A Gathering of Small Knowings

An Artistic Inquiry
into the Experience of Using Intuition
in Creative Arts Therapy

Exhibition and Exegesis

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Statement of Authorship

This is to certify that this exegesis comprises my original work except where indicated, and that due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

Jennifer Berlingieri
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I am very grateful to Jan Allen for her endless support, inspiration and encouragement throughout this research.

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We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.

~ T.S. Eliot
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Introduction

“Often it is necessary to clarify a vague content by giving it visible form... Often the hands know how to solve a riddle with which the intellect has wrestled in vain.” (Jung as quoted in Boik and Goodwin 2000, p.3)

The landscape of this inquiry is dotted with old wooden boxes, numerous shades of red oil paint, countless pages of long hand journal writing, and moments of both flowing inspiration and stuckness.

Developing the Topic

This research began with my desire to choose a topic and methods that felt useful to me both professionally and personally, and which would hold my interest for its duration. My choice of topic was quite obvious to me as I observed which elements of my therapeutic practice held my attention most. I have had an interest and an awareness of intuition, (my own and other peoples’), for many years. This interest has developed further through my work as a creative arts therapist, as I engage with people and observe myself wanting to be authentic, spontaneous and intuitive in my practice. By choosing this topic, I was hoping to gain some insight into some aspects of intuition I was curious about, like,

What exactly do I mean by intuition?

How does my intuition and felt sense help inform my therapeutic practice?

Are there certain states of being that assist or detract from my intuitive knowing?

Can I deepen my own understanding and trust of my intuition when working with people?

How can intuitive knowing be integrated into my practice as a valid mode of knowing for both myself and my clients?

Can my interest in intuition assist me in companioning others to increase their awareness of and trust for their own intuitive knowing?

Answers to these questions emerged organically over the course of this inquiry, and are discussed further in the subsequent sections of this paper.

Developing the Research Methods

“The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.” (Jung, as quoted in Cameron 1995, p.19)

When considering how I would proceed with this research, I sensed that I should follow my own intuitive approach in order to stay consistent with my topic, and
include my favourite creative elements so that I would be able to stay connected to the process, and so that the inquiry and its results were authentic. From past experience, I knew that if the work began to feel too structured or too predictable I would lose inspiration. Therefore, my initial brainstorming of how to keep this inquiry useful, engaging and authentic resulted in my decisions to: keep a journal throughout the process (something I do naturally) and make collage and mixed media art pieces in wooden boxes (as I’ve done for a number of years). Somehow, I hoped, something valuable and meaningful about my topic would emerge if I followed a creative process of inquiry that included the forms of expression to which I am naturally drawn.

It seemed quite appropriate that my instinct led me to making art in old wooden boxes for this research. The first piece of art that I made of this kind was in 1999, during a difficult time in my life. The long process I went through of collaging meaningful images and text, gathering interesting objects (natural objects, broken toys, old bottles, fabric scraps) and assembling them all in an old box proved to be very therapeutic for me at the time, and this piece remains very meaningful to me now. Through this process I gained a reverence for my own experience; the piece seemed to be a memorial, a shrine, to what I was going through. A deeper understanding of my situation grew, both from the art making and from engaging with the piece over time after its completion. It was this period of my life, and the insights I received from this creative process, that initially led me to the field of creative arts therapy.

All Things Sacred and Shellacked, 1999
An Exhibition

As this research project evolved, it became clear that the art making was consistently a major focal point for my meaning making, and the area where my interest most often led me. About six months into the inquiry, following a suggestion from my supervisor, I decided I would have an art exhibition of all the completed works as a major component of the inquiry. Having an exhibition felt most appropriate to me, not only because it remains faithful to the creative nature of my inquiry, but also because it allows for the opportunity for others to experience this research in both a visual and written form.
Methodology

Introduction

The methodology for this research has had many direct and indirect influences. My research mostly had two foundations, my natural intuitive and creative method of inquiry, and the MIECAT form of inquiry.

About halfway through my research, I discovered that my own intuitive/creative method of inquiry was very similar to art-based research as defined by Elliot Eisner (1991) and Shaun McNiff (1998), and a form of artistic inquiry described by Lenore Wadsworth Hervey (2000). Occasionally consulting Hervey’s writing while carrying out the remainder of my research helped me to understand and clarify my own methodology, which was organically emerging through my intuitive research process.

The MIECAT form of inquiry also strongly influenced my research. MIECAT sits within phenomenological, heuristic and constructivist paradigms, so therefore my research has an underlying thread of these as well.

What follows is a discussion of my own approach to my research, as well as the research paradigms that have had an impact on my work in some way.

My Intuitive/Creative Methodology

‘Yes. I am an artist.’ And I can say, ‘Yes. I am a researcher.’ But I have also discovered that my researcher self and artist self are not separate. I am simultaneously artist-as-researcher and researcher-as-artist, whatever specific task I am engaged in. (Finley as quoted in Hervey 2000, p.39)

In light of my chosen focus on intuitive knowing, it felt vital to me to carry out this research using an intuitive approach and processes that were consistent with the nature of my topic and my values in inquiry, creativity and therapy. Therefore, my intention was to trust my intuitive, creative process as it was unfolding through my research, and follow the natural direction of where it led next. This resulted in a period of fifteen months of artistic inquiry, mostly through visual art making and journal writing, that was usually spontaneous, unplanned and often heading in unknown directions.

From my journal, 11 June 2005:

Gentle appreciation for the natural movement of the process. Honesty and respect for it. The creative process, the therapeutic process, so much the same, embedded in each other.
No expectation or desperation for a grand result, just trust in the flow and intention. The rest will come.

The process speaks for itself.

Although not usually articulated at the time, in hindsight I can see that what guided me most during my inquiry were the following parameters:

- Always striving to bracket in the relevance to the topic as much as possible. To be aware of new directions and emerging content but to attempt to stay with the topic.

- “Make the art first. Talk later. All the essences that need to be expressed will come out in the making.” This instruction to myself arose during my inquiry and helped me to stay with the emergent process. It reminded me to stay open to the creative direction of the art making, even if I didn’t know where it was going, and not be concerned about meanings, analysis or reflection until later. This statement also reminded me of my intended focus on the art making process, more so than the art product itself.

- Try to stay spontaneous and fresh with the art making. Don’t force it. From past experience, I knew very well that if I approached the creative work with a feeling of obligation, pressure, or desire for a brilliant outcome any inspiration would surely dry up.

- Don’t try to guide the direction of the creative process. If allowed, I knew the creative process would guide my direction.

In my ongoing evaluation of my artwork for this research, I often would consider the following questions:

Does it say what I want it to say with potency?
Does it hit the place in me that says, “Yes, that’s it.”
Can it bear scrutiny? Can I look at it over and over again and still feel a connection?

Artistic Inquiry

McNiff declared himself a “practitioner researcher” and essentially discouraged any kind of research in the creative arts therapies that was not consistent with the values and methods of its practice. (McNiff as quoted in Hervey 2000, p. 25)
Hervey (2000), through her book *Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy*, clearly defines a form of research based on art making as a method of inquiry, and artistic knowing as a valid mode of knowing. Hervey notes that her ideas of artistic inquiry have a foundation in the work of Eisner (1991) and McNiff (1998) with what they call art-based research, and also influences from heuristics (Moustakas, 1990) and constructivism (Reason, 1988). She states, “The purpose of artistic inquiry is not to create the findings, but to create a form that is able to reveal and express the essential qualities of the findings.” (Hervey, p.71)

Hervey describes in depth the elements of an artistic approach to research and supports the validity of this method. She defines artistic inquiry as having the following criteria:

1. Artistic inquiry uses artistic methods of gathering, analyzing, and/or presenting data.
2. Artistic inquiry engages in and acknowledges a creative process.
3. Artistic inquiry is motivated and determined by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s). (Hervey 2000, p.7)

Another key point that Hervey makes, which is consistent with my experience of my research, is “…that the emergence of truth/meaning/understanding lies somewhere within the dialogue between the data and the artist/researcher. The art-making then ‘unconceals’ (Heidegger, 1971/1976) the meaning of the data as much to the artist as to any eventual audience.” (Hervey 2000, p. 50)

She notes the cognitive researchers and theorists Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), who discuss the qualities of the aesthetic experience in their book *The Art of Seeing*. They describe the aesthetic experience that is offered by the arts as:

…cognitive, perceptual, emotional and spiritual, and could therefore be understood as one impacting most dimensions of human consciousness… Artistic inquiry, if it offers its audiences an aesthetic experience, can be understood as communicating information holistically rather than only analytically or empirically. (Hervey 2000, p. 15)

**MIECAT Form of Inquiry**

The MIECAT form of inquiry, a method of meaning making that has arisen mostly out of the phenomenological, heuristic and constructivist research paradigms, has heavily influenced my inquiry. MIECAT (Melbourne Institute for Experiential and Creative Arts Therapies) values the following:

- Experiential knowing: an emphasis on lived experience and the knowledge that can be gained by inquiring into the “here and now”, *engaging in* the experience as contrasted to *talking about* the experience.
• Multi-modal knowing: there are different modes of knowing; intellectual, emotional, embodied, which can be accessed through different modes of expression; drawing, painting, movement, writing, music, voice, drama.

• A process focus: the process of inquiry is the main focus, not the product; the content is embedded in the process.

• A non interpretive stance: individuals are deemed to be the expert in understanding their own experience.

• Collaboration: the collaboration of people with each other or with their expressive representations to arrive at meaning, non hierarchical;

• Companioning: the relationship of people involved in the inquiry is of an equal, non diagnostic, non pathologising nature.

• Intersubjectivity: a co creation of knowing, arriving at approximations to meaning together.

The MIECAT form of inquiry involves a series of steps, which can be followed loosely, with steps being omitted or repeated in cycles of inquiry as is appropriate. In my research I used many of these steps spontaneously, as they seemed most useful at the time. In the remainder of this paper some of the following terms will be used:

• Experiencing: being present to lived experience.
• Description: awareness of experience and perhaps a description as it is happening.
• Representation: in the form of drawing, painting, clay, sand tray, writing, movement, music, vocalisation, drama.
• Reduction: focusing down to keywords, phrases or images.
• Amplification: delving into something deeper, perhaps by exaggerating it, repeating it, making it bigger.
• Clustering: arranging keywords/phrases/images into groups that have something in common.
• Intrasubjective response: one’s own internal response to experience, inner dialogue.
• Indwelling: reflecting on something for a period of time.
• Bracketing: leaving out or including in certain material.
• Essence statements: statements which hold significant meaning to the inquiry.
• Themes: arriving at recurrent themes and patterns observed in the research.
• Intersubjective responding: multi modal responses from companions in the inquiry, expressions of resonance.
• Creative Synthesis: a culmination of what has been learned developed into a creative form of expression.
• Choices for change: What to do with what we know? Understanding can lead to changes in behaviour.
Positivist Paradigm

The Positivist paradigm is quantitative research that focuses on a hypothesis and the systematic, “scientific” proving of the hypothesis. The Positivists believe in the possibility of an absolute truth, and aim to record observable “facts”. As this paradigm is not concerned with exploration of human experience or subjectivity, it is not appropriate to the nature of my topic or therapeutic work, and is therefore not used in my inquiry. I have mentioned positivist research only as a background for the following paradigms that have developed subsequent to positivist inquiry.

Post positivist Paradigms

Post positivism embraces qualitative data collection and has been evolving since the early 1900’s. This paradigm acknowledges that there is an absolute truth, but due to subjectivity and differing viewpoints this truth may be difficult to find. Under the post positivist “umbrella” falls phenomenological and heuristic research.

Phenomenological research evolved from the work of philosophers such as Husserl (1931), and Heidegger (1977), and includes the existential phenomenologist Spinelli (1989) and the psychological researcher Giorgi (1985), among others. This paradigm believes that the research and the researcher are naturally intertwined and it is not possible to separate them. It asserts that truth is relative to people’s perceptions and state of consciousness, but through disciplined focus on the subject of the research the “truth”, or essence of a phenomena, may emerge.

The heuristic methodology, with its foundations in phenomenology, is “a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self.” (Douglas and Moustakas 1985, p.39) It is concerned with a connected relationship with the subject of the research, and also allows for intuition and tacit knowing. While phenomenology culminates in the discovery of the essence of an experience, heuristics includes the essence of the person in experience. (Lett, 2003)

Constructivist and Participatory Paradigms

The participatory paradigm, as defined by Heron & Reason (1997), and the constructivist paradigm assert that there is no fixed truth, and that it is the collaborative dialogue between people that assists in arriving at approximations to meaning. Understanding can be co-created between people through experiential knowing and intersubjectivity, which embraces the sharing of resonance and insight.
The Inquiry

Map of Steps

- Initial journal writing about intuition in therapy
- Led to start of art making in boxes: first piece “Moments” created
- Began collecting random precious objects, bits of text, images, to put into future boxes
- Painting “Big Big Heart” created
- Box piece “Jewel in the Centre” made
- “The Cat” box created
- Journal writing continued, phrase “Inspiration comes by Chance” reflected upon in writing, keywords collected
- “The Divining Rod” box created
- Decided to have exhibition of artwork as part of research project
- Eight months into research, read over all journal entries so far and selected most significant keywords and phrases
- Arranged some of these keywords and phrases into five poetic representations
- Created piece of box art including these poetic representations
- “A Subtle, Calm Knowing” box made
- Created poetic representation, “I am moved”, from extracts of journals
- Box “Make the art first. Talk later” created
- Wrote poem “Work with What is Naturally Occurring”
- Continued journal writing, choosing keywords and phrases to be collaged into boxes
- Made box “It Has its Own Time”
- Started box “Creativity as Sanctuary”
- Created box “The Queen Inside”
- Poem “Work with What is Naturally Occurring” made into box of same name
- “The Unplanned Emergence” box made
- Completed box “Creativity as Sanctuary”
- Fourteen months into research, gathered together all art works and indwelled for period of several weeks
- Reflected on individual art pieces, generated a list of keywords or a poetic representation for each one
- Gathered together all keywords from above step and formed into clusters spread out on studio floor
- Gave each cluster a title (reduction)
- Gave each cluster a few images that represented it using postcards
- Indwelled clusters, titles and postcards
- Fifteen months into research, used all emergent data to write essence statements and themes
- Keywords and phrases from clusters used to write final poem “Intuition in Creative Arts Therapy”. 
Discussion of Data Generation

Introduction

This inquiry consistently had two major strands running through it for its duration of fifteen months: journal writing and art making.

The journal writing was a result of my natural habit of keeping a personal journal, which I have done regularly since I was young. Whenever I felt stuck, uncertain, inspired, confused or excited, I wrote it down in my journal. The writings are an unedited, spontaneous, stream of consciousness recording of my experiences, both professional and personal over this period of time.

The art making evolved organically, once I decided that the creation of art pieces in old wooden boxes would be one of my main modes of meaning making for this research. By collecting images, bits of text and objects that felt important, relevant, or simply aesthetically appropriate to me, the boxes began to take shape.

The following is a narrative of how the inquiry unfolded. I’ve included descriptions of the most significant art pieces and the processes through which they were created, as well as summarising each piece with a list of keywords or a poetic representation. The keywords were generated from looking back at each art piece and reflecting upon it, often months after it was completed. Although most of the keywords were collected towards the end of my inquiry, I have included them here along with each art piece for an easier understanding of how the process fits together.

Moments

I started by looking carefully at moments in my professional and personal life that felt particularly intuitive to me, inspired by the work of Stern (2004) in *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life*. By putting the lens on intuition in this way, I was soon surprised to notice that my instinct informed me even more regularly than I initially imagined. I became acutely aware of the many small synchronicities and intuitive urgings that occurred in my ordinary life that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. The more I looked the more I saw.
I made a series of small drawings, each representing an “intuitive moment”, and developed a piece of box art with them, as well as an excerpt of text from Stern’s article.

Keywords

Just be myself
The professional veneer
Connection made
Congruence
Full of Energy
Adventurous
 Authenticity
This is who I am
My Knowing
Synchronicity
Containers
Compartments
“I just knew it!”
Big Big Heart

This small painting started as an expression of an event in my personal life at the time, but upon later reflection I noticed it was relevant to this research. The painting, later titled “Big Big Heart”, depicts a heart so big it will not fit into the body. Handwritten text along the bottom of the painting reads, “Spacious Vulnerable So Strong”. This painting speaks to me of the sensitivity, attunement and openness required to be intuitively present with others and myself, which can result in both strength and vulnerability simultaneously.

Keywords

Spacious
Vulnerable
So Strong
Sensitivity
Attunement
Openness

The Jewel in the Centre

This representation was formed during a group research tutorial inquiring into the “Process of Connecting”. The making of the representation and the reflecting upon it later illuminated to me how my natural affinity for certain objects and aesthetics is consistent to my process of connecting in general, be it with people, text, art materials, nature, places, myself. The following keywords describe both the art piece itself and this process of connecting.
Keywords

The jewel in the centre
Precious
Nurturing
Sensual
Visceral
Emotive
Instinctual
Intimate
Nest
Womb like
Treasured
Reverence
Earthly

The Cat

This box evolved out of a supervision session where I started to identify some important threads that seemed to be consistent in my research at that time. The box is divided into three sections as follows.

My intrasubjective experience whilst working with a client (my inner response, my inner dialogue): This is represented by a half open door, revealing a fresh orchid, half visible, on the other side of the door. This is about disclosure, trust, self-care, what to keep to myself and what to share.

The intersubjective experience (the shared space between me and the other person, the collaborative space): This is represented by thin copper threads stitched from one side of the box section to the other, connecting the two sides with precious, semi visible strands.
Floating in the middle of the web of threads is a feather, representing the content of stories that gets released into this space.

The intuitive space (the intuitive knowing of both me and the other person): This is the section in the centre, represented by a wooden figure of a cat. This evokes to me the elegance, resilience and independence of one’s intuitive knowing and natural instincts.

**Keywords**

For the intrasubjective space:

Half open door  
Sanctuary  
Self Care  
Disclosure

For the intersubjective space:

Connection  
The space between us  
Delicate and Meaningful  
Sacred  
Collaborative

For the Intuitive space:

Elegant  
Resilient  
Independent  
Regal  
Certain
Soon after the Cat box was completed, a supervision session helped me explore a comment I had made about my art making process, “Inspiration comes by Chance.” This brought me to do some writing and reflecting in my journal about the ideas of intuition happening by chance, the element of chance in the therapeutic encounter, and the surprising, accidental arrivals often experienced in both creativity and therapy. I chose not to make a specific art piece about these ideas, as I felt that these were actually basic, foundational concepts of my work that would inevitably be an undercurrent through all my research. I’ve included the keywords and phrases from this chapter of journal writing as the representation.

Keywords

Inspiration comes by chance
Chance in Therapy
Surprising, accidental arrivals
It’s not about effort
Random acts of Brilliance
Unpredictable
Happy Accidents
Magical Alignments
Thrill
Emerging from Unknown Place

The Divining Rod

For a period of time after this, I felt quite stuck and uninspired by my research. I had reached a stage where I wanted to know where the research was heading, what was the point, and was I creating anything worthwhile? My doubts were fuelled by stress from work and ordinary life, and I was unable to create anything for a while.

The box titled “The Divining Rod” emerged at a frustrated point in this stuckness. I had noticed that my desire for excellent results was growing, and therefore my inspiration to make anything at all was shrinking. As I’d experienced before, and as an artist friend of mine said once “Expectation destroys art.” I resolved to just create something that felt right to me and that I liked, whether or not it was relevant to my research. The resulting box is quite strong and stark, with fewer elements than most of the others. By giving myself permission to just make the art without thinking and without aiming for a brilliant result, I managed to become unstuck for a while and continue. Upon later reflection, it became clear to me that this box was an Amplification (making bigger, expressing further) of the Cat figure in the previous piece.

The title of this work was inspired by one of my favourite passages from the book, A Way of Being Free, by Ben Okri (1997).
Every artist has to be as much a shaper as a diviner. Artists carry their susceptibility to hidden illumination around with them. They go about with half-sight, partially in this world, partially in an invented one, their spine a divining rod, seeking attunement to the source of inspiration. (1997, p.20)

Keywords

The Inner Fire
Inner Tracking Device
Divining Rod
Direct
Concise
Accurate
Potent
Knows where to Go
Defies Explanation
Making the Invisible Visible
Poetic Representations

After journaling for approximately 8 months about this research, I decided to read back through my journals and pull out the keywords and phrases that held my attention the most. As a result, I ended up with about 50 keywords and phrases, all typed and cut out individually, spread all over my drawing table. For the following few weeks I indwelled these words, randomly and quickly arranging and rearranging them into phrases and poems that held meaning for me. Eventually 5 poetic representations emerged that felt most important to me at that time, which I turned into another box art piece, collaged with images (both found and my own), photographs and random precious objects.

Following are the 5 Poetic Representations as they appear in this artwork:

**Intuition**
My Felt Sense informing me
Clear, comfortable and transparent
Authentic
Energy in my Body
The Divining Rod
Inner Tracking Device

**Visceral: Characterised by instinct rather than intellect**
Felt Sense
Keep it in the Body
Energetic and Sure
If it keeps coming to me just trust it
Compelled to speak up
If it keeps coming to me just trust it
Confidence
Valuing the instinct’s ability to transport us to useful places
Trust in the Process
I’m not the Expert
Just let it go and see what happens

Busy Head Stuff
Interference with my reception
Static
Makes me doubt myself
Body sense vs. Intellect
I will not be tricked
I must say something

Centred
Collaborating on the process
Work with what is naturally occurring
What’s meaningful for them
A Gathering of Small Knowings

A Subtle, Calm Knowing

Next, I made a very small and simple piece of box art, using one brief phrase from my journals, “A subtle, calm knowing”. Into this box went only two objects, a seedpod and the key to the box.
As I continued the process of reading through my journals to find keywords, I was inspired to experiment with creating a spontaneous poetic representation. As I read through the pages, I quickly selected words and phrases that stood out to me and transcribed them onto another page, in the same order in which they were chosen, to create the following poem. I felt that the random flow of the lines, and the new meanings that this selection of words created, were appropriate for this stage of the research.

> **I am moved**

And where is my intuition in this?

A lot of the meaning emerges
Feeling my way in the dark
The alternative story embodied
Letting it evolve

Commitment to the Process
Artists, Dancers, Authors
Mayhem and madness in the moment
Don’t work in isolation!

I am moved.
I am searching for words.

**Make the art first. Talk later.**

For the next month or two, I was back to being stuck, busy and exhausted. I was still uncertain where any of the art making was leading, and wishing for a more clear direction. As I rode the train home from work late one night, I scribbled on a scrap of paper, bleary eyed, “Make the art first. Talk later. All the essences that need to be expressed will come out in the making.”

When I looked at this statement again the next morning, I could recognise in it that persistent internal voice I know so well. I decided to try and follow its lead and just make some art for art’s sake, prepared to discard it if it didn’t amount to much. The resulting work holds many important images and words for me, and turns out now to be a piece that
holds much significance in the process; a turning point. The only objects placed in this box are a clay sculpture I made of a cowry shell, representing femininity and innate wisdom, and two plastic figures of tigers, representing wildness and the untamed.

Much later I looked back on this box, generated a list of keywords and phrases, and reduced them down into the following Poetic Representation.

**Make the Art first. Talk later.**

*The raw unplanned emergence  
*Red, dancing, wild, satisfying  
*Primordial, primeval, dynamic arising  
*Unleashed, uncovered rightness  
*Hits the place inside that says,  
*“Yes. That’s it.”*

**Work with What is Naturally Occurring**

At this stage in my research, about 10 months into it, I had a number of pieces of artwork in various stages of completion, 3 full journals, a few poems, a smattering of keywords and hesitation about what to do next. In my desire for some clarity, I reflected on my experiences of working with people therapeutically, and the intuitive spontaneity that continues to hold my interest. I crafted the following poem, being sure to include the fundamental concepts that seemed to be emerging in my research so far, as a creative representation of this aspect of my professional experience. The title was chosen as I felt it to be one of the most concise and important phrases that had evolved at that point. Many months later I put this poem into a box, with an old photo I had taken years ago.
Work with what is Naturally Occurring

Think of ideas
Let them flow
Write them down
Just in case
Nine times out of ten
Don’t even look at them anyway

See what the day feels like
How am I feeling?
How are they feeling?

Decide in the moment
Feel what’s happening in the room
Feeling my way in the dark

Foundation of experiencing
Springboard of ideas and trust
The content inside
Waiting to emerge
When it’s ready

One thing leads to another
The process knows where to go
Work with what is naturally occurring
It Has its Own Time

This piece was created whilst I was being very mindful of my phrase “Make the Art first. Talk later.” I had no sense of what it was becoming until it was almost finished. I started by creating small clay sculptures and placing them in the compartments however it felt right. I intentionally left the accumulated dust and dirt in this box as I had found it, appreciating the quiet metaphor to the sometimes unclear, gritty experience of both creative and therapeutic work. The box felt complete when I attached some keywords and phrases to the box compartments, evoking to me an almost scientific ordering, categorising and labelling of objects; whilst simultaneously creating a poetic phrase when read together.

the unspoken
joining
it
has
its
own
time

Upon later reflection of this piece, I summarised it with the following keywords:
Keywords

Compartments
Containment
Twisted up
Spiky
Cycles
Joining
Organic
Aged and weathered
The unspoken
Hidden jewels
Preciousness
Perfection of nature
Holding one’s own key
Spaciousness
Natural order
It has its own time

Something about the sparseness of this box and its meanings makes me think of a statement by English novelist Jeanette Winterson, in her book *Art Objects* (1995),

“It has teeth, art, and a way of cutting through to the soft parts untried” (p.37).

Creativity as Sanctuary

This piece evolved over a long period of time, and was inspired by the first box piece I made in 1999, as well as a recent trip to India. There were two major reasons why this box was developed. Firstly, it was important to me to create a piece that had the qualities of sacredness and ritual, aspects of therapeutic work that I value, and hence a link to India. Secondly, I was experiencing significant changes in my personal life over this period, and the slow, deliberate creating of this box provided me with a kind of sanctuary; hence the link to my first box made so many years ago.

As this box was being made, it became increasingly important to me that more and more of the images and objects in it were my own (as opposed to found ones), and therefore I have put in many of my own photos and objects from India that are meaningful to me.
Keywords

Creativity as Sanctuary
Sacred Places
Ritual
Reverence
The Chained Library
Precious
Ancient
Holy
Prayer
Wisdom
Ancient texts
Collective consciousness
Internal texts
Universal Experience
Cellular

The Queen Inside

Around this same time, I created another box as a response to the emotions I was experiencing due to my personal circumstances, as well as doubts about how to proceed with the research. This box illuminates to me the points in which personal and professional life can intersect, as well as the presence of the relentless inner voice, which I named “The Queen” while making this piece. Upon later observation, it is clear to me that the Cat, represented previously, and the Queen are different symbols for this relentless inner voice, and for the qualities of elegance, wisdom, and certainty.
Keywords

The Queen Inside
Relentless Inner Voice
Regal
Ruthless
Unwavering
Graceful
Elegant
Powerful and Empowered

The Unplanned Emergence

This was the final piece created for this research, completed in the last month of the inquiry process. It contains photos I have taken from different areas of Australia, objects collected around where I live now, and the keywords forming the phrase “The Unplanned Emergence”. In the centre section is a photograph of a box art piece I made approximately 3 years ago, representing safe space, self-care, and nurturing.
Man suspects that there must be harmony in all chaotic complexity, there must be some reason for his own existence and some final answer to all questions. In his search for the secret he has found the key in art. It may not fit the last lock or open the ultimate gate; but it makes him walk through a thousand little doors and, with each door he leaves behind, he feels as if he had come one step closer to finding the secret. (Sorrell, as quoted in Hervey 2000, p.130)
Why Boxes?

As mentioned in the Introduction, I have been drawn to making art in old wooden boxes for a number of years, but not until this research did I question why. Over these 15 months of art making it became clearer to me why I have been interested in this form of artwork. It is explained in the following journal entry from 8 March 2006:

I have been unconsciously drawn to old wooden boxes and suitcases for years. They are aesthetically pleasing to me: the worn, old, dusty, disused, beautiful, purposeful.

I become engaged by the painstaking care of accumulating small meaningful objects (and images and texts) over time. It has a sense of ritual and reverence to it that feels fitting for both creative and therapeutic work; layers upon layers of meaning.

There is something about the small preciousness of the boxes and all their contents that evokes to me the quality of tacit knowing, knowing that is on the margins of consciousness; like all the tiny details, nuances, impressions, emotions, interactions of one’s moment to moment lived experience to which it is rarely possible to give one’s attention to process fully. Layers. Microcosms.

I have a mental image of little sections of my brain holding different memories, visuals, sensations, influences, other people’s stories, tiny doors or drawers constantly opening and closing. And there are sections of my heart holding love, pain, joy, grief, in small distinct coexisting compartments, like filing cabinets. The actions of observing, identifying, naming, filing, sorting, and containing all of this, in an almost scientific way, is an undercurrent to this art making.
Clusters, Essence Statements, Themes

The art making for this research felt as if it could have gone on forever, but I had to stop it at this point. After all the above art pieces were completed and given keywords, I then wrote all the keywords on separate slips of paper, laid them out on my studio floor, and arranged them into clusters that had something in common. Seven distinct clusters emerged, each holding significant meanings about my experience of Intuition in Creative Arts Therapy. Next, I gave each cluster a title, then postcard images, to summarise the meanings of each one.

I indwelled the clusters for a period of time, then started selecting essence statements and identifying themes that reflected the most significant insights that had arisen from my research. Following, I have shown each cluster with the essence statements and themes that developed from each one.

Cluster 1

Intuition: Embodiment

Felt sense
A subtle, calm knowing
Divining rod
Inner tracking device
Knows where to go
If it keeps coming to me just trust it
Openness
It’s not about effort
Certainty
Holding one’s own key
Defies explanation
Attunement
Blessed inner star of navigation
Small brilliance
The jewel in the centre
Magical alignments
Uncovered rightness
The inner fire
My knowing
Visceral
Emerging from an unknown place
“I just know”
Instinctual
Core wisdom
Synchronicity
The unplanned emergence
Hits the place in me that says, “Yes, that’s it.”

Essence Statements

If it keeps coming to me just trust it.
Hits the place in me that says, “Yes, that’s it.”
A subtle, calm knowing
Holding one’s own key

Themes

I experience my intuition as a felt sense; a body based experience, which is distinct from my experience of cognitive, intellectual knowing.

Sometimes I experience intuitive knowing as a subtle, calm, internal knowing; other times it feels more dynamic, persistent and energetic.

If a felt sense, idea, or intuitive knowing keeps coming to me while working with a client, I usually find it helpful to mention this to them and see what meaning, if any, it holds for them.

For me to be in touch with my intuition it requires sensitivity, openness and attunement to both the people with whom I am working and myself.

My intuition is always present as a potential mode of knowing for me. What varies is how trusting I am of it, how clearly I can sense it, and how I choose to act on it.

At times, my intellect can make me doubt my intuitive knowing because it appears irrational or defies explanation. It is important for me in my therapeutic work to maintain an integrated balance between my intuitive knowing and my intellectual knowing.
Cluster 2

Intuition: Reverence

Precious
Organic
Ritual
Sacred place
Natural order
Primeval
Alchemy
Collective consciousness
Cycles
Joining
Ancient
Prayer
Mysterious
Universal experience
Lineage
The bigger picture
Cellular
Aged and weathered
Internal texts
Ancient wisdom
Wondrous
Hidden jewels
Holy
Primordial
The rightness of nature
Zen

Essence Statements

Organic alchemy
Hidden jewels
Precious ritual

Theme

To me, both creative work and therapeutic work can have elements of ritual, reverence, sacredness and spirituality.

Cluster 3

Intuition: Wild and Untamed

Spontaneous
Boundless energy
Dynamic
Dancing
Breathless improvisation
   Raw
   Wild
   Full of energy
   Thrill
   Empowerment
   Adventurous
   Red
   Liberation
   Potent

Essence Statements

Spontaneous, dancing empowerment
Breathless improvisation
Adventurous, red liberation

Themes

Sometimes I experience intuitive knowing as a subtle, calm, internal knowing; other times it feels more dynamic, persistent and energetic.

The therapeutic process often feels to me like a spontaneous, intuitive improvisation between the people involved.

Cluster 4

Intuition: Nurturing

   Precious
   Sanctuary
   Sensitivity
   Grace
   No hurry
   Fragile
   Vulnerable
   Very still, yet flowing
   Nesting
   Self love
   Simplicity
   It has its own time
   Seeds
   Intimate
   Treasured
   Womb-like
Essence Statements

No hurry
It has its own time

Theme

I often experience that it is useful to trust my intuitive knowing in order to determine the pacing of the therapeutic process. It seems to me that emotional and therapeutic processes have their own time, and this needs to be nurtured and supported.

Cluster 5

Intuition: The Queen Inside

Certain
Relentless inner voice
Concise
Regal
So strong
Confidence
Conviction
Accurate
Direct
Unwavering

Essence Statement

Relentless inner voice

Theme

At times, I experience my intuitive knowing as a confident, relentless inner voice.

Cluster 6

Intuition: The Creative Process

Making the invisible visible
Make the art first. Talk later
Expectation destroys art
Inspiration comes by chance
Creativity as sanctuary
Random precious objects
Compartments
Containers
Happy accidents
Random acts of brilliance
Essence Statements

Make the art first. Talk later.
Making the invisible visible
Inspiration comes by chance
Creativity as sanctuary

Themes

I have often experienced personally, and observed in others, that engagement in the creative process can provide sanctuary from difficult emotions or experiences.

I have witnessed that creative expression in the therapeutic process can offer containment of one’s experiences.

Cluster 7

Intuition: The Therapeutic Process

Congruence
Containment
The content is in the process
Surprising accidental arrivals
Work with what is naturally occurring
Safe space
Connection made
Disclosure
Self care
Authenticity
Chance in therapy

Essence Statements

Work with what is naturally occurring.
The content is in the process
Surprising accidental arrivals

Themes

In the therapeutic process I find it useful to work with what is naturally occurring; being a companion as content emerges, rather than actively pushing or directing the process.

I find when I am attuned to my intuitive knowing it helps me to be more sensitive to the emergent content.

The therapeutic process often guides itself, and embedded in this process is the content, which often arises spontaneously. (“Surprising accidental arrivals”)
Self-care puts me in a better state to be receptive to intuitive knowing.

When I am working with a client and become aware of an intuitive feeling that seems important to mention, I will often offer it to my client as my intersubjective response and check if it is relevant or useful for them.

Acknowledging, validating, and exploring a person’s own intuitive knowing can help connect them to their own wisdom and experience. This can provide the opportunity for informed choices, insight and empowerment.

A foundation of professional training, experience and supervision is necessary in order for me to have the expertise, confidence and sensitivity required to trust my intuitive knowing in my therapeutic practice.
Values

It has become very clear to me from this inquiry how important my values are to me in my therapeutic work and in my art making. I have articulated these values as follows:

Values present in my Therapeutic Practice

I value…
- an inherent respect of, and importance placed on the person’s own experience, knowing, and ability to make choices in their lives
- supporting the person’s empowerment and illuminating their abilities and strengths
- acknowledging, valuing and encouraging intuitive knowing
- transparency, authenticity, and congruence from me as therapist
- experiential knowing and experiential inquiry: processes that allow for being in the experience, in the emotions, in the body of knowing, as opposed to in the intellect talking about an experience.
- working with what is naturally occurring, Trust in the process, following the natural direction of where the therapeutic process is leading; the simple brilliance of what emerges
- the felt sense; embodied knowing, attention to body sensations and body memory
- that the content is often embedded in the process, and the process is often the content
- collaborating on the therapeutic encounter; co-creation of meaning, guiding the process together, checking in with the other and giving them choices; for example “What feels most important to you right now to look at further?”
- that I (therapist) am not the expert
- companioning
- multimodality: combining the use of many creative arts modalities to allow for different modes of knowing and different points of access
- openness to spontaneity, an unplanned, organic authentic therapeutic encounter.

Values present in my Art making Practice

(Visual Art, Dance, Writing)

I value…
- an unplanned, spontaneous, intuitive approach; trust in the process, often with little or no preconceived ideas, uncertainty of where the creative process is going, allowing the art to emerge naturally
- that inspiration comes by chance; the chance of finding just the right box/object/image that fits with what I’m already working on, serendipity, synchronicity
- embodied knowing, making the felt sense visible
- art making which is process oriented rather than product oriented
- allowing strong emotions to guide the direction of the art making; strong emotional states often inspire the strongest work
- accidents, mistakes and discoveries that happen along the way
• that some things are best expressed in an artistic form, transcending ordinary verbal communication
• an attempt to make the invisible visible, to take inner sensations and externalise them into some kind of visible form, to try to express the inexpressible
• an internal satisfaction and recognition of when the creative expression has hit the mark; an innate knowing of when the work I’ve made reaches that place inside me that says, “Yes, that’s it.”
Literature Review

Over the course of my research, I was able to locate a number of resources that discuss intuition in general, from psychology, nursing and business journals to books on creativity, art and personal development as well as poetry and fiction. There were far fewer resources that specifically dealt with the use of intuition in a therapeutic context. For this review, I will give an overview of the literature that seems most relevant to my research.

In 1996 an article titled “Intuition in Mental Health Counseling” was written for the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* in the U.S. The article cites a number of researchers in various fields that have explained the existence of intuition and given it specific definitions. The authors state, “Intuition implies rapid understanding or knowledge without the conscious use of reasoning (Bowers, Regehr, Balthazard, and Parker, 1990)” (Eisengart and Faiver 1996, p.41). It is also noted that

…research in the fields of cognitive psychology and human information-processing has revealed that intuition exists as a distinct nonconscious cognitive process that operates in a logical, rapid, highly structured manner and that plays an integral part in learning and judgment…In addition, research (Hammond, Hamm, Grassia and Pearson, 1989) has indicated that intuitive judgments frequently outperform, in terms of empirical accuracy, judgments based on conscious analytic cognitive processes. (Eisengart and Faiver 1996, p.41)

The intuitive process, the authors suggest, consists of a number of stages:

- Nonconscious perception of stimuli (for example something in the environment or cues from other person)
- Nonconscious identification of patterns
- Nonconscious recognition that the stimuli has similarities to what is already stored in the memory
- Nonconscious reconfiguration of information, creating a new awareness or conclusion
- The new awareness crosses the threshold from the nonconscious to the conscious. (Eisengart and Faiver 1996)

Many schools of thought in therapy and counselling acknowledge the importance of intuition in therapeutic work. (Arlow 1989; Berne 1949; Rogers 1961) Psychodynamic theorist Arlow notes that intuition is an integral part of the therapeutic relationship, and that openness to sharing the client’s experience is a vital aspect to the functioning of intuitive knowing and understanding. (Eisengart and Faiver 1996, p.44) Humanistic approaches such as Person Centred Therapy, through the work of Carl Rogers, also value intuitive knowing. Rogers wrote,

I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. (Rogers as quoted in Raskin & Rogers 1989, as quoted in Eisengart and Faiver 1996, p.44)
The authors suggest that effective intuitive knowing on the part of a therapist relies on two key factors, “therapeutic openness and clinical expertise” (Eisengart and Faiver 1996, p.41). They comment, “It seems that an open attitude, playfulness, and spontaneity encourage intuition” (p.45). It is further stated that “clinicians must lose the enculturated rules and rigid conceptualizations that block intuitive functioning” (Shea as quoted in Eisengart and Faiver 1996, p.45). Acknowledging the importance of expertise as well as openness, the authors note, “Professional study, in addition to professional experience, produces “useful generalizations, which then produce accumulated wisdom” (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p.510) stored in memory, ready to be retrieved intuitively” (Eisengart and Faiver 1996, p.45). These comments resonate with my experience of intuition in therapy. I find that my openness to the other person is an integral part of intuitive knowing, but this alone is not enough. My openness must be supported by a foundation of professional experience and expertise in order for my intuitive knowing to be most useful.

Faiver was also a contributor to an article in 2000 called “Teaching a Workshop on Creativity and Intuition in Counseling”, in the *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development*. The authors summarise a training workshop focused on giving counsellors an understanding of creativity and intuitive knowing, and how to apply these as tools in their counselling work. In this workshop, intuition was defined as “a nonconscious cognitive process activated through templates of memory” (Faiver, McNally and Nims 2000, p.222). They note that, “attentiveness, self-awareness and an experience of connectedness (oneness) were…important components of any potential intuitive awareness” (p.223). While intuition can seem to be elusive or difficult to articulate at times, it is a “proven” aspect of effective therapeutic relationships and can be used positively in addition to a significant foundation of experience and expertise in the field.

Bright (1999), a Sydney based Music Therapist, discusses the use of recorded and improvised music in therapy sessions with people experiencing severe grief and loss. She states that a therapist in her position requires “…wide background knowledge and well-developed skills in counseling and/or psychotherapy…musical skills and a wide repertoire of genres and specific musical pieces, as well as intuition” (p.481). She elaborates on her ideas about intuition in the following way:

> How do we know what to improvise? How do we know what to say? How do we balance the verbal and the nonverbal aspects of an interview? This process, known as intuition…is based on clinical experience, wide reading, and study. It includes a capacity for detailed observation of the patient's behaviour (e.g., emphasis on or choice of words, eye contact, change in posture, jerks of fingers or toes, approach/avoidance of topics), with an ability to make an assessment of what is going on for that person below the surface, on the basis of his or her past experiences and relationships. One also needs a sound knowledge of cultural diversity, whether this is the social culture or the ethnic origin of the patient and family, and of the person's spiritual beliefs and attitudes. Above all, one requires the mental capacity to store all this information and then (very rapidly) to use it to draw conclusions, decide how to phrase the next sentence, how to play the next musical phrase--often without having consciously gone through this deductive process at all! (Bright 1999, p.498)
Bright’s description of her experience of intuitive knowing in her work has a strong resonance for me in how I experience intuition in my own work.

As I mentioned in my Methodology section, Hervey (2000) articulates the factors that identify research as an artistic inquiry. She mentions the awareness and use of intuition in the process of artistic inquiry a number of times throughout her work. Hervey states, “Although intuition is a slippery function that resists explication, it seems related to the ability to comprehend through metaphoric images that arise spontaneously in response to less empirical information than analytic thinking would require” (Hervey, p.74).

In the concluding chapter, Hervey notes the appropriateness of intuitive knowing when doing research based on an aspect of human experience:

> Questions about the inner realm of human beingness very often lead to emotional and intuitive data that is expressed through stories, symbols, images, postural changes...If the research question is about these inner experiences of clients and therapists, and if the resulting data is rich in emotional, intuitive or imaginal content, then artistic inquiry that can transform this data into communicable form without losing its essential meaning is the best approach. (Hervey 2000, p.113)

The following poems are not explicit in mentioning intuition, but to me they evoke the experience of intuitive knowing.

Excerpt from poem by David Whyte, date unknown.

> But now I have spoken of that great sea
> the ocean of longing shifts through me
> the blessed inner star of navigation
> moves in the dark sky above
> and I am ready
> like the young salmon
> to leave his river
> blessed with hunger for a great journey
> on the drawing tide

Poem by Rumi, as translated by Coleman Barks, 2003.

> You’re song,
> a wished-for song.
> Go through the ear to the center
> where sky is, where wind
> where silent knowing.

> Put seeds and cover them.
> Blades will sprout
> where you do your work.
Conclusion

In coming to write the conclusion to this inquiry, it initially strikes me that the body of artwork created for this research speaks the content in a way that I couldn’t possibly articulate. I would like to emphasise that the Exhibition of this artwork remains an essential mode of expression for this inquiry.

Some of the insights illuminated in this inquiry are ones which I have observed in myself and in my work previously, but when they emerged in the research they felt newer, more clear and important in a deeper, more considered way; my instinct made visible, the unspoken articulated. I could observe my approach to my art making being very similar to my approach to therapeutic work, which is similar to my general approach to life; a way of being.

In this section, I will sum up the meanings that emerged through this process as best I can.

What do I know now?

Many of the most significant insights that I have gained from this research are summed up in the clusters, essence statements and themes. Rather than repeat them here, I will use this new understanding to briefly answer the questions that I posed myself in the Introduction in order to consolidate what has evolved.

“What exactly do I mean by intuition?”

A felt sense, a body based knowing, that may seem to spring from nowhere and requires no rational thought process. “I don’t know why I know it, but I just do.”

“How do my intuition and felt sense help inform my therapeutic practice?”

Intuitive knowing is one of many modes of knowing that informs my therapeutic practice. I can draw on my intuitive knowing, as well as that of the other person, in combination with other modes of knowing (cognitive, experiential, body based, emotional, creative) so we can attempt to arrive at approximations to meaning. For example, if I have an intuitive sense of something while working with a client, I may articulate it as an intersubjective response, and check if it is useful to them.

“Are there certain states of being that assist or detract from my intuitive knowing?”

If I am attuned and connected to myself and the other person, and if I am receiving supervision and self-care, it is easier to sense and trust my intuition. If I am exhausted, distracted or under extreme stress, I can still sense my intuitive knowing but may be more likely to doubt it.

“Can I deepen my own understanding and trust of my intuition when working with people?”
This inquiry definitely helped deepen my understanding and trust of my intuition. Additionally, it is further deepened when I engage in activities like meditation, art making, dance and writing, as they help me focus on my body based and emotional knowing rather than only my intellectual knowing.

“How can intuitive knowing be integrated into my practice as a valid mode of knowing for both me and my clients?”

Acknowledging and exploring the intuitive knowing of both my clients and myself is an important foundation. During a session I may ask what the other person’s felt sense is telling them, if they are feeling any physical sensations in their bodies; I may suggest experiential processes that will help them get in tune with their inner experience, or simply invite them to listen for their own intuitive knowing. Also, as mentioned above, offering my intuitive feeling on something can be a useful intersubjective response for the client to consider.

“Can my interest in intuition assist me in companioning others to increase their awareness of and trust for their own intuitive knowing?”

Yes, firstly by understanding intuition as a valid mode of knowing myself, I can bring it into the context of therapy as another tool with which we can work. Secondly, by integrating the acknowledgement and exploration of intuitive knowing in sessions, this validates the intuitive knowing of the other person and can assist them in becoming more aware and trusting of it themselves. This can be useful and empowering for the other person to strengthen their own connection to the expertise they already possess.

**What to do with what I know now?**

From this research, I can sense that I will have more confidence and trust in intuitive knowing in therapeutic work as a valid and valuable mode of knowing. This process has helped me explore many aspects of my experience of intuition, which is not mysterious or esoteric, but rather is grounded in my own openness, attunement, experience and expertise.

In my work with people I would like to continue to validate, acknowledge and explore their intuitive knowing as a part of the therapeutic process, in order to assist them in discovering empowering and integrated ways of being.
Final Poem

To close, I have written the following poem using keywords and phrases from this inquiry:

Intuition
Felt sense
A subtle, calm knowing
Blessed inner star of navigation
Divining rod
The inner fire
The inner tracking device
Knows where to go

The unplanned emergence
From an unknown place
It’s not about effort
It’s about attunement
Sensitivity
The relentless inner voice
Holding one’s own key

Graceful and elegant
The unspoken
Golden possibilities
Core wisdom
Synchronicities
Surprising accidental arrivals
Hits the place inside that says,
“Yes, that’s it.”

Random acts of brilliance
Wild and dancing
Spontaneous
Empowered
Certain

Sanctuary of silent knowing
Alignment
Simplicity
Precious alchemy
Ritual
Reverence

Work with what is naturally occurring
The content is in the process
Containment
Authenticity
Don’t hurry
It has its own time
Appendix A: Exhibition flyer

**A Gathering of Small Knowings**

Jennifer Berlingieri

An Exhibition of Artwork created as an Artistic Inquiry into the experience of **Intuition** in Creative Arts Therapy

Saturday 10 June, 2006
Open anytime between 1-5 pm

The Loft
Corner of Brunswick St. and King William St, Fitzroy
(entry on King William St, upstairs)

**You are invited to bring along any objects, images, anything, that evoke to you something about Intuition; to be added to a collaborative art piece on the day.**
Appendix B: Photos of Exhibition

Exhibition space, autumn leaves scattered on floor

“Big Big Heart” and “Moments”
Sanctuary space made for “Creativity as Sanctuary”

Essence statements on window
Participants creating intersubjective responses to exhibition

Intersubjective responses
Intersubjective responses
Bibliography


