition that the integration of unacknowledged or fragmented aspects of the self can lead to the freeing of energy and increased capacity to cope with life. For example:

Psychoanalytic understanding may view this as having developed an observing ego and the sublimation of id energy for more functional and satisfying use by the ego.

A Jungian orientation focuses on using art media to bring hidden aspects to light and thus to promote understanding, integration, growth and transformation. It also encourages trusting inner figures and the intuitive side of the self as sources of insight and creative development in the individuation process.

Object relations theory views the therapeutic space as promoting new possibilities and potencies with the accompanying sense of a new self.

A gestalt orientation views self-awareness as creating a potential for being more actively autonomous in making choices in the world.

In this research, the verbal descriptions offered by the client allowed the theoretical descriptions of similar phenomena to be confirmed and elaborated so that the lived experience is conveyed in a range of the possible ways it is actualized for a client.

In looking at and experiencing the art object the client locates the meaning within herself as being embodied within her chest. Through the meaning she experiences an inner

and outer connection. Many of the theoretical orientations mention that the creation of and existence of an art object can act to mediate between outer and inner reality. In connecting to the art object this client experienced what she interpreted as authentic meaning physically in her chest. She would use this physical experience to help her to discover her own truth. Phenomenology orientations mention that intentionality of consciousness resides in the body. It is the whole body that is conscious; one does not see with the eyes alone but the whole physical being. The participant locates a consciousness within her body. She also equates the experience to being similar to a connection with mother.

The nature of the experience of a physical connection to the art object is not directly described in any of the orientations. It would be interesting to consider if it was a common occurrence in art therapy in various populations and to explore the nature of this occurrence. Object relations theorists are aware of the problem of the relationship between what is objectively perceived and what is subjectively conceived of. This is discussed in terms of early development. They mention ambivalent feelings about merging and separation (initially with mother), about being confused about boundaries, what is inside and what is outside, and the limits of containment, but they do not mention if there is a physical aspect to this experience. They do recognize however that this is something that requires constant resolution throughout life.

In entering into a relationship or a connection with the art object, the participant described occasional experiences where the horizons of what was real and what was illusion would fuse. The boundary between what was her and what was other became less clear, as did the boundaries between past, present and future. The ability to fuse or merge inner and external realities, subject and object is considered to be an aspect of creativity in many of the psychodynamic orientations. A phenomenologist may describe this as a suspension of belief in the separate or objective existence of the external object. A Jungian views an image as an extension of the personality which is linked to the past by actual events in a person's life and to the present and future by the archetypal structure inherent in

the situation. Analytic orientations believe that the more an individual can fluctuate between the two areas of fusion and separation and contain both these elements simultaneously the more creative she can become. The ability to be able to do this at will is considered a sign of healthy ego functioning.

In merging with the art work, the client was able to allow the truth about herself to be in the art work rather than in what she was feeling. In this way she is suspending belief in her own objective existence and emphasizing the reality of the existence of the art object as her own. Being able to locate or physically embody meaning within herself and also being able to locate her existential reality in the art object may be considered similar to the client's experience in making the art object when her field of meaning expands out beyond the boundaries of her physical being. The client's descriptions of her experience in art therapy provide living examples of what is otherwise a theoretical experience. Perhaps an "expanded field of meaning" would be a more appropriate conceptual term for this experience in art therapy than a "transitional space". Not only the creation of meaning in art therapy but the location of meaning in art therapy, as experienced by a client, is an area worthy of further research.

The client experienced the outer as an affirmation of the inner; she had a sense of verification and growing inner clarity and self acceptance. Psychodynamic orientations, especially self psychology, have mentioned the importance of an outer empathic response for the development of the self. In a pictorial dialogue, this is not a passive process as a client engages in a mutuality that allows her to contribute something. It allows for reciprocity between the client and the art object. The nature of this sense of validation, verification or inner clarity is not well articulated in present theoretical understanding in art therapy and offers further possibilities for elaboration from the point of view of the client's experience of looking at and discussing her art objects.

The space between allowed the client to have an interactive relationship with the art object i.e. have feelings toward it or search for information, and of it moving toward her,

affirming her, or giving her messages. The client's descriptions clearly indicate not only that her existential field of meaning has expanded through locating the meaning either in herself or the external object, but that there is the possibility of movement and dialogue and the potential for change. This phenomena is expressed in art therapy in the language of the psychodynamic or humanistic orientations, however, these research findings demonstrate that the verbal descriptions of the client are another source of gaining access to an experience and one that is taken from the essence of art therapy itself. Although it was not the goal of this research to create new conceptual formulations or terminology for art therapy but rather to describe an experience, where such terminology has arisen, such as analogal processing or field of meaning, the words chosen seemed to fit the experience. These phrases, unlike most in art therapy, have not been borrowed from other theoretical language.

#### SECTION 4: A CLIENT'S PRESENT EXPERIENCE OF LOOKING AT ART WORK CREATED IN ART THERAPY

##### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

After the client had described her experience of looking at and discussing her art work in art therapy she was asked to describe her experience of the art object now, in the research context. This experience often differed from what she had originally and retrospectively described. This difference does not prove that the client's descriptions of her experience in art therapy reflect the actual experience. It does indicate, however, that the client's experience of looking at the art object has changed. This experience is presented here to further illuminate the original experience; to provide a context for it in terms of then and now.

##### How the experience occurred:

The client looked at and saw her artwork in various ways other than when she had retrospectively described looking at the art object in art therapy:

- (a) Seeing the artwork as a signifier or reminder of meaning she was familiar with.

*In terms of how I experience this painting now it sort of serves to remind me of this unfinished potential that I have.*

- (b) Selective looking- the looking at aspects of the art object which had a particular meaning and avoiding looking at other aspects of the art object which had been associated with other meaning.

*I don't see the red and all the other jazz that's on there and the pain and stuff doesn't feel that important to me anymore. I don't look at.....so the black and red doesn't affect me like it would have a few months ago. At this point it's that whole open area up there in the corner that I sort of see as being the future and I can finish that and see what it's all about. Yeah it's exciting.*

- (c) Through seeing in retrospect because of life process.

*It even had more significance because I see it in retrospect and I see a change that's occurred from the time of painting that painting and having tentatively put those stairs in there and the change and what's gone on in retrospect and looking at it now and knowing really what those stairs mean and what having those stairs there means because of the whole life process I've gone through since I've done the painting.*

*It feels like it's very definitely something of my past and I guess that I really feel compassion for that child. But it doesn't feel like me anymore, it feels separate, like it's somebody else and so the feeling I have is rather than it being in my gut or my heart it's more like kind of a sadness that I can feel in my head, kind of like something more logic, based on some sort of knowledge and logic rather than based on the connection I have, the gut connection I have with it.*

What the client experienced:

In looking at the artwork in the present, there was a sense of familiarity, that she didn't have before when she looked at them in art therapy (the groundwork had already been established)-

*I sort of know and I've thought it through and assimilated all the stuff that's in there, so I don't have that kind of little girl eagerness to find out what this is about that I had before*

The client had achieved some expertness which was evident in how she related to the art work. There was an immediacy about this, she knew the meaning or she knew she didn't; she could quickly enter into an experiencing state with the artwork; she could move through different levels of meaning. She could facilitate her own experiencing of the artwork; she could vary her own point of view.

1. From the viewpoint of seeing or not seeing the meaning:

(a) She may have experienced that she had feelings towards or about the artwork. For example, she liked the painting because of the meaning

*I like it because it's a very meaningful painting....*

*I feel a fondness for her because it's part of me....*

- or she liked them because she could see what she accomplished over time.

*....it's the first one where it's like me and me....you know there's this adult me on there.*

(b) She experienced the artworks as becoming more attached to them, as being a part of her, being more like her than before. She experienced an active sense of taking them back from over there and making them part of her, internalizing them.

*As we've gone through the three we've gone through I mean I really am beginning to feel some kind of attachment. I mean they feel more like me now than when I first painted them, it's almost like I'm going through this process of taking it back from over there and putting it back some how and making it part of me again.*

*I love these paintings.*

*I have an attachment to this one because it's really me at this point.*

(c) She may have felt unable to relate the painting to herself, unsure of the meaning. In these instances she felt that it contained something for her, some "information" which it had not revealed, a "key" to understanding. She felt she would have to actively work at it, to "get into it" more, to experience it more fully. The artwork contained a direction for her to go in, or a time on which to focus and re-experience, in order to discover the meaning. She sensed something more there. She may have felt "confused", "disturbed" by it, "lost on it", puzzled about it, non-comprehending. Something had not appeared to her yet, was not visible. She experienced a lack of clarity, and an awareness that her understanding was not complete; she did not feel finished. The artwork represented a signpost, a possible access point to further experiencing and understanding.

*When I look at it right now, at this exact very moment, it indicates, it reminds me that I'm still confused right now and that this isn't finished. That's what I'm experiencing right now is a realization that I'm not finished this anyway and that I'm still pretty confused about a lot of things...I don't have the feeling of*

completion like I had in the other painting at all. This is not complete this is not um I haven't defeated anything here and I haven't...it doesn't give me an uplifting feeling it gives me a blah feeling. Sort of makes me feel like um like um this is the elevator going down.

I feel quite bland towards it. It doesn't emotionally do anything for me except that I know that if I got into that small child there if I closed my eyes and just really worked my way back to that that I could probably find some information, get some information, get more information from it. It's another thing that isn't finished I think but it's, it doesn't emotionally, it doesn't make me feel fear or pain or anger or anything, it's just very bland and the face doesn't disturb me because I think I've finished that part, that part is complete. But the little child thing is not.

(d) In looking at the painting she may have been reminded of an experience or a presence that took her deeper into her own experiencing where she lived that presence: felt it, was in it, wondered where she was in it, or had it all around her. She experienced the presence and elaborated it.

*This colourful lusciousness, I remember this painting as being one where I got into the sort of smushing and lusciousness of the actual paint, I mean I'm experiencing it that way too. I feel like I could eat it, I have a visual image of the paint on the end of the brush that is reminding me of the properties of the paint and the lusciousness of the paint and as I talk about it I'm getting more and more excited about it and now I want to paint something in fact my body is going agghhh. The more I look at it now the more I like it, and actually it's this whole spiral I don't even see that centre part, I mean this outside part is really big to me right now it's really huge I feel like I'm inside it. I feel like it's moving and it's all around me, yeah I'd like to get inside there. Its' taken on an immense proportion that it didn't have before.*

*Now I also realize when I look back that I did see several signs, but I didn't recognize them consciously but they made me feel suspicious, and now, something I never realized, now, because it is there, seems to imply to me that, feels to me like I am willing to spread this out a bit to include more, it's like I feel like I'm here and I've got this safe space right around me but there's my stairway and I've also got safe space around it so not only have I increased my safe space but also there's and element of sharing with it. Because throughout all of this I've noticed a feeling and it was the yellow in the star and it was a feeling of me wanting to include others in my space some sort of benevolency right, in this the fact that that safe space also includes stairs is significant.*

*Sort of like um (laughs) this pseudoscary dragon. It reminds me of my son, actually, when he's the most scared. I can tell when he's the most scared is when he's like huffing and puffing the most- right- and that's kind of like the feeling I get from this dragon right now is that it's trying to be this scary dragon and it's not really very scary at all. I feel fondness for it, yeah it's sort of like I want to pick it up and carry it around. It reminds me it's like a little kitten that they're so afraid and they hiss at you and you could just pick them up in your hand and you could just crush them if you wanted to you know but they look so vicious and they're just hissing at you, that's what that reminds me of that's what and that's what that reminds me of, that's what I feel like. I could just sort of pick that dragon up you know and or cat/dragon whatever the heck it is. So "I'm friendly but I can be*

*tough." I don't know "You don't look like it." So I wonder what that says about me?*

2. She experienced a sense of clarity, of seeing things more clearly than she did before, and she liked this.

*I like this , there are a lot of things that I'm seeing very clearly that I probably sort of glimmered on.*

She experienced meaning evolving or different levels of experiencing meaning.

- (a) What she experienced before in a physical realm evolves into more of an abstract or intuitive realm.

*But it has something to do with talking about the need to be above and the need to see, although I've said that same thing before but I never made the realization at the time. So I realize that I have this height in my house because I have this need to be able to see what's going on and to make choices about who can come into my safe space or not. At that point it was a very physical feeling of physical safety, personal safety, and now the realization that I'm making is also the fact of being able to see this stuff not people and things but all of the potential crises.*

- (b) As she looks at an artwork she becomes aware of meaning and moves through different ways of experiencing it. She locates it in the painting as a sign "it seems to imply to me", a presence "feels to me like I am willing to spread this out a bit to include more", she is in it "It's like I feel like I'm here and I've got this safe space right around me".

*Now something I never realized, something the therapist pointed out was this change in the configuration of the safe space....it now has two bubbles as compared to the one big colourful bubble, now I'm just thinking actually that this part that's coming down with the stairs now if that wasn't there it would be very similar to the other painting except there's stairs there, now because it is there it seems to imply to me that, feels to me like I am willing to spread this out a bit to include more. It's like I feel like I'm here and I've got this safe space right around me but there's my stairway and I've also got safe space around it so not only have I increased my safe space but also there's an element of sharing with it.*

- (c) She notices presences in herself and paintings over time and makes, affirms the meaning.

*I'm seeing this now. Yeah, because then she just pointed out and I never even realized it, and then she pointed it out and we never talked about it or got into why that configuration had changed and I'm thinking of it now because throughout all of this I've noticed a feeling and it was the yellow in the star and it was a feeling of me wanting to include others in my space....some sort of benevolency right? and it comes out in another painting where um she talks about it in terms of social conditioning and the conditioning that we have that we should share things and*

*include other people in it but I think I have worked through a lot of that before and I sort of didn't really agree although it was important I'll get to that another time but in this the fact that that safe space also includes stairs is significant.*

2. The client experiences herself as evolving over time. She experiences herself as having visibility (the possibility of seeing), of being visible, and she wants to be seen in a certain way.

- (a) She recognizes herself and sees her own development.

*I like it because it's a very meaningful painting and because it's the first one where it's like me and me....you know there's this adult me on there.*

She recognizes herself at this point, *"it's really me at this point"*. This implies other points in time, a sense of herself now and beyond now.

- (b) She experiences a sense of future potential.

*It serves to remind me of this unfinished potential that I have, potential to have fun, it reaffirms a goal. It excites me to know that that's there. It's exciting.*

- (c) She is aware of experiencing the artwork differently then before, a sense of then and now. She feels more like an observer than a participant in the painting. She looks at it without being emotionally caught up in it. She interprets this as a milestone, a sign of her own development and feels a sense of completion.

*This painting to look at it now doesn't bother me. I had just a few days ago I had a sort of cathartic reaction to this painting because I was showing it to my mother who hadn't seen it before, then I wanted to show her this painting and I once again became very emotional when I was showing it to her and that actually prompted a real cathartic thing between her and I. So now when I look at the painting it doesn't....any of the fears or any of the anger feelings I had when the painting happened in the first place....they aren't there anymore. I feel real calm about it. At this point for me right now the way I feel about it is that I feel quite at peace because to me it represents a real milestone. I feel more like I'm an observer than a participant in the painting. So now when I look at it now I feel like I can laugh at it and say 'Ha! Ha! You're not going to get me.' I feel like somehow I defeated it.*

*I know when I did the painting and for several hours later I could still feel that humiliation. To look at this painting now it doesn't create any kinds of feeling one way or the other except as a memory of an event. Looking at it the last time when we were in the office I felt really like I had defeated something and I think that's how I feel sort of like it's kind of like an end. It's not an unfinished thing like a lot of them are still unfinished this one seems really complete.*

(d) She experienced a development in her attachment to the artworks, a reintegration of experiences she had put out there apart from her and looked at and was now making them part of her again.

*I mean they feel more like me now than when I first painted them.*

*.....I love her. She feels like me and she feels like my sister....I feel a fondness, and a comradeship, and an attachment to this image. It's an attachment like the other image of the critic but I'd rather not be attached to that.*

(e) She discovers a visible sign of her own development in looking at similarities and differences between artworks. She wants this to be seen and acknowledged as an accomplishment.

*I wanted to have that painting out because I wanted to show or remind us of what it looked like in comparison to this one, because there's similarities and yet there's differences. I guess as well .to me, I guess it has significance and I guess I wanted to say "Look what I've done! Look what I did!" So I wanted to show this evolution here and having put the stairs in also said something of me in that there's more of an element of control in the second one.....*

(f) She sees her experience in art therapy as a whole process. She experienced herself going down,

*It's like being right in there. I always call it being in the bottom of the swamp. It's like you're rooting around the bottom of the swamp. It's muddy, and it's murky, and it's icky, and there's no light down there*

- and coming apart and coming together

*I'm certainly back together again, in a better way.*

*If this whole process had stopped anywhere it's hard to imagine what I would feel like but I would not feel the way I feel having this happened at the end this piece. I think I would still be down there.*

- and of coming up again and being on stable ground, a standpoint in the light (with visibility, greater clarity) from which she can move forward.

*At least now I sort of like I've gone through this I've taken a sweep in there I've had a look at some of the specimens on the bottom of it and I've come back up for air with what I found and knowing something so I'm sort of like at another plateau so if I want to go down there again, I can. I may some huge crisis may happen and something may happen that will force me back down there again but I feel like I'm somehow on stable ground here and can go forward in the light.*

*This wasn't the end that it was just the beginning in this whole process of remembering and putting all this stuff back together again. This therapy program was just going to be the beginning and I guess for me it would probably I can see this whole process. Thank God for the end because I couldn't get left high and dry*

*like that. It feels like if you got left at this point somewhere in here that it wouldn't be finished that you'd have to continue on with therapy continue on with the process. It's not finished.*

(g) She is amazed at her own development both in how she feels and in her ability to put a face on herself, one she feels satisfied with and one she created. She accepts her visible self; she can see herself more clearly. She experiences a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction; that she is retaining what she values in herself and creating the person she wants to be. She sees herself as newly entering into the world, as having a future and a place in the world.

*I just realized it's quite amazing actually because I should show you one other ceramic piece. Early on in the process we did another ceramic piece. This was about the third or fourth session. I did that and this cloak or whatever the heck it is. I called it a shell kind of like a protective shell. It's all patched and it's got chunks on the back of it and stuff like that. There's no face on it. When I look at the two (laughs). It's really amazing. To start out like that sort of like featureless and very ..... When I did it and described it I described you know all these sort of tatters these patches on my shell where it's all kind of tattered and it's like wounded. This figure is not very I mean it's pretty lumpy and bumpy. It had a slash there and a wound there. That was how I felt, I felt really tattered and really patched up. Pretty frail, faceless. I mean I couldn't even put a face on this and I don't think I had any faces up to this point either. So I find it a major accomplishment to have put a face on me and a grown up face and part of it still being childlike and spontaneous, and part of it being wise, I like that. I like that. It feels to me like something like I am creating the person I want myself to be. By hook or by crook I'm getting there. I'm retaining the qualities that I value in myself, it's there. So I really feel good about that.*

*.....it's like I was just born. It's like I have my whole life yet.....the rest of the world is still available.*

(h) She considers making her artworks visible to the world, so that others might see and know her.

*I wonder if I should have a show?*

## INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The value of having a concrete object that one can refer to and re-experience at different points in time is recognized by many art therapists (Rubin, 1984; Edwards, 1987; Dalley, 1984). This is usually commented on in a general way. It may be considered as a record of activity which cannot be denied, erased or forgotten, or as having a multi-faceted nature which can allow a rich and multi-leveled experience which varies over time. However, the specific experiencing that occurs when one experiences in the present what one has created in the past has not as yet been discussed in any depth. The purpose of this discussion is mainly to illuminate the original experience of looking at the art object in art therapy. This will mainly consist of my own interpretations with some reference to theory where it collaborates, amplifies, or disagrees with what is given.

How the experience occurs:

The client not only uses various ways of looking at the art objects she created during art therapy, but, because she had previous experience with the art work and was familiar with its meaning, she could use that as a baseline from which she could vary. She could use her previous experience as a ground or backdrop, a context to recognize and validate a meaning. She could choose to look at the aspect of the artwork that contained the most positive meaning for herself, or place the original meaning in a context of life process and amplify it because of her experience of change. What she sees in the art object is more real and meaningful to her now. Or, in having the original experience as a backdrop and recognizing the difference between now and then, she could look at the art object in a more objective way and experience it as separate from her. In this case, the art work was more real and meaningful to her then. In the original experience of looking at and experiencing the art object, the client does not have as much control of what she looks at and what she sees, as she does in the present. She would not have a familiar object to vary her experience from. This implies that as the original experience would be unfamiliar territory, the guidance and support of the art therapist would be particularly important here.

What the client experiences:

The familiarity she feels now in looking at her art object illuminates the newness, the excitement, the unknown aspect of the original experience.

She has a sense now that she is more in control, that she has some skill at, and a sense of confidence in this process. Rubin, 1984, mentioned that the most legitimate aim of art therapy is the development of the creative power and self control of the individual. The client seems to feel this sense of satisfaction and accomplishment; she experiences pleasure from the meaning she recognizes in her art object.

She experiences that the paintings are more like her now than before, even though it appeared she identified with them previously. This may indicate that the experience of identifying with the art object to the point where it becomes part of the person may be an evolving one and that there may be levels to this process. There is perhaps a continuation over time of the structure building, the development of ego strength, that Kohut spoke of (Lachman Chapman, 1987).

When the client looks at the art object, she sometimes immediately experiences confusion, a sense of incompleteness and not knowing the meaning of what is before her. This experience of realizing that she does not know the meaning of her art work, illuminates and is in contrast to her experience of recognizing or being familiar with the meaning from her original art therapy experience. Because she has had the experience of being familiar, of knowing the meaning; she immediately knows when she does not. She experiences a sense of completeness when she knows the meaning and an incompleteness when she does not. This appears similar to the experience of completing a gestalt, or integrating hidden or fragmented aspects of self to become more whole and complete. The art object and the client together complete or do not complete a whole in terms of understanding.

Because of her original experience of discovering meaning and of the intentional effort she put into this, she views the art object as a container of meaning, as holding a key

to understanding. She believes that if she works at entering into the art object and experiencing it more fully that she can discover some meaningful information for herself.

The client in her original experience would enter into an experiencing state, a presencing of the art object. She was able to immediately do this at this point in time and could amplify and elaborate her original experience.

The experience of becoming clearer now illuminates the "sort of glimmered on" experience of before. This seems similar to preintentional experience mentioned by a phenomenology orientation where there are only vague stirrings before someone becomes fully intentional and directionally focused. This may also reflect movement from preconscious to conscious awareness, a psychoanalytic concept. In art therapy developing clarity and differentiation, begins with visual perception and increasing awareness, and hopefully ends with understanding. In looking now she has an experience of seeing some things very clearly that were not as clear before.

Having had an experience of meaning in art therapy at the level of the physical world, allows the client to evolve it into a more intuitive realm. In looking at her art object now she can vary her experience of it and go through layers of meaning. Her ability to do this demonstrates her own control over this, and an expertise she has developed so that it appears that the client can vary her own point of view without the assistance of the art therapist. There is not, however, the same sense of excitement and discovery as in the original experience of a new point of view, a point of view that is often mutually formed with the art therapist. This ability to enter in and out of an experiencing state, to be able to fuse and differentiate, was something noted in the original experience as being considered, from a psychoanalytic perspective, as a sign of healthy ego functioning. The client appears to have evolved in her ability to do this.

She notices presences in herself and paintings over time and she validates her own meaning of this which differs from the art therapist's interpretation in the original experience. She did not feel quite comfortable with the original meaning but is now able to

see and accept her own difference from the art therapist. She is developing faith in her own point of view.

At this point in time, she can see herself and her own development even more than she originally did. She sees herself in a context of evolution over time. She experiences having a future potential, with even more of a sense of this than before. She recognizes patterns that are signs of her evolution and wants them to be acknowledged. In looking at the art object she experiences the development of objectivity or the development of identity, in that either she is more objective about images which she had no distance from before, or she is more identified with her art work.

She is amazed at her own development. Kramer, 1987, mentioned that art tells the story of transformation, only it allows us the pleasure of witnessing the process. The client identifies the evolving external self objects with her inner self. She equates her ability to create them with her ability to create herself. The experience of paralleling the struggles with the process of art expression, with efforts to cope with real life experiences is considered by Betensky, 1987, to be the final stage of phenomenological integration. The client appears to be able to see this parallel process even more clearly than she did in the art therapy group. It is important to note that the client and the researcher reviewed all her art objects in a shorter period of time in the research context than when she originally looked at them in art therapy. It appears this client did experience a sense of her own creative power and inner self control (Rubin, 1984).

Something that occurred as part of looking at the paintings in the present (in the research context) that had not occurred in her original experience (in art therapy) was that at the end of the individual review, the art works were all brought out and viewed together as a group and she was asked to comment on her experience of the art therapy process. She saw her experience in art therapy as involving all aspects of her. Rubin (1984 p. 196-197) mentions how being involved in art therapy

*.....involves the engagement of not only the experiencing, doing, active self, but the observing, reflective, passive self in relation to the same art object..... Art therapy.....requires the integration of so many usually separated, isolated parts of the mind and aspects of human experience.....an integration of inner and outer worlds, of self and nonself, of good and bad, of primary and secondary processes, of matter and mind, or of any other such polarities.*

The client had a sense of process with qualities of being down to the depths, coming apart, being in the dark and unable to see, and then coming up into the light, being able to see and move forward, coming together and experiencing some calm and stability. She also recognized the fragility of this process, the importance the doing and seeing her final painting had for her. She felt if she hadn't done that she could not have felt so complete. It seemed to be important for her to have been able to bring a visibly strong and stable structure into the world that she could see.

She mentioned a desire for others to see her artwork, to make herself visible in the world and perhaps be seen and acknowledged. This was an extension of being visible beyond her original experience and into the world.

In the present experience of her art objects that she created in art therapy the client appears to be quick to recognize and interpret her experience, either positively or negatively (things are more black and white, less shades of grey). She immediately experiences that she has an evolving visibility and sense of clarity, or that she cannot see or comprehend; but in the present the possibility of seeing remains, she has visibility even if she is unable to see.

#### SECTION 5: A CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE OF ART THERAPY IN HER DAY-TO-DAY LIFE (FROM ART THERAPY INTO THE WORLD)

In the research interview the client was also asked to describe her experience in the world while she was in art therapy. It emerged that a significant aspect of this experience involved looking and forming meaning. At a later point she commented that something she heard *"The ability to form one's perceptions in a useful way is crucial for one's*

*functioning*" really spoke to her about her experience in art therapy. In effect, art therapy appeared to have given her some experience in forming her perceptions in a useful way. Visual perception seems to be an important aspect of this experience.

#### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

In interacting with the world, some of the thought processes and experiences of the client appeared to be a continuation of what was happening for her in art therapy. She commented on the fact that everything seemed to be connected, that one thing seemed to arise from another.

During the week, following her art therapy sessions, the client intentionally focused on watching, observing and thinking about things in terms of meaning about herself. Once the client even showed one of her artworks to a significant other, assuming that to see was to know; that communication could take place through a visual object.

She experienced a heightened awareness, an intensity to her everyday experience. There was a flow to her experiencing, and a sense of process and interconnectedness.

The client experienced being more intentional, she could slowly look at and see aspects of a problem instead of being overwhelmed by her experience. She trusted her intuition and other ways of knowing than just by her intellect. Feeling calmer, more embodied (the calmness was located inside her chest and head), the client felt more centered in herself and did not get as caught up with others. She experienced more inner control, and was able both to let go of and to take control.

The client experienced herself as being visible to others. She wanted to show herself yet to be in control of how she was seen. She was aware that her outer appearance, how others saw her, affected how she was perceived. She appeared to make a connection between her outer visibility and her inner self. The client felt if she outwardly looked strong and well, that even if she was feeling awful inside, that her inner self would be

protected. The act of creating this outer self, the work of how she would present herself, was what gave her a feeling of strength and control.

The client experienced herself as having a standpoint, a starting point, an existence in the world. She experienced herself as moving beyond where she was at, as having a future potential.

How the experience occurred.

1. The client looked at things in the world in a similar way as she did in art therapy. She made use of holistic, non-rational subjective thought processes as well as objective, rational and linear ones. She intentionally focused on watching, observing and thinking about things in the world in terms of meaning she could use for herself.

*I observed all of that all of the time and was always questioning how this, you know how did it all fit together and what did it all mean about who I was and what parts of me were things I had control over and I wanted to keep and I wanted to get rid of. What part was just conditioning that happened.*

In making the transition either from her inner psychological world to her outer physical world, or from her outer world to her inner world at times the client would make use of an analogical thought process, a process of reasoning from parallel cases, in a similar manner as she had done in art therapy. For example, she had been directed by the therapist to think about the characteristics of her safe space over the week so that she could make sure she had everything she wanted in her next painting. The client took that psychological concept home with her, looked around her room at home and had an experience of safety. She reasoned from the physical characteristics of her room (the light, the large private space, the stairs) that the qualities of peace, harmony and light symbolized safety for her. She used what she saw and physically experienced, and cognitively processed it in such a way that it became representative of an inner psychological concept, a transition from outer to inner.

*Over the week I thought about and realized I have this height here and this stairway and I realized this is my safe space and I can get up it.....that was during the week that I thought about this to be able to see around me and to see what was happening and have some kinds of choices as to who was allowed into my safe space. That was another element of my safety; was having a choice over who the heck could come in there and who couldn't come.*

The client pays attention to her inner intuitive experience and considers it a valid and useful way of making sense of her outer world.

*Now when I get those thoughts I really pay attention to them because I became aware that those are really important, that's really important knowledge whether it has any logic to it or not.....*

*In this last incident I had feelings of suspicion that normally I would need to know what was making me feel suspicious and my kid would lie or exaggerate and I still wouldn't know and I'd be even more confused but now the simple fact that I feel suspicious says to me there's something suspicious going on and I don't even need to know what it is. I just feel suspicious so therefore "No you cannot go out."*

*My intuition is in the form of a thought. It's like a thought that comes, a piece of information that comes from nowhere, it has no process attached to it. It's just a random single thought that I get that's perfectly right and totally correct and everything.*

2. The client prepared herself to be seen by others in a manner that she would want to be seen. In art therapy the client had physically worked in clay and paint at creating an image of herself. She was sometimes horrified and sometimes pleasantly surprised by what she saw. After she finished her art therapy sessions she continued to try and physically create the face that she wanted on a clay piece. It seemed important to her to work at getting the right face on herself. In a parallel way she worked on her own physical appearance in presenting herself to others, wanting them to see her in a certain way.

*It seemed important to me that when I go out that I prepare myself because it seemed like I was more liable to attract something undesirable if I somehow didn't prepare myself in terms of what I wore and how I looked.*

3. The client shared a piece of her artwork with a significant other as a way of communicating. She seemed to have a belief that looking at something would create understanding.

*And then putting it down in front of her and her seeing it and me seeing it, we never even talked and she knew and I knew and the whole thing happened and there was no discussion, there was no, it was part emotion and there were no intelligence, rational or logical it just happened.*

#### What the client experienced:

In looking at and thinking about things in between and following art therapy sessions:

1. She experienced a heightened awareness, an intensity to her experiencing as meaning evolved and she realized things and made connections.
2. She experienced a flow to her experiencing, a process to her learning of "just letting things come" or of her experiences being connected yet moving, forming and evolving through meaning

*My experience of art therapy doesn't seem to be separate from the rest of my experience. from my day to day, like I mean it seems like even this crow, even this bird claw thing seems to have come out of something that happened during the week which seems to have come out or....it all seems to be really connected. It's like my whole life becomes the process of learning something.*

*The whole time I was going through this art therapy I had to get in the bathtub. I would just sort of go through this and kind of think about it and um reprocess it but it didn't seem to be very logical it just seemed to be just lying there and relaxing and maybe reading one of the books and just letting things come.*

3. The client was able to stay mentally focused, to use her intellect to sort things out versus feeling overwhelmed by her experience. She was able to see aspects of the whole and to think about how to proceed. She experienced being more in control and capable of solving her problems by thinking things through. The client experienced presence of mind.

*I can think about things. Where there's a situation that happens I can look at it and I can slow down and I can see all the little parts and think about what has to be done rather than just being totally overwhelmed and hysterical.*

4. The client was more embodied and aware of her physical presence. She had a sense of inner strength and felt calmer. She was able to trust her own intuitive sense of things and not just her intellect.

*I feel much calmer, in my head and here in my solar plexus. In this last incidence, it happened I had feelings of suspicion that normally I would need to know what was making me feel suspicious and my kid would lie or exaggerate and I still wouldn't know and I'd be even more confused, but now the simple fact that I feel suspicious says to me there's something suspicious going on and I don't even need to know what it is. I just feel suspicious so therefore "No you cannot go out". I'm noticing, I mean he is as much as I try to put some of these guidelines into place over the month, it's now that there is some sort of confidence behind them and unwaveringness in a way or something a confidence or something where it's becoming that he doesn't even hassle it anymore. If I say "No", it's like okay. Whereas before it was like keep on me, and on me, and just tear me down until "Okay! Do it! I don't care!" That's happened over the process of the whole art*

*therapy but really come to a point with this sort of inner strength that I feel from this painting as a result of this process. I don't know whether it's the painting or the process. I guess it's the process that I was going through that actually shows it in the painting, this is sort of the visual description of what happened to me.*

*It seemed to me that a lot of my protection wasn't with external things but it had to do with how I felt about myself and how I let that self present itself.*

*So somehow in the process now and since this painting I felt much calmer about things and about sort of myself in regards to there's so many things that I don't need to get uptight about that I don't even need to be concerned about.*

5. She experienced having a starting point and being more solidly anchored in herself and in the world. She had more of a sense of what was her and what was beyond her. She experienced being centered in herself rather than in others. She was able to remain separate from things instead of being caught up in or involving herself in others' difficulties. She felt more in control (inner control) and more able to both give up and take control in the world. She experienced her own potential, having a place in the world and opening to a meaningful future.

*Sort of an idea of who I was and where I was at and what I had to do....sort of like a starting point really but a much stronger and firmer and more complete sort of part. I feel real good about this and about who this person is. It makes me feel strong. I feel much more in control and I feel good about what I had managed to accomplish through all of this.....It feels like I have so much potential and I'm really excited about it. I'm really enthusiastic I mean I could sometimes jump up and down for joy. I think of the world that's out there that I haven't been able to cope with or to even get to the point where I could even cope with going to work and the possibility of actually earning a living and making money and having things and going places and doing stuff and people I can yet meet and mean and God it's like I was just born. It's like I have my whole life yet.*

*I just sort of let things happen more on their own rather than being involved...For instance with my son coming home and relaying something to me that is quite exaggerated or it sounds quite exaggerated and rather than getting caught up in the exaggeration, I just sort of not ignore it but just not that emotional intensity. Then I'm calmer. I'm more rational. I'm more logical in dealing with the problem. It's not that I'm not emotional.*

*Now I would experience that like it's just not that important. It's not a big deal. Say for instance somebody having a problem with someone. Maybe two friends of mine are having a problem rather than me needing to somehow get involved and sort it out and have some emotional thing out of this and be in the middle of it, it just isn't important. I just sort of let things happen more on their own rather than being involved or getting involved or allowing myself to get involved.*

7. The client experienced herself as visible to others and that it was important that she be seen by others in a certain way. She took control of her own visibility and this gave

her a feeling of power and strength, of being able to protect herself and what was valuable to her.

*It seemed really important to me that part of my strength or part of me feeling good about myself had to do with how I presented myself to the public outside of my home. It seemed important to me that when I go out that I prepare myself because it seemed like I was more liable to attract something undesirable if I somehow didn't prepare myself- in terms of what I wore and how I looked. If I'm depressed or have been depressed in the past or feeling really shitty, I'd just go out looking shitty....so I've been known to be quite a slob at times. It seemed to me that really said something to people and somehow attracted that kind of people to me that should not want to be.*

*It seemed to me that a lot of my protection wasn't with external things but it had more to do with how I felt about myself and how I let that self present itself..... That was important that I present myself in a certain way. That gave some kind of feeling of power and strength. I fix my hair up because I started to wear my hair back because previous to that my hair was just growing out and it was hanging in my face all the time and it made me feel not in control, I don't know how come.....it felt like I was hiding something but somehow it made me feel weak to have this hair here all the time in my face so I had started to wear my hair up and back and somehow that made me feel stronger. It had something to do with letting people see your face. Having something to do with presenting your face to them. Presenting your self to them. I got a sense of feeling stronger if I got myself fixed up before I went out into the public and I presented myself in a certain way people would comment on how well I looked. That gave me feedback. It wasn't the peoples comments that made me feel good but it was going out and somehow preparing myself and making myself feel presentable that made the difference. It's very interesting and to me it said that my clothes and my presentation of my self is really important and has a lot to do with how I feel or has a lot to do with how I feel about myself. Now I don't know which comes first the feeling or the whatever. Because even if I feel lousy, if I make the conscious effort to present myself then nobody else knows I feel lousy and somehow I don't quite... I think I still feel that lousy whatever is making me feel that lousy is still there but somehow I feel protected or something. I sort of feel I have a protection that people can't hook into whatever my vulnerabilities are. Noone knows and they won't poke into it. It won't make me crumble. I can get back home.*

*I look at other people that way too and I get a real sense of them being real down trodden and disempowered by their physical appearance and you just can tell it. I don't want people to get that impression about me. I am not disempowered. I'm just slightly disempowered and I don't want people to tag me. I guess it has something to do with wanting people to give me credit for the power that I do have and not just assume that I'm powerless and can't do any of this stuff. Like I'm dependant because I can I mean look it. There's a very strong woman, you know. Once you get tagged then it's like a helplessness. A learned helplessness that I learned and I know I had it and I don't want it anymore I'm starting to feel where my legs are and where the ground is and I just want to keep building on that and I don't want someone to take it away from me because they think I'm not very strong. So, it seems important to me that I present myself in a certain way that doesn't give people an impression of something I don't want them to have.*

### Interpretation and Discussion of the Findings

What clients experience after art therapy in their day-to-day life is generally only mentioned in a global way through theoretical goals or in case study reports. This area is also considered in research studies that are interested in examining the effectiveness of art therapy. Such studies, however, may be interested in measuring aspects of functioning or specific mental concepts, such as self esteem, after an art therapy treatment program instead of examining the qualities of a person's experience as they live it in the world. The findings explicate and present aspects of a client's experience between art therapy sessions and for a few months following art therapy prior to the commencement of the research study.

Some of the goals that art therapy aims for have been mentioned throughout the thesis: to bring hidden aspects of self to light so that one can examine the role they play in current functioning (psychoanalytic); to increase experiential self knowledge so that one can interact in a more whole way in the world (gestalt); to increase self esteem or ego strength so that one can be more flexible in the way they respond to things yet not be overwhelmed by life (analytic self psychology); and lastly to be intentionally focused, self directed and more open to the world, to be able to see oneself in a more global way, such as seeing patterns or parallels and to be able to use these in a healthy way (phenomenology).

Rubin (1984) mentioned that, whether an art therapist views their primary task as bringing out what is already inside (bringing things to light or bringing out potential) or as adding to or filling in (building structure or making up for deficiencies), all of this should be undertaken in the service of the development of the creative power and self control of the individual.

#### How the experience occurs:

The client came home from art therapy with the direction to think about what she wanted in her safe space (a psychological concept) for the next art therapy session. She looked around her and saw qualities of safety in her room at home. Through visual

perception and a process of parallel reasoning she transferred the psychological concept into the outer world around her. Later she translated what she saw in the outer world into inner qualities of her safe space - peace, light and harmony. While living in the world, the client continues to have movement between inner and outer realities, a frequently mentioned concept in art therapy.

The client would observe and reflect on things in terms of meaning about herself. This sounds similar to the observing ego, a psychoanalytic concept, that can remain somewhat detached and observant in order to better understand something. The activities of looking, observing and forming connections stand out here.

In general, art therapy offers a bridge and a synthesis of some of man's polarities (Rubin, 1984; Nowell Hall, 1987); this includes redressing the balance between intuition and rationality (as well as between inner and outer). The client was more aware of her own intuitions and willing to give them more weight in contributing to her own understanding. Intuitive thoughts assumed an equality to her logical ones in her existential reality.

She acted to present her visible physical self in a manner that was in her own best interest. In doing this she demonstrates creative power and self control that Rubin (1984) states is the aim of art therapy. She has worked on creating herself in clay and paint, and continues to try and put a face on herself through working with clay figures at home. This is an active physical process that parallels the preparation of her appearance, and building of ego strength.

The findings point to the fact that a client makes use of some of the same mental and physical processes she uses in art therapy to continue to create possibilities for understanding and to have a sense of agency and self control in the world. The qualities of a client's experience of art therapy as they live it in the world is an area worthy of further research.

What the client experiences:

The client appeared to have experienced things in a similar way as when she was in the art therapy sessions because of the heightened awareness and the sense of movement or being part of an evolving non-linear process in both settings.

She seemed to be able to organize her perceptions in a way that was useful to her. Perceptual awareness is mentioned as a goal of gestalt and phenomenology art therapy orientations as it contributes to the ability to form a gestalt or to assume more intentional living. The findings indicate that the client was able to differentiate aspects from the whole rather than be overwhelmed by seeing in a confused or global way. The ability to separate and differentiate helped her to maintain some control and to be more intentional about what she would do.

The client not only was able to maintain a presence of mind, but was able to maintain an awareness of her physical presence as well. She stated she felt like she was in her body whereas before she didn't feel this. She would feel detached from her body, especially when she was with strangers. This is a phenomenon that is discussed more in terms of the specific issue of sexual abuse than it is in general art therapy concepts. Gestalt orientations do encourage the development of the physical and experiential self and not just the intellect. She has developed a belief in her own inner sense of things. She feels calmer both mentally and within her body.

The findings describe what it is like for her to experience her own existence, and to be able to separate and differentiate from others. The concepts of separation and differentiation from a developmental point of view are discussed in psychodynamic art therapy theories. A Jungian may tend to view this as the process of individuation. The findings explicate this experience and provide some examples of how the client lived being more rooted in the world, having some perspective of herself and being able to differentiate herself from others (to have some personal boundaries).

The client experienced herself as being visible. She experienced herself as being seen by others and recognized that how they see her can effect how they are towards her. Creating a self was something that she worked on in art therapy. She continues to do the same in the world and this gave her a sense of strength and self control. This client's evolving experience of her self as being visible was an interesting finding. This is not something that is mentioned in art therapy theory. It implies however that she has a sense of herself in relation to others. It is interesting that in this instance the visual aspect remains central in her experience. Perhaps this is an evolving process: seeing herself, experiencing being seen by others and also seeing others. She experiences herself as being visible and as having visibility - the possibility of seeing.

#### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS IN TERMS OF THE RESEARCH APPROACH

There are many instances in the research findings that support or validate the observations of art therapists who see and describe art therapy phenomena from psychodynamic or humanistic perspectives. As there is little research in art therapy, the fact that this research study often confirms current theoretical understanding is already a valuable contribution. The findings and the descriptions of the client, in this study, serve to illuminate in a living form present theoretical interpretations of art therapy experience. Finding similar art therapy phenomena in this research study as have already been articulated from various theoretical viewpoints does not make this form of research less valid. Instead, the findings illustrate that understanding can be formed through the art therapy experience itself rather than by triangulating the experience through the viewpoints and language of other disciplines. It is important to do this:

*Conceptual advance calls for the breakdown and displacement of prior conceptual structures and the incorporation of pieces of them into webs with a new coherence. Often the new coherence is more complicated, although more deeply coherent..... Perkins, 1988, p. 126.*

The discussion of the research findings also demonstrates that concepts from psychodynamic or humanistic theory are not always a perfect fit to art therapy phenomena, and it is essential that we be precise in our understanding and articulation of art therapy experiences. In some instances the findings from this research approach offered more accurate descriptions and concepts of art therapy phenomena than some of the current theoretical presentations. Perkins (1988) mentions that misunderstandings often have coherence; that they are

*.....highly patterned webs of relations sustained in multiple ways. Better understandings depend not only on more knowledge, but also on finer distinctions that the misunderstandings do not make. p.128.*

Having an attitude of openness to possibilities is crucial at this stage of art therapy development. There is danger that imposing theoretical terms and concepts from other disciplines on art therapy phenomena will close down our ability to see and describe what is uniquely art therapy. Rubin (1984) and McNiff (1987) have called for new research approaches that are discovery oriented and that contribute to understanding about art therapy that arises from its own nature and essence.

The strength of this research approach lies in attempting to remain open to and to describe art therapy phenomena as they emerge in the experience of a client. In keeping with this, the findings are not meant to be presented as facts or as the only truth about what art therapy is or how art therapy occurs:

*.....description, and phenomenological description in particular, can never be more than selective: it is impossible to exhaust all the properties, especially the relational properties, of any object or phenomenon. (Speigelberg, 1982, p. 694).*

Rather they are the researcher's constitution of this experience and are presented as an exploratory offering, as possibilities, to promote discussion along the path to understanding. This encourages art therapy researchers to be open, and willing to explore and discuss, rather than becoming narrowly confined to a particular theoretical viewpoint. For those seeking understanding it is important to remember

*The genuine will to know calls for the spirit of generosity rather than for that of economy, for reverence rather than for subjugation, for the lens rather than the hammer.* (Speigelberg, 1982, p. 680).

The scope of this research has purposefully been broad to illuminate a client's whole experience in art therapy, so the findings are painted with a wide brush rather than focusing in on a particular aspect of experience. As constituents of the client's experience in art therapy emerged, they sometimes suggested important avenues for exploring in further research and these have been specifically mentioned in the discussion of the findings.

The findings illustrate how this research approach can allow something unique to emerge from the experience rather than immediately screening out what did not fit into a specific viewpoint or only being able to see what did. For example, the analogal process emerged from the experience of the making. Also, it became evident that there were various patterns of movement in the client's experience of forming meaning and this led the researcher to consider the implicit emphasis on different psychological movement in Freudian, Jungian and gestalt orientations. Most importantly, the visual aspect of the client's experience in art therapy emerged and remained present in the findings and although it is mentioned in Jungian, gestalt, and phenomenology orientations, it often seems to be ignored or taken for granted in other theoretical understanding.

In the findings, the client's experience in art therapy has been presented in the form of: how the experience occurs and what the client experiences. It is important to note that these are very much intertwined, and that what the client experiences in art therapy is embedded or arises through how the experience occurs. As the decisions being made by the researcher were based on a systematic but intuitive approach, they are said to be constituted by the researcher, and someone else may constitute them differently. The researcher supplies quotes from the participant so the reader may get a sense of what these intuitions are based on or how these experiences are actualized for the client.

It was not the intention of this research approach to focus on cause and effect relationships. The behaviours and experiences are extracted from the context of the client's story so that the reader is unable to ascertain what came before or after them. In essence the unfolding of the client's experience in art therapy over time is not always shown. However, the evolution of the client's experience is revealed in her experience of the art therapist's acceptance, respect and caring for her, indicating the potential for this research approach to disclose developing as well as specific experiences, but not in the sense of cause and effect. The emphasis or ebb and flow of a client's experience across sessions is also not revealed by this research method. For example, there were times when the making phase was barely discussed by the client and the main emphasis was on looking at and discussing the art object, or at other times the emphasis would be on experiencing while making, and there would be very little discussion of the looking phase after that. A fundamental description - the client's story - in Appendix C can provide the reader with some sense of this.

This research method does not reveal the quantities of behaviours or experiences so that it is not immediately obvious to the reader what the emphasis of specific behaviours and experiences might be. For example the number of the therapist's interpretations was not counted and compared to the number of times she described what she saw on the surface of the art object. However, in keeping with the purpose of this research, these behaviours are viewed as constituents or aspects of a qualitative theme through which the client's experience emerged rather than from a cause and effect perspective.

#### Suggestions for Further Research.

Suggestions for further research include the following:

1. The present research study imposed an elemental structure on the client's experience in art therapy consisting of the elements of: A client's experience of the therapist, the making of the art object, and the looking at and discussing of the art object in art

therapy. Due to time constraints and the importance of the contribution at this level, the researcher did not integrate the findings into one structure. This research study could be extended to continue to explore, describe, and synthesize the essential constituents into a coherent structural form of a client's experience in art therapy.

2. The population of the study could be expanded to include more than one client. Including more people in the study may offer the possibility of forming the general structure (*the phenomenon in its generality and universality*) of a client's experience in art therapy, to extend the research beyond the situated structure (*the phenomenon in this situation*) of one individual (Von Eckartsberg, 1986, p. 28).
3. This research study has been wide in scope in terms of the depth and breadth of the analysis of a single client's experience in art therapy. The focus and scope of the research could be narrowed to specific in-depth examination of areas that have emerged in the discussion of the findings. For example the various ways art therapists "interpret" art objects and the client's experience of this interpretation is not yet fully explored or understood.
4. Giorgi (1991) mentioned that in order to understand "art therapeutic experience" we need to be able to distinguish the experience from regular art experience. He made the suggestion that researching both these experiences could help to illuminate or have the art therapy experience stand out. Art therapy experience is presently discussed more in terms of how it differs from imagery-based verbal therapy (Lusebrink, 1989), however, this has not been systematically examined in research either. Explication and description of verbal therapy experience (perhaps imagery-based verbal therapy) as well as regular art experience could help to locate the phenomenon of art therapy experience in an already developed understanding of art and therapy.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research was to gain understanding of a client's experience in art therapy. The question that guided the research was: What meaning is revealed in a client's descriptions of her experience of paintings that were created in art therapy over time? Two specific aspects of this question were focused on: What is a client's experience in art therapy and how does a client experience art therapy? As the individual sections of the findings provide in-depth descriptions of constituents of the elements of a client's experience in art therapy, they will not be re-presented here. Van Manen (1984) and Spiegelberg (1982) both point to the potential to diminish or alter phenomena if they are further reduced beyond what is intuitively given. The discussion and interpretation of the findings thoroughly examines the contribution of the findings to understanding art therapy experience in the context of psychodynamic and humanistic art therapy theory. The findings confirm, elaborate, and illuminate various theoretical viewpoints by presenting them in a living form. The findings refine or more accurately describe art therapy phenomena and allow new understandings to emerge.

The research also demonstrates that a phenomenological research approach can contribute in a significant way to the discovery, description and understanding of art therapy phenomena. Phenomenological research has the potential to contribute to art therapy theory that arises out of its own nature and essence. The findings embody the authority and the living energy of authentic experience that may assist art therapy in communicating with other disciplines from its own unique perspective. This research approach is about the discovery of art therapy viewpoints, the location of art therapy from within itself so that it can interrelate with other disciplines in a meaningful way. Art therapy researchers have called for new research approaches and for research that respects the emergence of meaning and allows the phenomena to speak for themselves (McNiff, 1986). This research study is an offering to the art therapy community. It is an example of an in-depth, extensive application of a phenomenological research approach in art therapy.

### Implications for Art Therapy Practice

A significant contribution of this research is to affirm for art therapists the primary role of vision in a client's experience in art therapy. The visual experience is also a spatial experience because through seeing, a client recognizes, distinguishes, differentiates and locates herself amongst objects in the world:

*Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing that establishes our place in the surrounding world..... The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe..... We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach..... Soon after we can see we are aware that we can also be seen. The eye of the other combines with our own eye to make it fully credible that we are part of the visible world. The reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue. (Berger et al., 1972, pp. 8-9)*

The act of looking, the dimensions of seeing, and the client's experience of being visible and having visibility are extremely important for the art therapist to consider as they visually guide their clients in experiencing the art object. Also, it is important for the art therapist to know where the client is psychologically located in relation to the art object; sometimes it is valuable for a client to approach and merge with the art object (to be it) and sometimes it is valuable for the client to be separate and detached. The art object offers an opportunity not only for the creation of meaning but for the location of meaning in space and art therapists can facilitate and guide this process. The visual-spatial experience in art therapy has movement. It is a reciprocal relationship. The client sees and locates herself in relation to the art object. There can be a give and take, an interrelating, between subject and object. The materials and activity involved in making the art object can become analogues or vehicles of meaning that allow a client to expand her existence from inner to outer objects. This is intuitively known and facilitated by art therapists in their present practice of encouraging links between the client and the art, for example "Let a colour be a feeling". However, the experience of the client and the profound nature of this experience has not been explored in research until now. To further illustrate this John Berger (Spencer

[Ed.], 1985 pp. 279-280) talks about the objects and materials of Van Gogh's paintings as being vehicles going toward reality, rather than objects of longing in themselves. In other words, Van Gogh expanded his existence out toward his reality; he approached it through his activity.

*.....all the gestures with which he handled and manufactured the stuff of the painted image, are analogous to the activity of the existence of what he is painting. His paintings imitate, the active existence-the labour of being-of what they depict. His act of painting was far nearer than that of any other painter to the carpenter's or the shoemaker's act of making them. He brings together the elements of the product - legs, cross bars, back, seat: sole, uppers tongue, heel-- as though he too were fitting them together, joining them, and as if this being joined constituted their reality. These acts were present for him in the act of painting.*

This is a reminder to art therapists that the act of making in art therapy, as well as the act of looking and the experience of seeing, can be an existential affirmation for the client. The above can also serve to emphasize that art therapists need to protect clients from intrusion (particularly from the art therapist) as in the making phase (and beyond) a client may exist beyond the boundary of the physical self in the materials and objects of art making, that at certain points in time the existential reality of the client may be located more in the art object than within the client. The above are some of the research findings which can contribute to art therapy practice.

The findings can also contribute to art therapy research and practice by illustrating the potential value of verbal as well as visual description in contributing to art therapy understanding. Although it is not possible for all art therapy clients to articulate their experience, it is possible for some clients to do so. Art therapists can learn by listening to and hearing, as well as looking at and seeing descriptive expressions of clients, to gain an understanding of a client's experience in art therapy.

### Implications for Counselling Research and Practice

The findings of this research are of particular relevance to those counsellors and counselling researchers who are interested in the the use of imagery and art in counselling

practice. The findings illuminate the experience of a client in art therapy. Those interested in phenomena of imagery-based verbal therapy can grasp the uniqueness of this experience by comparing them with art therapy phenomena described in the findings, giving special attention to similarities and differences.

Counsellors emphasize listening and hearing to obtain accurate understanding.

*Understanding is weblike. Understanding something entails appreciating how it is "placed" in a web of relationships that give it meaning. Perkins, 1988, p. 114.*

The present research study serves to remind counsellors of the potential that art has for engaging our processes of understanding by contributing to the building and revising of relational webs through visual and spatial activity. As art therapists were reminded that listening to clients is a mode of understanding; counsellors are reminded that looking is a mode of understanding as well.

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## Appendix A

OUTLINE OF RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of the study is to gain understanding of a client's experience in art therapy.

The focus of the study is on discovering the meaning of a client's experience of paintings which were created and discussed in an art therapy context. The meaning will be discovered through the participant's verbal descriptions of her experience. The descriptions will be obtained through 5 in-depth interviews which will be held at a place that is acceptable to the participant and researcher. The researcher and participant will meet once prior to the interviews in order to obtain the participant's written informed consent. The participant will be asked to select 10-15 paintings which she feels a) are representative of her experience, b) are significant and meaningful to her, and c) which she is willing to discuss for the purpose of this research study. The format for the research interviews will be as follows: The participant will view and describe her experience of 2-3 paintings per interview. The researcher will act as a facilitator in her exploration. The interviews will be audiotaped. The interviews will be spaced at least one day apart and will be up to 1 hour long. The researcher will transcribe and do an initial analysis of the interviews. Another meeting with the participant may be required in order to confirm the accuracy of the accounts and to clarify or elaborate data if necessary. Descriptive analysis will be utilized, that is the descriptions will adhere as closely as possible to the experience and meaning systems of the participant. Approximate interview dates: April 1-21, 1990. Persons conducting the research: Judith M. Quail.

## Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to being part of this study which explores my experience in art therapy.

I am aware that I will be asked to describe my experience of a select number of paintings which I have created in an art therapy context, in five in-depth audiotaped interviews with the researcher.

I understand that I will choose approximately 10-15 paintings that I would like to explore and describe in these interview sessions.

I confirm that I have been advised that reasonable efforts will be made to keep my involvement in this study confidential by ensuring that neither the written transcripts nor the researcher will reveal any information likely to disclose my personal identity.

I understand that the audiotapes will not be listened to by anyone other than the researcher without my permission.

I am aware that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have been advised and confirm my understanding that my decision to participate in this project or not, or having decided to participate electing to withdraw, is neither a requirement nor expectation of the Research Institution or the therapist.

I confirm that I have been given a description of the full purpose of the study and will be given an opportunity to debrief my personal reactions to the project.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_.

Date \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix C

THE CLIENT'S STORY

The following is a descriptive summary of the client's experience in fourteen sessions of art therapy. The experience cited was expressed by the client and is described rather than interpreted by the researcher. The language used is similar to the client's except that a lot of the rich detail has been removed; only the outline of the story remains. The purpose of the outline is to provide the reader with a sense of the client's evolving process in art therapy over time, as was told to the researcher. The story includes her description of her experience in art therapy - the direction, the making and the looking - and also her experience of being in the world between art therapy sessions (significant experiences of being in the world either precede or follow the sessions).

## ART WORK # 1 THE INCOMPLETE STAR

The Direction. In a visualization exercise, the art therapy group members were asked to imagine an image or symbol for themselves. The client got a clear image of a shining white star in darkness. The Making. In painting this she struggled to translate what she had seen onto paper. It was puzzling to her, she tried to think about how to do it. Other colours crept in. She felt bored and frustrated with her painting. It seemed empty, not authentic. It didn't look like what she had imagined. She looked at her painting. She was not all blue, black and red; things were not all that bad. She consciously decided to add the yellow, the positive part of her. The Looking. The therapist looked at her painting and pointed out that the shape of the star was like a human figure. The client looked at the colours and lines and saw the red on the leg as blood, and the line coming toward the throat as a penis. Nobody was talking about sexual abuse. She saw the abuse in her image and thought to herself "There it is. Let's get on with it and talk about it". The therapist said her image looked like a star but that it was not complete yet, and suggested that the incompleteness represented her potential. The therapist brought that out of the painting. The client also saw this and was excited. She discovered a new way of seeing herself. However, she continued to see her abuse. She thought, "I have never realized my potential because of my abuse." She thought the images of the other group members were bland, that they were stoic, that there were no signs of abuse or interpretations of abuse in them. She felt frustrated by this and thought "Doesn't anybody know why they're here?" At the end of the session, she thought the goals she came up with for what she wanted to

accomplish in art therapy were real and meaningful, whereas others' goals were superficial. She felt different from them.

#### ART WORK # 2 THE BLACK SAFE SPACE (TO NOT EXIST FEELS SAFE)

The Direction. The client was guided to visualize a safe space with everything in it she would need to feel safe. All she could visualize was a white bubble surrounded by darkness. It seemed right not to have anything in there. She felt puzzled by the therapist's suggestions that she would need things in it. The Making. As she was painting, once again she was unable to paint what she saw. The black wasn't black enough; it had black things in it, and the paint dripped and ran, and the white space got smaller. She became aware this was not her original image, that something else was happening, she allowed it to happen and watched it emerge. The Looking. In looking at and discussing her painting she noticed how different it was from the others, how they had detail, realism and objects of comfort in theirs while hers contained nothing like this. The client silently looked at her painting. It reminded her of being in a closet, then a cave, with things hanging down. She could feel this. She was hiding in the closet. She felt being in the cave had something to do with her uncle; she didn't like being in there. The therapist pointed out a shadowy figure with no face in that little white space, a little person that the therapist could hardly see. The client saw herself in that white space. She felt like she was in the black but she could see herself in the white. She tried to match up what she saw with what she was feeling. She couldn't logically explain it, but it felt right "It just is." The World. During the week she felt depressed, like she had to work through stuff to get to the top, where things were lighter and more superficial. She thought about things, constantly trying to deal with the issues. She recognized a similarity between a life experience and a quality in the painting, that a time when she felt herself slipping into unconsciousness was like going into the black. She put words on her experience: "To be safe means not to exist" She continued to think of other experiences when she had felt this way. She realized she did not have any boundaries, anything to protect herself, that the only way she really felt safe was not to exist "period". This explained things to her, why she was constantly being violated, why she was not in her body. This angered her and motivated her to think about what she did want in terms of a safe space. She wanted things to be different for herself.

#### ARTWORK # 3. THE COLOURFUL SAFE SPACE

The Direction. During the visualization exercise, the therapist asked the group members to imagine a safe space with all the things they had thought of during the week to feel safe; a container which only they could open that could hold all ugly memories and bad

feelings; and they were also to create a helper. She had looked around her during the week and had decided what she needed to feel safe was peace, light and harmony. She visualized a box in front of her, then herself and behind her a big bird like a crow or a raven that had its wings out. The Making. She began to paint and got into the shmushing and lusciousness of the paint. She liked the materials. She wanted to use all the colours because together they meant peace, harmony and light. She was aware the green meant her material needs. She knew that these were pretty basic needs and asked herself "Is this all I need for myself?" and decided it was. She painted the box first and then the helper, which was supposed to be a crow but that wasn't anything in her opinion, standing behind the box. As she put the paint on she became aware of what she was doing. The crow was not behind her, it was like she was inside of it. It did not look like what she had imagined. She was aware of the therapist noticing if people in the group had put themselves in their artwork, so she put herself in the painting. The Looking. She noted that another group member had felt that material things and concrete objects, were not important to her and that she had not included them in her painting either. In looking at the artwork the therapist pointed out that the client was in the middle of the bubble but that it looked like there was no way out of the bubble. The art therapist pointed out the little face peeking out "Is it safe out there?" only this time it had some features. She had a kindly feeling toward the figure in the painting; she was beginning to feel like it was okay for this little child to come out. She noted the black helper looked like a nun, this was significant to her because of her Roman Catholic background. In her interactions with the art therapist, the client felt accepted, like she was okay. To the client, in the whole scheme of things, to be accepted is all she's ever wanted. She did not ever feel ashamed or embarrassed with the art therapist. The World. She felt a heaviness after the sessions; her whole body felt heavy. She felt an overwhelming need to get in the bathtub after these sessions, even though she doesn't usually have baths. She would have travelled 100 miles to get into a bathtub. She would stay there for hours, reprocessing things: reading and thinking, but not in a logical way, just letting things come.

#### ART WORK # 4 SAFE SPACE WITH STAIRS

The World. During the week, she was downtown with her friends. She'd had a glass of wine. Her son phoned for her and yelled at her. She experienced an intense physical reaction. She felt tremendous energy and rigidity in her hands. She saw them as claws. She was afraid she was going crazy, that she was losing control. She thought "I'll just let go." and experienced letting go with her whole being. Her hands relaxed. She felt nauseated and vomited. She felt weak. She thought about what it meant, meditated on it

and talked to an Indian Shaman. The words came to her "I can let go because I know I can hang on." The Shaman told her that she had her claws; they were symbols of authority, power and strength. He mentioned the wine might have had something to do with her reaction as well. She thought about it over the week and confronted it head on. She thought of her son and the battle for control and power. Once she realized she could let go there was a significant change in their relationship. She realized there was another way to behave with her son which didn't mean she didn't have authority or control. This was a realization for her. The perceptual change was immediate upon that realization. Instantaneous. It came with the phrase "You can let go because you can hang on"; it was like "Click! Click! Everything shifted!" She had been thinking about her own physical space and safety requirements. She found that the height and the stairway she had up to her private room in her house allowed her some choice about who she would let in and who she wouldn't. The Direction. She was to visualize her safe space and her box and to be there with her helper. She got the same image of a safe space and the box and the crow somewhere behind her. There was a struggle with a thing in the box. A red creature kept coming out. She kept telling it to "Get in there and stay in there." It seemed to have a will of its own; she had no control. The helper, the bird attacked the little creature and pulled it to shreds. The Making. At first the painting came easily to her, she knew what her safe space looked like and what it contained. She felt excited about using the paints again. As she painted, she again felt frustrated, as she could not paint what she had imagined and the painting changed on her while she was painting. As she painted she got into feeling the power in the wings of the crow, making them bigger and bigger, getting into the stroke of it. The bird was going to attack; it had a shred of flesh in its mouth. The last thing she painted was the little face again. She realized the face was hers. The Looking. The therapist pointed out that the face looked a little older than the previous one. She could see that. She was amazed by what the therapist noticed and remembered and she felt kindly toward her. The therapist pointed out the change in configuration of the safe space and that she had noticed that the client painted the stairway last. She said the client seemed to know and be clear on what they meant. The World. The client did not see her experience in the world, or her experience in art therapy as being separate. She experienced that things were connected, that one thing arose out of another. She was becoming conscious of the connections, and felt that when she needed to learn something, it was a whole process for her, encompassing everything in her life.

## ARTWORK # 5A THE FACE

The Direction. There was a movement exercise and then a visualization. The therapist suggested they visualize being in their safe space, with their helper there and then they were to open the box and paint what came out. They were also to paint the emotions about that, and what created the emotions. She immediately felt confused but she did not want to ask for clarification; she thought she would wait and see what happened. The figure came out again but in an image of a face with a grin and eyes that were familiar to her. She recognized her uncle, because of something about the eyes. The Making. She started mixing the paints, shmucking them around to make a yucky brown. She felt like she was mixing a harmful concoction, and had a feeling of power and glee. She liked the paints, the thickness and the mixing. It seemed to her that this face was really rotten, yucky, decayed and horrible. In painting the face, the more she painted the more she didn't want to paint. She stopped and started. She felt a need to put herself in the right hand corner and painted an image of herself walking with her uncle. It was almost like a dream. It was a familiar image; when she wanted to think of who she was she'd get an image of a carefree happy girl skipping. She put yellow around it, added more black and brown. The therapist commented on how horrible the face was. She felt annoyed, intruded upon, and wanted to hide what she was doing. She sat looking at the face, there was a feeling of timelessness and she felt like she was being drawn into the painting. It felt dark all around her and then she got mad. Initially she felt overwhelmed and embarrassed by her emotions, inhibited by the group, but her emotions overwhelmed her until she didn't care. She thought "I am an emotional person and my emotions are me". She decided to go with it. This was like getting past a threshold for her- of not caring that this was going to be a painting, or being concerned about where to place things on the paper, or thinking about how others would respond to it- she just let herself go, and let the feelings and emotions come, and then respond to them on the paper. She felt a need for a particular red, the good red. It was like blood. She put the red right on the face. Stabbing and moving around on it and crying. She felt at some point like a crow pecking at the face, tearing at it, making it bleed. The therapist came by and directed her to take another piece of paper and to paint the emotions. She felt annoyed by the interruption.

## ARTWORK # 5B THE HUMILIATION

The Direction. The therapist asked her what the emotions were and pointed out that not only was she angry but she was crying. The art therapist suggested she paint the anger and reminded her that there were other emotions involved and asked if she could get into them. The Making. She felt puzzled by this. Her experience had been that her anger expressed itself as tears. She carried on with the red and she felt spent and tired. She was

aware of the therapist's presence behind the easel. She didn't like this but carried on anyway. She sat down and tried to get into the feeling. She felt sadness, like a memory. She put black in because she felt it was expected of her. All of a sudden she had an intense feeling. She knew it was green. She mixed up the right green and started slapping it on. She didn't put a name on it until she painted it. It was a feeling of humiliation. It came from nowhere. She remembered a situation with her uncle when she was 14 when she felt humiliated by him. She refelt, relived the emotion. She felt ill and nauseated. It was significant to her because it was so strong. She felt there was no other explanation other than that something had happened. Putting this all into a context; she realized she felt humiliated because she had been sexually abused.

#### ARTWORK 5C THE SITUATION

The Direction. The client thought that the direction was to paint what made you feel the emotion. She felt confused by this, like she had already done that in painting the face. The therapist then said paint whatever comes to you. The Making. The client took a long time trying to figure the instructions out. She felt worn out, she didn't want to put much effort into the painting. She felt the humiliation so strongly that she almost passed out. She painted the face first and knew it was her uncle. She just took the brush and went whoosh! whoosh! and did a few lines. She was aware that this situation was not what was pissing her off or causing her the emotions, but that she had painted herself as a 10 year old and this was where she felt the sexual abuse originated. The Looking. She felt exhausted, empty, like she'd been in a battle and had no more energy. It was a hollow emptiness. She didn't want to get into it. She felt unattached or detached when it was her turn to talk and what she said was pretty intellectual. The therapist pointed out there was no face on the two images of herself. She wanted to go home for a bath. The therapist said that the next session would not be as heavy and that they were just going to have fun before the Christmas break. She felt relieved. The World. She stayed in the bath for hours, she would think about what went on, what she had discovered, or some of the feelings would come up again. She was tired, sometimes for days. She thought about her uncle and the situation. It was profound to relive the actual humiliation. She was amazed she had forgotten that. Reliving the humiliation verified it for her. She had a distinct knowing that all the symptoms were there for a reason, although she didn't have an actual memory of being sexually abused. This experience was like a momentary knowledge when everything came together, like seeing the big picture and then the wholeness of it disappeared again. But she remembered the moment, knew it was real and knew it was the truth.

## ART WORK # 6A THE RAGDOLL #6B WHERE IS MY MOM?

The World. She had an experience with a boyfriend, of him holding her and moving against her. She felt a physical pain in her neck and then had a total experience and realization that she had experienced this before with her father. The Direction. The therapist directed them in a visualization to get in their safe space and to open their box and to paint whatever came out, including the emotions involved. She got an image right away of a dark shadow and her hanging there against it. The word "ragdoll" came to her, a single word. The Making. She started to paint herself but as she painted she became aware that this was her doll. Once she realized this she added a slash to the neck because her doll's head was broken off. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, she painted herself at 7 and her sister at age 4. She felt that the picture painted itself, but somewhere in the process she realized what she was painting. She got a memory of her father making potato pancakes, probably when her brother was born and then she realized her mum was not there. Somewhere here she got really angry at her father. She had only gotten angry with him one other time. She'd had a wonderful experience of her father, with them teaming up against her mother; for her entire life the two of them were in cahoots against her mother. She knew that whatever happened had occurred because her mother wasn't there. She got mad when she realized this and then began to paint the emotions. She hated painting the emotions because she felt confused, she couldn't identify them. She got down all of the colours and wrote "You mother fucker! Where is my mother?" The words put the whole thing together for her. The words to the anger didn't happen until she started painting these emotions. She had never thought of that before, had never connected her mother being away with her abuse, and was surprised by what came out. She had never had any concern for her mother because she hated her. She couldn't bear to think that her father had done that. The Looking. The therapist commented on the blank space in her painting.

## ART WORK # 7 SURRENDERING THE DREAM / ACCEPTING WHAT IS

The Direction. In a movement exercise she was to make a space for herself in the room, to move through space, and use her whole body. She moved all around using her arms to feel out what kind of space she had. It felt like she was creating a dome around her with her hands, like she had big wings on her arms. Then the art therapist directed them to make themselves out of clay. It could be abstract; it was completely up to them. The Making. As she formed the clay figure she remembered the feeling of power in her arms during the movement exercise and it harkened back to one of her paintings when she felt this power from painting the wings of a crow. It felt like they were connected but not the same. The wings, cape or veil kept falling apart and cracking on her as she worked.

She became concerned. She had wanted something beautiful- nice, smooth and well crafted. She kept adding pieces to it and as she worked on it she gave up the idea of having this beautiful smooth piece. She realized what she was doing was patching up this shell. She thought it seemed to be an appropriate thing for her to do. She made a joke to others working at her table about how she was rather tattered and torn and needed to have all these patches. Once she realized that this was the way it was, she felt okay and let the materials happen rather than try and manipulate them. In making the shell she felt she could use it to protect herself, and other people too. At the end she realized it was important to have arms, so she slapped on arms. In the process of hollowing out her figure to prepare it for firing the client really felt terrible. She thought about the recent murder in the community where a man had shoved a steel pipe up a woman's vagina. She felt sick about the whole realization of rape and sexual abuse. The Looking. The therapist pointed out it was like a shell over top of her. To the client it was more like a cloak, like going back to the cloak on the original helper. The art therapist mentioned how maybe she shouldn't be so concerned with protecting others, but rather protect herself. The client didn't know if this was such a good attitude. She thought she was being good hearted in wanting to protect other people. The therapist spoke about the little blank face with no features on her figure. To the client this indicated this was probably going to be an objective here, to get a face sooner or later. As she looked, she noticed a gash on the ceramic piece. It seemed very appropriate and it seemed like a bigger deal than not having a face. The therapist didn't comment on it and she didn't talk about it. The client was always searching for deeper meaning, looking for concrete answers. She was always wishing, hoping for the complete perfect memory that would tell her that she had been sexually abused, because then she would know. She had the distinct feeling of knowing but didn't have a memory. Later, she left her piece unglazed. It seemed like it was in a raw unfinished state and that it was more authentic like that- simply unfinished.

#### ART WORK #8 THE BEWILDERED CHILD / GRANDMOTHER'S FACE

The Direction. First there was a movement exercise and then the art therapist asked them to visualize themselves at some point in their childhood, then go to the child and talk to it, put their arms around it, whatever they felt they had to do and whatever the child seemed to want to let them do- then to paint that experience. She got an image of herself around 4 years old at a branding party in Manitoba. She was standing there with all this stuff going on around her. It seemed like everything was brown; the little girl was dressed in brown and felt brown. She went to try and put her arms around the little girl but the child was unresponsive. The Making. She started painting the little girl and then painted

her older self. As she was painting, she remembered the feeling of being there and being bewildered by all this confusion. There were cattle crying and a lot of people around. She felt unhappy, bewildered and kind of lost. She was procrastinating putting on a face, trying to figure it out- should she use a pencil, a little brush? The therapist commented that she hadn't gotten to the face yet. She was always encouraging them to put themselves in the painting. She would point out in group when somebody did "Well, there you finally are." She noticed she was putting herself in her paintings, it was not a conscious effort but it was starting to happen. She finally focused right on the face with a small brush, trying to get the nose, mouth, everything right. She noticed it was an older woman, an ancestor, and then thought "God this is my Grandmother. What's she doing here?". She was horrified, disbelieving; she hated her grandmother. The face was so ugly. In looking at the face, it was like it was coming at her and going way back and all of it coming on top of her. The Looking. She hung back in the group, she didn't want to be first. The therapist pointed out that the child did not have a face, and that it was brown once again. The World. That had ended with a real shock. She felt depressed and had a long bath. She came to realize how much her grandmother and mother were the same. She remembered things she had forgotten. Her grandmother shook her fist at her, and her mother did too and swore in Slavik; she had a simultaneous image of them both doing that. It was a powerful old country curse and she felt cursed by them, although her mother may not have understood what she was doing. In thinking about the whole thing, she realized her grandmother had done to her mother what her mother had done to her, all down the line. During her day to day life in the week, she would observe all the time. She was always questioning how this fit together and what did it mean about who she was. Everything that happened seemed to have something to do with the process she was going through in art therapy.

#### ART WORK # 9 THE CAT / DRAGON (I AM STRONG / I AM GONE)

The Direction. The direction was a movement session where they were to imagine some kind of animal, where in the body they could feel it, and then move around the room and be this animal. After that they were to imagine and be another creature; then try and integrate the two of them; draw it; and then write what it felt like and capsulize the picture in one line. Her legs were like a cat lion and as she moved she could feel the strength and power in her legs. The upper part of her body seemed to be a dragon, arms, shoulders and wings. She really got into it. She experienced energy connections between her upper and lower body as she moved. The Making. She felt frustrated as she drew. She had imagined the legs so big and powerful but she started to run out of room on the page. Then

she started writing and it became really automatic; she was writing like crazy not thinking anymore, it was just coming "I am a dragon I am scary I can bite your head off or throw fire in your face I have wings that can flutter like veils behind my back or can push me off the rocks into the sky I can get away I can fly I can run I can jump I can run away I can scratch you I can roar at you with my hot breath I can fly I can leave I can fly but I am strong.....I am gone." The Looking. When she read what she'd written in group she cried; it triggered her on being really young and vulnerable. When it was pointed out there was a real split there, it funnelled her back to being there at a time where she would want to do this. She had no memories but a feeling that she had felt this. The last sentence "I can fly but I am strong....I am gone" reminded her of being somewhere where she couldn't get away, so she had checked out mentally "There's my body.....I'm gone." It was another one of those times that she knew she had been there, and it was disturbing. It was like having this intellectual information, and then getting some emotions as a result of it, and then getting the knowledge she had felt this before, and it was scary and profound. It was different from having a memory; in a way she felt more certain but she thought it would be good to have a memory too, if she could remember the whole thing. She thought her legs didn't look very powerful. The group said they thought they did look powerful and by the time the session was over her legs seemed quite powerful. The art therapist pointed out the recurring theme of the wings. The World. The next day she had an awareness, a feeling of confidence that she had connected the two halves of her body. She knew they were connected and she didn't have to think about it. It made her feel differently, walk differently. She went through a process of thinking a lot about it and then it became part of her everyday living.

#### ARTWORK # 10 THE GIMPED LEGS, THE UGLY FACE (SEEING THE STRENGTH, SEEING THE BEAUTY--GOING WAY BACK)

The World. She had been thinking about feeling disconnected between her body and her legs, and realizing she had been making connections in the movement exercises. She'd been reading about this kind of disconnection and understood that it was one of the symptoms of sexual abuse. She worked on this in massage therapy. The Direction. They were asked to make an image of themselves out of clay- to take a lump of clay and do something with it. The Making. She started to make a model of a woman, trying to make it realistic. She formed the arms and the torso nicely, but as she worked on the legs she was not able to model them or form them. Her clay figure wouldn't stand up on it's legs and this said to her that she had a problem with her legs. As she worked she felt alarmed, frustrated and concerned, but she recognized that there was something significant here.

She went on to make the face and worked on it a lot and then realized she had made an unrefined cavewoman face, an ugly old woman. She started to cry, here's this person with this ugly face and gimped legs and this was supposed to be her. The Looking. The art therapist was trying to build her back up, and said she thought the legs were fine and that there was this beautiful pose and pathos to this piece of sculpture. As she looked she could see that it really was beautiful. The art therapist also pointed out details about the piece, like it was naked but not detailedly so, but she also pointed out the dignity of the stance and the strength and vulnerability and as she looked she could really see that was there, there was a magnificent feeling to the sculpture. By the end of the session she loved that piece. It said something to her that even though she had feelings of weakness and of not being able to hold herself up, the strength was coming through. She looked at the face after everyone left, and really got into it, it felt like it was going way, way back. She thought "God this really is a beautiful face" and it seemed to harken back to some long, long line of female. The World. She kept trying to make a female figures out of clay, trying to get a face she wanted, she knew she had all these faceless things and it seemed important to try and get a face.

#### ART WORK # 11 BEING A CRITIC / BEING CRITICIZED

The Direction. The art therapist asked them to think of a role that was a part of who they were; and then paint how it felt to be that; and then write "Being a \_\_\_\_\_ makes me \_\_\_\_\_." She thought of some roles: a clown, a rebel but when she thought of being a critic the art therapist suggested she paint that as it was different from what she'd been talking about before. The Making. She sat in front of the paper. An image come to her. When she'd get angry or uptight, her head would go forward and her neck would hurt. Her mother also looked like this. The night before, she'd gotten angry with her son and was criticizing him. (On his 13th birthday, when she was doing this to him she had realized "This is my mother and I'm doing it to my son. Help!" It had been one of the things that motivated her to get help.) As she painted she tried to get a flesh tone but it came out hot pink. She just painted, she never thought about anything and was really getting into the feeling of being critical and mad and making her wild and crazy with her hair "It's like me and my mother and my grandmother, all of them". At some point she could feel a feeling of nothingness, she felt helpless, just like being totally worthless- shit. Then she got an image of a little child and painted it, at the last minute. She could identify with that child. She made herself be an automatic writer, and as she wrote she felt like she was getting into a progression: "Being a critic makes me feel right ('Makes sense'), makes me feel not so afraid ('Wow-never realized that'), makes me feel stronger, makes me feel in

control, makes me feel better than, makes me feel ruthless, vicious and scary ('Really ugly stuff, surprising'), makes me feel big ('I always had a problem with not being big'), lets me get revenge." The Looking. When she put it up on the wall, she was surprised to see that the top and bottom half of her body were still disconnected. The art therapist said "God! Look at those strong legs for someone who feels they don't have very strong legs." She thought "You're not kidding! Those are pretty walloping legs!" She could see that, and feel it and it felt good. She wondered about the orange circle in her chest with the black in it, she didn't know why she painted it. She thought about how she often made reference to stuff in her chest in the sessions. The art therapist described how in her experience orange occurred when something was ambiguous, not being this or not being that, and asked her what she thought it might mean. The client was lost on it. The art therapist pointed out the face on the child looked young and said it seemed somehow like the child could be put into the space in the chest. The client could see how the images fit together, she hadn't seen that. She thought somehow the two images had been separated and she could see the visual process of them fitting together. She knew that this was the whole reparenting process she had read about, and seeing this hit the nail on the head. It was a really clear message that that's exactly what she had to do. At some point she got in touch with the absolute devastation of the little creature and knew that was the same devastation as when her mother did it to her. Because of the empathy she had for the little creature, she realized how her son felt when she did that to him. She got that real clear. There was a major perception shift "It all shifts and you were one way before and you're not that way afterwards, it's all different. It's like you can let go because you can hang on. It shifted and the components came together and it's like being able to see it all at once at the same time and it just all fits, it's a total picture which is totally different." She realized she didn't have to be this critic, that she was doing this because she was so afraid and she wanted control. She realized there was a different way to do this. The World. Doing the painting and seeing this changed the tide between her son and her, now instead of criticizing him she can go back and forth with him, accept him and just tease him saying "It's okay to be angry. It's okay to be a brat." What he does doesn't affect her as much.

#### ARTWORK # 12 FEELING BLOCKED ( FEELING UPLIFTED)

The World. She had a bad week: was feeling creatively blocked, couldn't get her work done, and she was constipated. She was at a standstill, feeling like everything was coming to an end. The client was afraid something was psychologically very wrong and that she was going crazy. A fleeting thought that maybe feeling blocked had something to do with the group coming to an end, passed through her mind. The Directions. She didn't

remember the directions. She didn't feel like doing anything. She felt shitty and told the art therapist that she didn't want to paint anything. The therapist told her to just go and paint something. The Making. The client half-heartedly dabble-dabbled all over the page and it was done in a few minutes. The Looking. She talked to the art therapist about how she was feeling. The therapist suggested she she was pushing herself too hard and needed to take time to relax. She said "Look, what you painted. You painted this happy, bubbly painting with all this stuff here; yet you're coming in, telling me how shitty you feel, and that you're so creatively blocked." The painting was such a contrast to how she felt. The client thought that what she saw was obviously what was really going on inside. The therapist pointing it out to her and saying "Look you feel one way but obviously what's really going on is okay. You're really okay, even if you feel shitty." That was good! She was glad someone was telling her she was okay, and that she wasn't falling apart, and that it was just a result of the environment and what was going on around her. She came away feeling great, uplifted. The group agreed they couldn't see any of what she was feeling in the painting. She felt relieved to have so simple an answer, knowing she wasn't going crazy. The final conclusion was she needed to go home, have a sleep and take a break.

#### ART WORK # 13 THIS WOMAN IS STRONG / I AM STRONG (SEEING A DUALITY / GETTING IT ALL INTO PLACE)

Week 1 - The Direction. They were to decide what pose they wanted to be in, to lay down and get someone to sketch them out; then they were to paint themselves. The Making. She put the paper, with the sketch of herself on it, up on the wall to paint it. She had an idea in her mind, to paint herself with a frivolous miniskirt and top with polka dots and bright colours. She was surprised when the art therapist pointed out she had started to paint right on her legs. She thought that was interesting and funny, as it was legs and knees she'd been working on for a large part of the art therapy process. As she painted she realized her idea wasn't happening the way she wanted. In standing back and looking, she saw "Holy Shit! Whose legs are those?" She was pleased and surprised. The therapist joked with her about the size of her own skinny little legs and those big legs on the painting. As she painted, it just kept getting bigger and stronger, with a big bosom and these arms and shoulders. She was painting up close, she didn't step back to look much. By the time the session was over she had done everything except the flesh, hands, feet, face, and head. She stood back and looked and said "God! Look at this woman, she's a tough big woman, right?" She was amazed at some of the things she'd done; this muscle woman coming into form. At some point she realized that she didn't have the miniskirt so

that this was something else taking shape. She thought she would like to put a shield and some sort of weaponry in her hand. It seemed like she needed this for protection.

Week 2- The Making. She painted the feet, hands and flesh. She left the face until last as she had been so horrified with the faces she had come up with before. She looked at the painting and thought "God this woman is strong! She doesn't need any shields or anything." At some point or another she had a feeling that this woman did not need a shield or weapons; that it was all right there in her body, in her stance. She didn't need the external stuff. That was a real clear impression she got and it made her realize that that was her. As she was painting the face she was jabbering away to the therapist and crying about some problem with her son. She was just painting and not thinking about what she was doing. She felt like the therapist was trying to help her with her anxiety about painting the face by distracting her (that the therapist knew it was important for her to get the right kind of face on herself, as she had never managed to do this before). She got going with a flesh colour and she had a mirror to look at herself while she painted her face. She painted her hair with a yellow bow and did her hands last. The Looking. The art therapist pointed out that the hands on the painting were incomplete compared to the rest of her. The therapist covered part of the painting so you could only see half of the face. The consensus with the group, and the impression she got, was that one side looked young and innocent and the other side was a mature woman with a really different contrasting feel to it, older and wiser. She thought this was interesting, that the young side went with the bow and meant her wanting to be creative, unique, fun and not a boring person. It sort of put the whole thing of rebelliousness into perspective. She wanted to keep that part of her, spontaneous and childlike, it wasn't just rebelliousness. Yet there was a very wise knowledgeable person there as well; a blending and integrating of these two parts of her. That was really good, very satisfying and it felt like a culmination of everything, a final creation, a feeling like she had sort of got it all into place. It showed a duality that she didn't even know was there. The therapist and the group were saying that the wacky side of her was a good thing, as well. Although she expressed doubts she heard what they were saying and put things into order. It was good for her to hear that the way she was was okay for others. She noticed the theme of rebelliousness seemed to be going through the whole thing. "Rebelliousness is not a good word for it, it's not just being rebellious, it's being creative, interesting, curious. There's more to it." This session seemed important for everyone. Everyone who hadn't cried cried. It made her cry, them crying. She thought "You idiots, you were supposed to do this all along." She developed some feeling of bonding and felt close to everyone. The World. It was important that she present herself to people in a certain way. It seemed that part of her strength or part of feeling good about herself had to

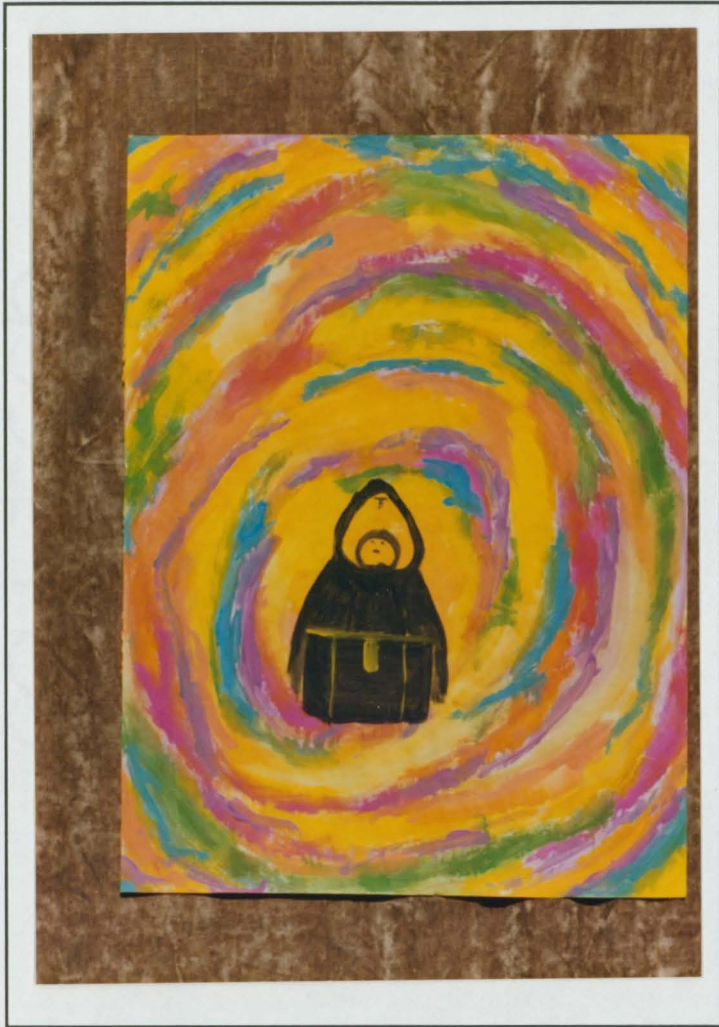
do with how she presented herself in public outside her home. If she didn't prepare herself, she likely would attract something undesirable. She thought about it and it seemed like a lot of protection wasn't to do with external things but more how she felt about herself and let that self present itself. She started to wear her hair back. When it was hanging in her face it made her feel not in control, it made her feel like she was hiding something and was weak. Wearing her hair back made her feel stronger; letting people see her face, presenting her face to them. The preparation made her feel good, not so much people's comments. She felt protected even if she was feeling lousy, that people couldn't look into her vulnerabilities and that she could safely get back home. She didn't want people to take away her strength. She did not want people to get an impression of her that she was disempowered or downtrodden and to react to her in that way.



ARTWORK #1. THE INCOMPLETE STAR.



ARTWORK #2. THE BLACK SAFE SPACE (TO NOT EXIST FEELS SAFE).



ARTWORK #3. THE COLORFUL SAFE SPACE



ARTWORK #4. SAFE SPACE WITH STAIRS



ARTWORK #5A. THE FACE.



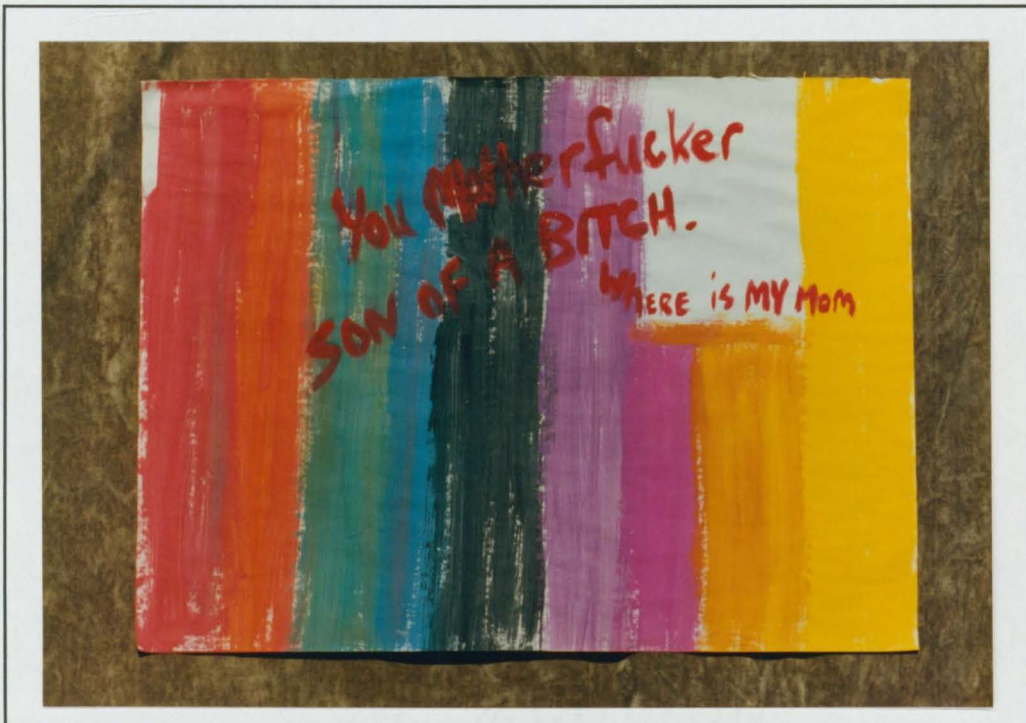
ARTWORK #5B. THE HUMILIATION.



ARTWORK #5C. THE SITUATION.



ARTWORK #6A. THE RAGDOLL



ARTWORK #6B. WHERE IS MY MOM?



ARTWORK #7. SURRENDERING THE DREAM/ACCEPTING WHAT IS.

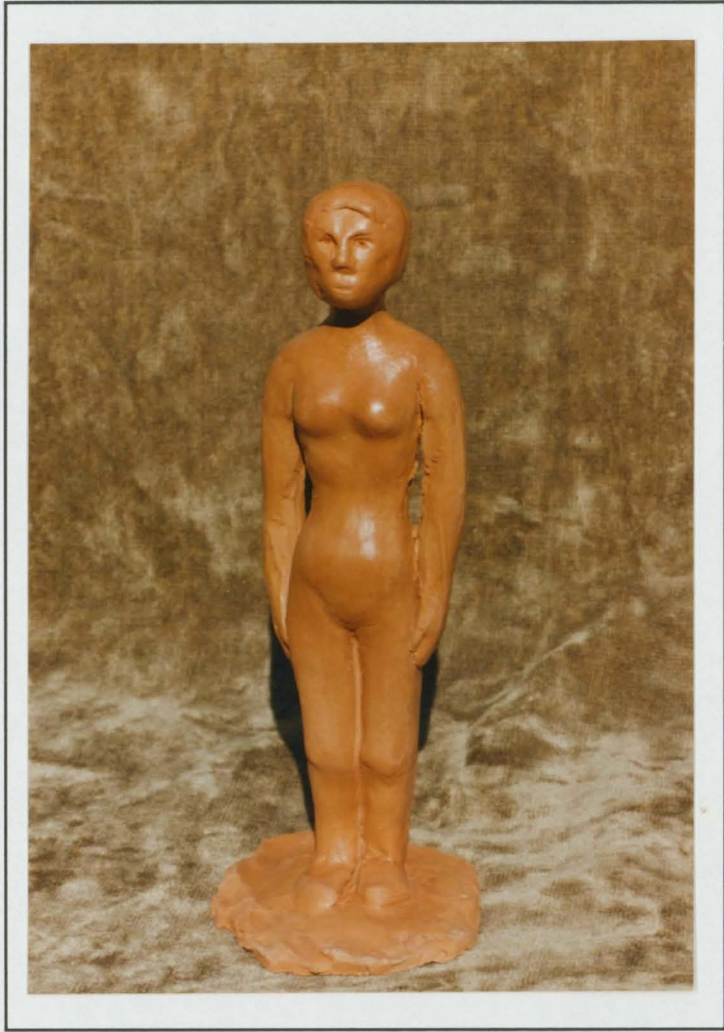


ARTWORK #8. THE BEWILDERED  
CHILD/GRANDMOTHER'S FACE.

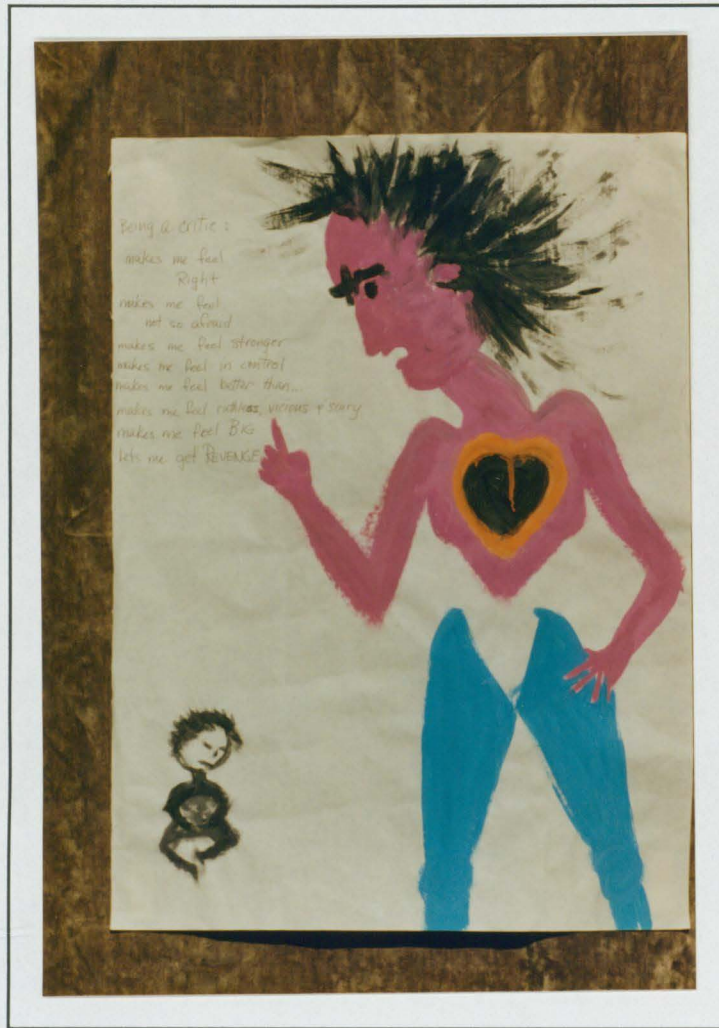


ARTWORK #9. THE CAT/DRAGON (I AM  
STRONG/I AM GONE).

NOTES ON COTTON



ARTWORK #10. THE GIMPED LEGS, THE UGLY FACE (SEEING THE STRENGTH, SEEING THE BEAUTY - GOING WAY BACK).



ARTWORK #11. BEING A CRITIC / BEING CRITICIZED.



ARTWORK #12. FEELING BLOCKED  
(FEELING UPLIFTED).



ARTWORK #13. THIS WOMAN IS  
STRONG/I AM STRONG



ARTWORK #13. OLDER, WISER/YOUNG, INNOCENT (BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER)

Figure 1. The therapeutic context of an art therapy group consists of the interrelationships between the therapist, the clients, and the client's paintings, which includes their experience of using art materials and processes, in regular sessions over time in a designated setting.

Figure 2. The research context consists of semi-structured sessions where the researcher and subject view and discuss a selection of paintings which the subject created in an art therapy group over time. The subject may reconstruct her experience of these paintings in the therapeutic context including her experience of the art materials and processes involved in creating the paintings, and her experience of the group members and therapist.

Figure 3. A client's experience of the art therapist in art therapy includes the acceptance, respect and caring that the art therapist conveys both directly to her and through the art object; the fond feelings she has toward the art therapist for the perceptiveness and the unconditional acceptance she repeatedly shows her; the looking and seeing of the art therapist which is verbally and visually conveyed to the client through the art object; and the client's new point of view and standpoint within herself which implicitly includes her experience of the art therapist and which facilitates her own perceptual interpretative process in experiencing her art object.

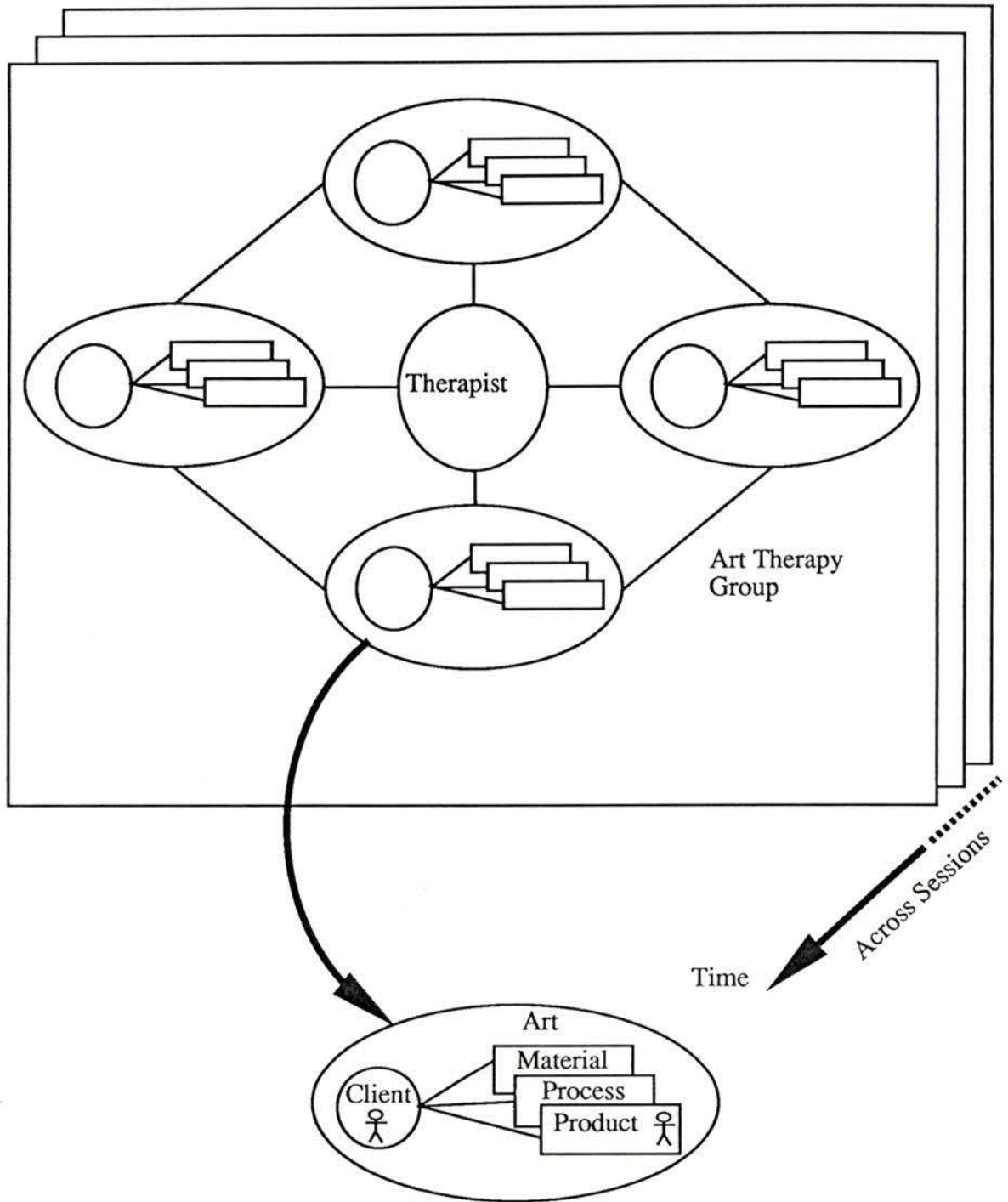


FIGURE 1.

## Research Context

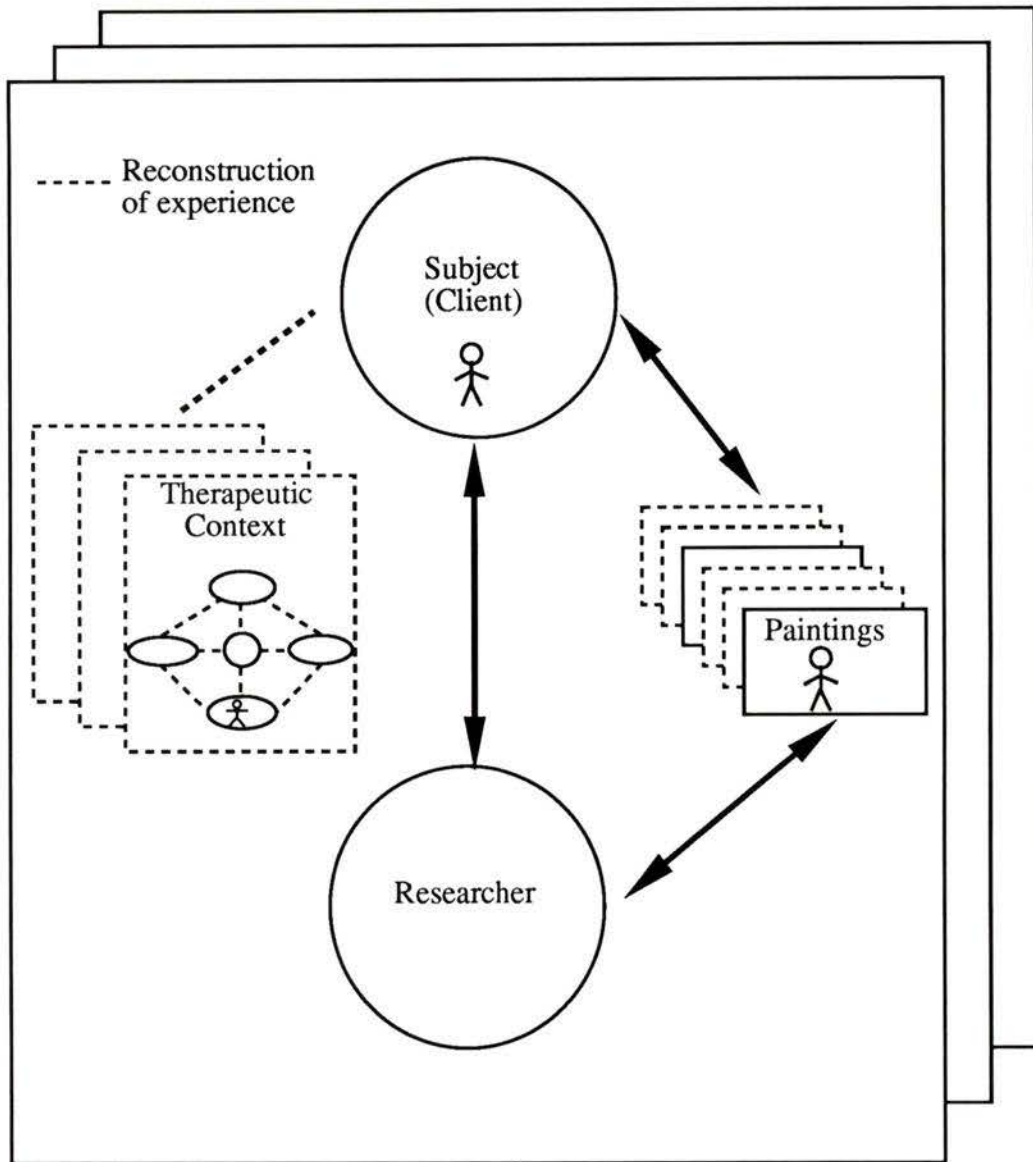
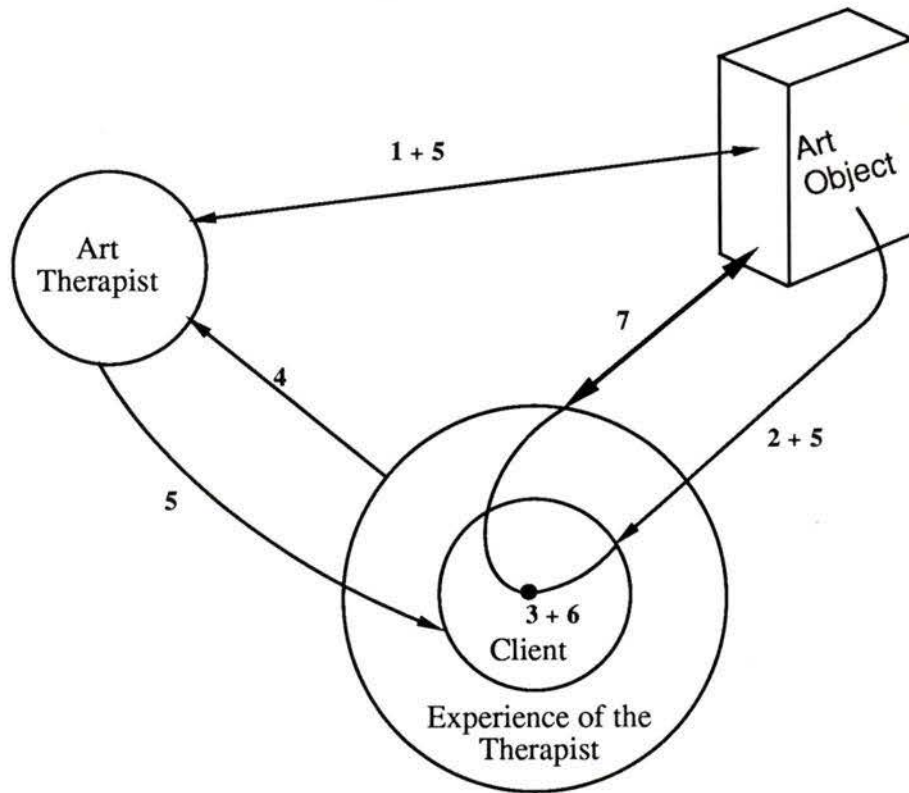


FIGURE 2.

## A Client's Experience of the Art Therapist



1. The art therapist sees and experiences the art object.
2. She verbally conveys what she sees to the client.
3. I SEE: The client discovers a new point of view.
4. The client's feelings towards the therapist.
5. Acceptance, respect and care.
6. I AM: The client feels accepted, has a standpoint from which to interrelate.
7. Her experience of the art object is co-constituted, implicit in this is her experience of the art therapist.

FIGURE 3.

## VITA

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