Being With/In The Space of Us: An Emergent Arts Inquiry

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Volume One
Being With/In the Space of Us:
An Emergent Arts Inquiry

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Abstract

What can we come to know of qualities of being with/in intersubjective space? I inquire into this question by exploring in detail four moments of therapists’ experiences of intersubjective interaction. This is an emergent art inquiry where multi-modal art expression is the research. As such it is situated in the field of arts-based research. Unique to my way of working is the use of visual description to represent and explore experiences of being with/in intersubjective space. What is explored here is what we know, implicitly and explicitly, of our experiencing. I suggest that we access what we know by attending to our resonant felt sensing. We multi-modally represent felt resonances which hold energy, be they consonant or dissonant. Through this exploration I learn that this work is as much about the process of emergent art inquiry as it is about being with/in intersubjective spaces. I learn that being with/in spaces of intersubjective interaction is also an emergent process, a form of inquiry.

The relevance and value of this thesis lies in its articulation of processes of intersubjective interaction and its demonstration of how using multi-modal arts as inquiry is an emergent process of coming to new knowing. In many ways it is all about the ‘how’ of being with self, others, and the world in inquiries into meaning. This focus is aimed at making meaning in general but also fosters understanding of unique personal processes of meaning making. This ‘how’ is relevant not only to therapists, researchers, and artists, but to all of us who are curious to make sense of living experiencing and wish to flourish.
Declaration

Except where reference is made in this text, this work contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a work for the award of any other degree or diploma.

This work has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the MIECAT Ethics Committee on 29th July 2010.

Name: ...........................................
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Preamble

Becoming:

Beginnings and Endings
Preamble
Introducing the Thesis

The artwork, no matter what the medium ... opens up a space
in that both the world and our being in the world
is brought to light as a single, but inexhaustibly rich totality.
(Kossak, 2013, p. 20)

This inquiry is an emergent arts inquiry into experiences of being with/in intersubjective spaces by way of exploring confronting moments in a series of therapeutic interactions. In this work experiences of being with/in the relational spaces of these interactions are represented using multi-modal arts and explored in many iterative cycles of inquiry. I inquire into what is held in the spaces between us and how things are held. I inquire into what movement and energy forms and shapes intersubjective spaces of us.

As I began this work I held several things in focus. First is an intention to explore the use of visual imagery as a descriptive tool, as well as a primary means of expression and of emergent searching for meaning in an inquiry. Second is an intention to begin with a degree of uncertainty, at the edge of what I don’t quite know, in order to allow for emergence. As I decide on a starting point for my inquiry I hold an awareness that the inquiry will move from this point and very possibly move into unexpected and unanticipated territory, as it indeed does. I intend to allow for and stay open to the possibilities that emerge through the inquiry process. Third is an intention to explore what happens between us when in interaction. When I began this thesis I was working as a therapist with children and experienced some very confronting moments. I was aware that these moments were quite profound both for me and the children I was working with. I became very curious about what was going on in the space between us. This has to do with intersubjectivity. I intentionally hold these things loosely as I start my inquiry.
In this thesis I explore four instances of a confronting moment as experienced by the therapist or companion\(^1\) while engaged in a therapeutic interaction; these form four data streams. Two of these confronting moments are experienced by me in a one on one interaction and then a group interaction. The other two moments are experienced by two participants who are therapists, one in a group interaction and the other in a one on one interaction. We each represent our experiencing in a variety of creative art modalities. We bring our resonant felt sensed responses to experiencing into expression in order to represent what we think we know and come to new knowing, in order to try to make sense of our experiences. With these representations as starting places, I and at times others, then iteratively engage and re-engage with the data in many cycles of inquiry. This involves sharing data, in the form of multi-modal representations as well as written descriptions of both representations and experiencing, with peer-companions through conversations that I transcribe. I then invite and receive resonant responses from them in a variety of arts modalities. In further iterations I may then engage with these responses in processes of reduction or re-forming in order to create stories that tell something of the spaces explored. Consequently, the data does move from its original source as my participants, peer-companions, and I respond to what emerges in processes of sharing and co-creating data. The data in this inquiry includes drawings, collage, dance, poetry, sandtray, enactment, and written story. In a fifth data stream I explore in detail a dialogue I have with images from one of the other data streams. This is a detailed description of, clarification of, and inquiry into my experience and process of being with these images in this space of us.

\(^1\) I prefer to use the term companion instead of the term therapist. This is because I feel that the term therapist implies a privileged access to knowledge that can only create inequality. While I acknowledge that the relationship between client and companion is not an equal one, within this context I do all I can to equalise things. For the same reasons I prefer to use the term companionee instead of the term client.
As this inquiry unfolds, I engage with creating and representing experiencing with different arts modalities, witness participants and peer-companions representing their experiencing, share this data, co-create it, reflect on it, reflexively engage with it, and dialogue with it. I come to understand that for me, the use of multi-modal arts as/in a search for meaning, has become the primary inquiry process for me. Consequently, I have come to refer to this inquiry as an ‘arts inquiry’, it is not just based in the arts; rather the art is the primary means of inquiry.

The Layout
This thesis consists of this Preamble, seven chapters, and finally Envoi: An Approximation to Meaning that is by way of a conclusion. Of the seven chapters, the first chapter addresses methodology and contextualises the inquiry. The next five chapters each engage with one stream of inquiry. Chapter Seven then reviews and reduces all the data generated and presents a meta-view of the emergent form of arts inquiry adopted. In this thesis I address conceptual issues that arise as they come up. I do not leave conceptualising till my ‘findings’ chapter (Chapter Seven). Rather I engage with conceptual issues and relevant literature throughout this work.

Chapter One, It’s All Connected: Methodology for an Inquiry into Living Experiencing, introduces the concepts, methods, and procedures that shape this thesis. Here I discuss the ontological, epistemological, and axiological underpinnings of my approach to this inquiry. I review the literature and contextualise this work in the field of arts-based research. I also outline how the values I hold as a researcher and inquirer inform the methods of inquiry I employ. Finally I outline the procedures I use in this arts inquiry.
In Chapter Two, *Finding My Way: What Lies Between Us*, I begin by inquiring into my experience of a confronting moment in a one on one therapeutic interaction. I then share this experience with peer-companions in a series of further cycles of inquiry.


In Chapter Four, *Layers of Engagement: An Interactive Web*, I companion a participant Jay, in her exploration of an experience of a confronting moment facilitating a group interaction in a therapeutic context. In Chapter Five, *Feeling for the Fit: Stories for Us, Stories of Us*, I companion a participant Sam, in her exploration of an experience of a confronting moment in a one on one therapeutic interaction. After companioning I reflect on and further explore each participant’s representations of her experiencing. What I am engaging with here is my experience of the participant’s representations. Again in a series of further cycles of inquiry I share this experiencing with peer-companions.

In Chapter Six, *A Dialogue with Images: An Experience of Being With/in a Space of Us*, I engage in a dialogue with images. I am now very interested in processes of relational interaction with/in spaces of us. I want to explore this and come to new understandings by describing in detail my process of intersubjective engagement with images.

Chapter Seven, *The Space of Us: Stories of Process and Content*, is where I bring together the large amount of data generated in this thesis in order to reduce and review it. Reducing the data allows me to clarify and better articulate what the data tells us about processes of being with/in spaces of us in the context of this thesis inquiry. I also review what I have learnt
about the process of emergent multi-modal arts inquiry that I have engaged in throughout this thesis.

The final chapter, Envoi: An Approximation to Meaning, is a very short rounding off and creative summary of this work with a poetic story.

**A Word on Quality and Validity**

Issues of quality and validity can be thorny and difficult to pin down in the world of qualitative research yet I feel they need to be addressed. There are a lot of different approaches within the broad spectrum of qualitative research and this makes for a great variety of different types of research methodologies. As Findley says, qualitative arts based research is “more of an ‘umbrella term’ for many methodologies” (Findley, 2008, p. 79). Gathered under this umbrella are works that draw on different philosophical, ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions.

Quality is seen as irreducibly tied to the philosophical and methodological context of inquiry. In the words of Spencer and Ritchie, “Any assessment of quality will need to be tuned to the philosophical and methodological base of a specific study” (2012, p. 240). Findlay agrees suggesting that when evaluating a piece of research “it helps to do so within the frame of its own terms and values” (2011, p. 261). For this reason I chose to begin this thesis with a methodology chapter. In it I state my philosophical, ontological, epistemological, axiological positions and how they work to inform my methodology and procedures for inquiry. This is very important to me for in a sense it forms the very distinctive ground from that all else arises and that by extension informs the quality, value, and validity of the overall work.

The variety of possible approaches under the umbrella of qualitative research thus makes it impossible to apply any kind of fixed framework for validation. For these reasons Spencer and Ritchie argue that quality
criteria should be “framed as guidelines, rather than prescriptive rules” (Spencer and Ritchie, 2012, p. 227). Barone and Eisner say that “criteria demand judgement regarding significance or value” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 147). They suggest general criteria for evaluating research are incisiveness, concision, coherence, generativity, social significance, and evaluation and illumination. Spenser and Ritchie come up with a few quality principles and guidelines that they identify as widely held. These have to do with contribution of the research, the credibility it holds, and the rigor of its conduct (2012, pp. 229-232). Findlay also has developed some criteria to evaluate qualitative research. She says, “In our view the best qualitative research shows evidence of rigor, resonance, reflexivity, and relevance” (Findlay, 2011, p. 262). There is quite a range of differing views on criteria for quality and value.

When considering the quality and validity of this thesis I feel drawn to the criteria of rigor, resonance, reflexivity, and relevance, that I think also address criteria of credibility and contribution to the research. While I believe this work has quality and holds much value I feel it is ultimately the job of readers to make decisions as to the value and validity of this thesis for them. What I can say is that I believe this detailed exploration of the relational and reflexive processes of intersubjective interaction does contribute to research on intersubjectivity. As a multi-modal emergent arts inquiry this thesis also holds significant relevance to the field of art-based research, and to research on emergent forms of inquiry in general. In the process of writing this thesis my interest increasingly focuses on relational processes. I become aware of the importance of the way I engage participants, peer-companions, self, and data. I become aware of the importance of carefully and meticulously explicating the ‘how’ of this inquiry process. I take much care in articulating this ‘how’ with a high degree of openness and transparency; this demonstrates reflexivity and rigor. As I review the data and present my findings in Chapter Seven,
I take these findings to relevant literature in the fields of art-based research and therapeutic practice. In this way I demonstrate that my findings do speak to this literature and that there is significant support for, resonance with, and relevance of my findings. This indicates to me that there is a reasonable sense that my findings, because they have these resonances, may in fact indicate applicability in other similar contexts and significant contribution to relevant research fields. This speaks to me of quality, validity, and value.

Closing Thoughts
This thesis is an emergent inquiry. As a consequence, there is something that has followed me through the work of this thesis inquiry that has to do with not ever knowing with any certainty quite what the next step might be until it arrives. I have stayed with and followed the energy of the inquiry. I began by inquiring into witnessing moments of shift in awareness in therapeutic interactions. This very quickly became a focus on qualities of being with/in intersubjective spaces of us. As I engaged in further cycles of inquiry I began to develop an awareness of the importance of process of being with/in intersubjective spaces of us. This developing awareness speaks to the value of an emergent inquiry. New knowing is arrived at by way of and within the ongoing emergent process of inquiry that is not fixed, it is always in becoming. In this way the beginning you are now reading grows directly from the ending place of this work. It is quite different from the place from that I first began.

Finally, from the start of this project the idea of telling story has been important to me. I hold a strong desire specifically to use visual images to tell story. It is important to me to explore and open up the potential of visual imagery to tell story in unique ways. This interest in exploring visual imagery as story helps to shape the form and aesthetics of this thesis. My hope is to produce a work that is aesthetically engaging and rich with story in many forms, a work that you the reader can enter into and interact.
with. The space where you meet and engage with this work is itself an intersubjective space of us. It is a space where we can explore our processes of interaction, a space where we can work together to co-create new story possibilities, new meanings. The following words resonate with me as they speak to the many possible co-creative spaces of engagement, to spaces of us.

Life is lived and knowledge made through kitchen table conversations and yamin’ at the wharf ... in the imaginative spaces created between the lines of a good book or an encounter with an evocative photograph, in an embodied response to a musical composition or interpretive dance.

These are all examples of meaning making – of knowledge.

(Cole and Knowles, 2008, p. 59)
Chapter One

It's all Connected: Methodology for an Inquiry into Living Experience
It's all Connected
An Introduction

The concept of experience: Like that of happening, of process, of state, of something, of fact, of description and of report. Here we think we are standing on the hard bedrock, deeper than any special methods and language-games. But these extremely general terms have an extremely blurred meaning. They relate in practice to innumerable special cases. But that does not make them any solider; no, rather it makes them more fluid.

(Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 199e)

Experiencing and the process of inquiring into experiencing is indeed, as the opening quote suggests, fluid. As I have discovered in the course of this thesis inquiry the process of inquiring into experiencing is multilayered and full of places of uncertainty and the not quite known. It has been necessary to be very flexible and open in order to stay with, and flow with, the fluid nature of experiential unfolding.

In this chapter my intention is to paint you a picture of the ideas and assumptions that underpin this work and the conceptual context in which I write; this includes a review of relevant research. Also to show how this informs my way of working with myself, with others, and with the data we generate in the process of this inquiry. There are four parts to this chapter. The first section is titled ‘Ways of Knowing and Being in the Lived World’. This section addresses the underpinning concepts and assumptions that inform the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of this work. I do not claim or aim to arrive at any universal statements or absolute truths; this is I believe simply not possible. The best that can be achieved is to arrive at an approximation of meaning, a meaning that I have arrived at here and now, a meaning that is fluid and will shift and change as others further inquire into it. The meanings I arrive at are a co-creation of the intersubjective dialogues of my participants, peer-companions, and me; we meet in the context of specific experiences. What I do aim for is to arrive at a gain in understanding of qualities of being in the relational intersubjective spaces we occupy.
The second part of this chapter is ‘The Question of Epistemology’. Here I explore the question of how we come to know something when working experientially and with creative arts. I discuss and review relevant literature that engages arts as ways of knowing. For me, engaging experiencing through artistic expression involves interacting with self, others, art materials, and art works. It involves bringing into expression felt sensed experiencing, attending to resonance, working emergently, and attending to reflexivity.

The third part of this chapter is ‘Actioning the Values which Inform my Method’. In this section I speak to the values that inform and form the means by which I make this inquiry. The inquiry takes place in time and space and is structured by moments of experiencing in specific relational spaces. Through a series of cycles of inquiry I aim to arrive at a multidimensional multifaceted approximation to meaning. I try to stay with just what is there in experiencing and with what emerges through the process of inquiry and exploration. This is achieved by maintaining a visually descriptive attitude. I work emergently and value maintaining openness and flexibility.

The final part, ‘An Emergent Arts Inquiry’ outlines the procedures I employ in the making of my inquiry. This is a practical guide to the way I work with the arts in cycles of experiencing, representation, and reflection in a movement towards making sense of the relational intersubjective spaces we occupy. I also include in this section a series of maps to orientate you to the sometimes complex and confusing terrain of each of the four data sets.
Ways of Knowing and Being in the Living World

There are times in life when the question
of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive
differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on
looking and reflecting at all.
(Foucault, 1985, p. 8)

Being in Context, Knowing in Context

Some key assumptions of my approach for this inquiry and for my living
everyday practice are as follows. First, that there is no objective knowable
quantifiable reality or truth out there to be found. Neither, by extension,
are there any particular theories, practices or discourses that can hold any
claim to being a means to access universal truths or authoritative
knowledge. Such assumptions place this work in the arena of
postmodernism. I first began to get a sense of postmodernism and its value
many years ago when I read Michel Foucault’s The history of sexuality: Volume
1 an introduction (1978), The use of pleasure: The history of sexuality volume 2
(1985), and The care of the self: The history of sexuality volume 3 (1986). In this
series of books Foucault demonstrated to me that what is considered to be
history is embedded in the values, culture, and politics of those who write
history. He problematises truth values of conventional histories. In his view
“the least glimmer of truth is conditioned by politics”, and theoretic
discourse “however rigorously pursued” cannot hope to arrive at truth
(Foucault, 1978, p. 11). What he does is to write a history of sexuality,
which takes the subject back to the experiencing self in specific historical
and social contexts.

Thus while the topic is sexuality, his focus is on how it is thought and
historically contextualised in the living world of thoughts, interactions,
values, ethics, and conventions in which it is produced. In this way Foucault
traces sexuality by way of analysing:
... not the behaviours or ideas, nor societies and their ‘ideologies’, but the problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought and the practices on the basis of which the problematizations are formed. (Foucault, 1985, p. 11)

He makes it clear that he values this kind of focus for its ability to bring reflexive critical thought to bear on ways of thinking and being itself. He says:

There is always something ludicrous in philosophic discourse when it tries, from the outside, to dictate to others, to tell them where their truth is and how to find it, or when it works up a case against them in the language of naive positivity. (Foucault, 1985, p. 9)

Truth is not absolute, it lies within the thinking and being practice of living and cannot be accessed from without this context by way of applying theory or positivist philosophies.

So in a sense the really important thing about postmodernism is how we make inquiry into our subject. What is important here is not the subject of sexuality, but the philosophy that underpins Foucault’s desire to work outside of politics and theorising conceptions of truth and reality. By situating his inquiry in specific living contexts it is possible to write another history. He very clearly shows that it is possible to write many different, many other histories, all of which contain ‘truths’. Foucault’s work, amongst others, paved the way for postmodernism and opened up avenues for inquiry, which continue to find and navigate paths other than those established ones of totalizing theory.

The contexts of inquiry are many and varied amongst postmodern paradigms, but the overriding commonality is this rejection of totalizing theory applied in order to gain some kind of access to ‘truth’ or ‘reality’, to gain mastery. In the words of Richardson and Adams St Pierre:
The core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, any discourse or genre, or any tradition or novelty has a universal and general claim as the “right” or privileged form of authoritative knowledge. ... No method has a privileged status. But a postmodern position does allow us to know “something” without claiming to know everything. (2005, p. 961)

What we know is then relative to subject, experience, position, and context: in this way difference is valorised and validated. I do not believe that any knowledge is privileged, nor that access to knowledge should in any way be controlled or mediated by a privileged, initiated, few. I reject constructions of a dichotomous and unequal relationship between informed inquirer and object of inquiry, where the informed inquirer holds a position of mastery. I envisage positions of inquirer and subject of inquiry as equal and interactive, they are shifting and shared.

In this conceptualisation, knowings, understandings, and meanings held are arrived at experientially in relationship with the people and phenomena of the world we inhabit. In this respect I also draw on the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of existential phenomenological philosophy. Peter Willis quotes Husserl saying that phenomenological researchers:

... wanted to reaffirm and describe their ‘being in the world’ as an alternative way to human knowledge, rather than objectification of so-called positivist science. (Willis, 2001, p. 2)

What is important here is the idea that this concept of ‘knowing’ is formed through experience of being in the world. Heidegger, a student of Husserl who is credited with developing existential phenomenology agrees the importance of this idea of being-in-the-world. In the words of Spinelli:

Like Husserl, Heidegger assumes that all of our investigations and reflections regarding human existence arise out of our indissoluble inter-relationship between ‘a being’ and ‘the world’. (Spinelli, 2005, p. 108)
In this way human existence is perceived as being inescapably tied to its state of being in inter-relationship with the world. Thus, in any inquiry into an experience of being there is an “indissoluble relationship between the investigator and the focus of investigation” (Spinelli, 2005, p. 108). Heron and Reason affirm the primacy of this relationship between inquirer and focus of inquiry, by saying that “our attempts at aware everyday living all convince us that experiential encounter with the presence of the world is the ground of our being and knowing” (Heron and Reason, 1997, p. 276). So it is by way of our experiences of being in inter-relationship or intersubjective engagement with the world and the things of the world, that we come to new knowings.

**Seeking Understanding**

Another key value of phenomenology that I share is that of being non-interpretive. A phenomenological approach does not seek to explain or interpret; rather the focus is on seeking to understand. That is, a phenomenological approach assumes that meaning is created in interaction, not derived from a supposed authoritative source or theory. The ultimate goal of inquiry is thus to gain in understanding, to try to make sense of things. Spinelli says:

>This focus on understanding rather than explanation (and with this the emphasis upon meaning) runs throughout phenomenology regardless of its diverse branches or emphases. For Heidegger, scientific enquiry lost much of its way when it placed its emphasis, if not exclusive attention, upon explanation alone. That loss was its very connectedness to Being. (2005, p. 109)

Thus the value of understanding, of searching for meaning, is seen to be directly related to connectedness to Being\(^1\). The ongoing quest for meaning and understanding is an integral part of our state of being in connection, in inter-relation with the things of the world.

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\(^1\) Heidegger differentiates between being and Being, where ‘beings’ are distinct from ‘Being’ itself. Being is the state of all beings. (Spinelli, 2005, p.106)
What I understand to be important here is that interpretation, explanation, and judgement are all to do with thinking about, rather than about engaging with. There is a distance in thinking about that precludes open and present engagement. Trinh T Minha is a postmodern Vietnamese American film maker. She argues against theory driven forms of critical inquiry and posits that an opening of dialogue between different subjectivities is crucial in order to break down dichotomous and unequal constructions of the relationship between self and other (Trinh, 1991). In other words, what is important is to enter the intersubjective world of the other and talk with them instead of about or at them. The act of talking about something or someone instantly creates a distance between. This distance between is not a shared space—it draws a boundary between self and other that defines difference and speaks of holding apart and keeping separate. On the other hand the act of talking with implies a shared space where the space between is fluid and defines the form of interaction. What appeals to me about this is that mutual sharing and intersubjective dialogue is valued, as is the idea of entering and staying in the world of the other/self. In this respect some of the ideas that inform this share ground with paradigms of reflexivity (Denzin, 1997) and the intersubjectivity described by (Stolorow, Atwood, and Brandchaft, 1994). Carl Rogers’ humanism also stresses the importance of entering the world of the other and the quality of the relationship between client and therapist (Corey, 2005). It is this shared space between us that I am very interested in.

**Intersubjectivity is the Context**

Here I want to slow things down and explore in some detail the idea of intersubjectivity, of the process of engaging with another or others in shared spaces of interaction. I have touched on the idea that human existence is inescapably tied to its being in a state of inter-relationship with the things of the world. That is we as individuals do not exist in, nor are we formed in, isolation. Rather, we are all connected and that connection both forms and defines us. We are inescapably in intersubjective relationship with the
things of the world, where intersubjectivity has to do with being and knowing relationally. I will now take a closer look at this idea. I do this in order to clarify and underline a key assumption of my position, that we are intersubjectively, not subjectively, formed.

Stolorow traces a shift from the idea of the mind as an object standing separate and alone amongst other objects in the world. He points to a conceptual shift from the Cartesian doctrine of the isolated mind that Freud inherited from Descartes (Stolorow, 2000, p. 149). In this view the mind is conceived as “a ‘thinking thing’ that has an inside with contents and looks out on an external world from which it is radically estranged” (2000, p. 149). In this conceptualisation then, not only does the mind exist in isolation, but it is also ‘radically estranged’ from the world in which it exists. There seems here little place for quality interaction; the only possibility seems to be that of thinking about what is other. In contrast, I believe a quality interaction involves a more embodied responding in which we talk with, act with, feel with, and create with each other.

Crossley traces the development of the concept of intersubjectivity and starts with a discussion of Husserl, who in his *Cartesian Meditations* challenges Descartes’ idea of the isolated mind (Crossley, 1996, pp 1-7). For Husserl what is central is “the question of the existence of other consciousnesses and his relationship to them” (1996, p. 3). In this way he does not doubt or reject the existence of that which is other to self, rather he affirms that we are always in relationship with that which is other to self. In the words of Husserl:

> I experience [others] at the same time as subjects for this world, as experiencing it (this same world that I experience) and, in so doing, experiencing me too, even as I experience the world and others in it... I experience the world (including others)—and, according to its experiential sense, not as... my private synthetic formation but as other than mine alone, ... as an intersubjective world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone.

(Husserl, 1977, p. 91)
Thus, for Husserl intersubjectivity confirms and in a sense forms the objective world, that which is other than self. Crossley goes on to say, ...

... other perspectives on the world than my own are necessary if the objectivity of the world is to be established. Objectivity, in this sense, is intersubjective. It is a view of the world arrived at through mutual confirmation and negotiation between different and independent perspectives. (Crossley, 1996, p. 3)

We exist in the world with others and understand that world through processes of negotiation with and confirmation by others. Buber similarly posits that “our belief in the reality of the external world comes from our relation to other selves. ... The I is not an I, the self not a self, except through its meeting with the thou” (Friedman, 2002, p. 193). These writers all hold that it is precisely because we are each different, because we each hold differing perspectives that are individual and independent of each other, that any shared and co-created concept of ‘world’ is possible.

If we stay with this idea and extend it a bit it is possible to say that the boundaries between self and other now hold a new potential for interaction. Stern speaks of a greater permeability of the boundaries between self and other where “what is ours and what belongs to others begins to break down. Our intentions are modified or born in a shifting dialogue with the felt intentions of others” (Stern, 2004, p. 77). Here again is this idea of a dialogue, of a shifting and fluid dialogue with the felt intentions of others. This speaks to a connectivity and interaction that is at a deeper or different level than spoken dialogue; it is at a level of feeling and sensing, and thinking. As Stolorow points out this dialogue takes place at the interface of experiential worlds. He speaks specifically from a therapeutic context when he says psychoanalytic therapy “is no longer an archaeological excavation of ever deeper layers of an isolated unconscious mind. Instead, it is a dialogic exploration of a patient’s experiential world” (Stolorow, 2000, p. 150). As the companion talks to the companionee their experiential worlds interact.
What emerges from this interaction is necessarily a co-creation; it is born of both the companion and the companionee. I believe this idea of a dialogic exploration of experiential worlds is applicable beyond therapy in any context.

Intersubjectivity, then, has to do with what is of me, what is of you, and what is co-created by us. Stern speaks of an intersubjective matrix, which I understand to be a relational space or context for our interactions. He says it is the “overriding crucible in which interacting minds take on their current form” (Stern, 2004, p. 78). So there is something here about a place in which creation, or co-creation takes place. He goes on to say that “Two minds create intersubjectivity. But equally, intersubjectivity shapes the two minds” (2004, p. 78). This for me is very important as it points to the idea that we each form or co-create our interactions and are in turn formed or co-created by them. As previously stated, “we can recognise that selfhood is inevitably intersubjective. Self is seen to be achieved only in relation to other” (Crossley, 1996, p. 68). We are thus intersubjectively formed in interaction with others/the world. This forming takes place in a relational space, an intersubjective space. This is a key assumption that I hold.
The Question of Epistemology

Like others before me
I sense the ambiguity
Of intuitions that cannot be understood.
Knowing is such a precarious balancing act.
(Waite, 2013, p. 531)

Here I want to slow down again and focus in on the idea of meaning-making in experiencing. It is important to consider how we come to ‘know’ something when working experientially. In the process of making and writing up this inquiry, it has become clear to me that the epistemology, the ways we know, are inextricably tied up with the underpinning ontology as well as the process and form of inquiry. Being so interwoven makes it quite difficult to clearly articulate the epistemology of this work in any contained way. Yet it is important to try to do so, or at least to signpost it, precisely because how we come to know, to understand, and to make sense is an important part of both the content and the process of my inquiry. The content of this inquiry is exploring qualities of intersubjective spaces. The process of inquiry is emergent and I use arts as research/inquiry. In this process I am on a journey where I arrive at many new knowings, the demonstration of this unfolds a developing understanding of, and a developing exploration of, how we arrive at new understandings and make sense of things.

I have spoken about the importance of exploring living experiencing in order to come to know something of our being in the world. I have spoken of the search for meaning, for understanding, as connected to our being in interaction with the world and our experiencing of that interaction. We experience with others and so what we come to know is formed in relationship with others, or reflects the relational context. In this sense we make meaning or come to know something with whomever or whatever
we are interacting, the meanings we make are always thus a co-creation. But how do we know, what is the process of that?

While I am sure there are no definitive answers to this question I think we can say a bit about it. If experiencing is the broader context for our knowing then what is experiencing? According to Eugene Gendlin it is … that partly unformed stream of feeling that we have every moment. I shall call it ‘experiencing’, using that term for the flow of feeling, concretely, to which you can every moment attend inwardly, if you wish. (1997, p. 3)

Here then, experiencing has to do with the stream of feeling within us. This, says Gendlin, is concrete experience where “the phenomenon I refer to is the raw, present, ongoing functioning (in us) of what is usually called experience... Another term for it is ‘felt meaning’ or ‘feeling’” (1997, p. 11).

So here it is feeling, a sense of felt meaning, which flows constantly within us as a function of experiencing that Gendlin points to. He makes it clear that by feeling he is not referring to what or how we feel, although that will be present, so much as to the “concretely present flow of feeling” (1997, p. 11). This flow of feeling is always there for us whenever we need to turn our focus inward.

[W]e always have concrete feeling, an inward sensing whose nature is broader... It is not at all vague in its being there, It may be vague only in that we may not know what it is. We can put only a few aspects of it into words. (1997, p. 11)

So while the feeling, the sensing, is always there to be accessed, it may not be very clear to us. This has also been referred to as a body sense, (Gendlin, 1990) a felt-level experience, (Corcoran, 1981) and reminiscence (Sherman, 1990). At times we may reach inward and have a very clear sense of what the feeling is pointing to, at other times it may be felt as something not quite known or just out of reach. What is important is that by accessing and attending to this inner resonant felt sensing we can come to know something about what things mean to or for us.
So these writers would claim that meanings are felt, and we come to knowing by way of attending to our intuiting and our resonant felt sensing. Thorburn and Hibbard speak of resonance and felt sensing as having to do with “a shared experiential/embodied knowing that seems to be unfolding” (Thorburn and Hibbard, 2008, p. 157). They describe an experience they shared with a young person where there was a particularly powerful moment of resonance between Thorburn and the young person. She describes the moment as follows:

Resonance in that moment was captured in the split second glance—my eyes met his eyes and our sensing traversed the space between the two of us. Our shared feelings and our combined knowing about that felt experiencing lingered for a few moments in silence. It’s as if that shared experience stood in the midst of us, and we inhabited its meaning, in that moment, together. (2008, p. 157)

This is a beautiful and deeply felt description of a process of resonant felt sensing, which leads to a place of knowing or co-created meaning. The images of sensing travelling the space between us, of combined or shared knowing lingering, and of the shared experience as being ‘in the midst of us’, very powerfully speak to a process of coming to know something. They arrive at meaning by way of drawing on the felt sense of an (shared) experience, bringing that felt sense up into a resonant response, in this case a glance, and allowing the whole experience of this to take place in that space, in that moment. For me, this description also highlights the space of coming to know as being fundamentally a shared relational space. Resonant felt sensing is thus an important aspect of how we come to knowing.

I now pause this discussion temporarily in order to bring arts as ways of knowing into the frame. I will focus in on arts as ways of knowing in the broader context of the field of arts-based research. Then discuss how I conceive of creative arts as ways of knowing in the context of this thesis.
Creative Arts and Inquiry into Knowing

Curious as to how the arts are conceived of as ways of knowing and of accessing knowing I explore the literature around the relationship between creative arts and knowing. As Eisner says, “the idea that art can be regarded as a form of knowledge does not have a secure history in contemporary philosophical thought” (Eisner, 2008, p. 3). What I discover is that art is perceived to be associated primarily with feeling, emotion and storytelling, as opposed to rational, logical, ‘truth’ telling (Eisner, 2008; Janesick, 2008; Langer, 1953; McNiff, 2008). Susan Langer says art is “the practice of creating perceptible forms expressive of human feeling” (Langer, 1962, p. 76). Further, Langer identifies the feeling, emotional, and storytelling qualities of the arts as important forms of knowing. She sees art as having some kind of fundamental connection to, or access to, what we know of the feeling and sensory aspects of our being, of our awareness and perception of the world. For Langer, what we know of these things “is a continual play of impressions... a fund of images, not necessarily visual, but often gestic, kinaesthetic, verbal or what I can only call ‘situational’” (Langer, 1967, p. 59). Artistic imagery can, in Langer’s words, map “the form of felt life” (Langer 1967, p. 67). Furthermore, she says that we can recognise a work of artistic expression “intuitively as something very much like feeling; and this abstract likeness to feeling teaches me, without effort or explicit awareness, what feeling is like” (Langer, 1967, p. 67). In this way, not only can the arts express what we know of the feeling of our experiencing, but they can also communicate that feeling to others and so provide opportunities for new knowing.

Because of this connection to the sensory, feeling, storying aspects of being, the arts have historically been employed to some degree as a means to explore and inquire into social and personal meanings. Since the Enlightenment, the use of the arts in research inquiry has not been much practiced outside the fields of art and psychology (Kossak, 2013). In more recent times, there has been a growing interest in using arts in research and this growing field is often referred to as arts-based research. My approach to using arts in inquiry is positioned within this field.
Guba and Lincoln point out that the 70’s and 80’s was a time of blurred genres when some researchers turned to forms of inquiry that were multi-disciplinarian, arts-based, reflexive, and politically critical (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 18). Yet arts-based research has only been named up as a field since the 1990s (Barone & Eisner, 2012, 2012; Finley, 2005; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2009; Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008; McNiff, 2011, 2013). This ‘field’ is itself quite fluid and open ended being also referred to as arts informed research, art based research, and expressive arts-based research as a few examples². This is largely due to the many different modes of artistic expression, each of which calls for distinct styles and/or methodologies.

Add to this mix a diversity of academic disciplines that engage the arts in research practice, often collaboratively, and methodological approaches become even more open ended. Liamputtong and Rumbold speak of the interest in arts-based and collaborative research methods as bubbling up in various disciplines and in many countries (2008, p. 1). Arts-based research has been engaged in disciplines of health and social sciences including sociology, ethnography, anthropology, psychology, social work, public health, nursing, education, history, and post-colonialism (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Davis, 2013; Eisner, 2008; McNiff, 2011; Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2005). This is not an exhaustive list.

Arts-based research places value on the arts as very effective tools to address and represent the complexity of social phenomena, of living experiencing. It is seen as providing “particularly rich ways to access experiential knowing” (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2005, p. 3). It “addresses complex and often subtle interactions and that it provides an image of those interactions in ways that make them noticeable” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 3).

By representing experience in new and often not so familiar ways, new possibilities for seeing, hearing, thinking, and understanding can be opened up. In the words of Sajnani, arts-based research “is an approach to

² For clarity, in this thesis I choose to refer to this general field of research as ‘arts-based research’. This is distinct from my own inquiry which I choose to refer to as an ‘arts inquiry’.
knowledge creation that invites floating, emergent and evolving discoveries unfolding on canvas, in writing and onstage as they do in life” (Sajnani, 2013, p. 82). This often involves “stepping into the unknown” and being taken to places not anticipated (Rumbold, Fenner & Brophy-Dixon, 2013, p. 69). Consequently, it helps to hold “an openness and tolerance for this kind of not-knowing” (Rumbold et. al., 2013, p. 71). Indeed as McNiff points out, in an art-based inquiry “knowing and not-knowing are in perpetual tension” (McNiff, 2013, p. 112). The arts can thus provide a means to articulate that which is ambiguous, difficult to describe, and not quite known. The arts can also articulate experience in “ways not accessible to spoken language” (McNiff, 2011, p. 389; Rappaport, 2013). The arts allow for multiple viewpoints, some of which may be marginalised, subjugated, silenced, or difficult to articulate. Kalmanowitz speaks of the value of arts as research in the following way.

But art contains within it not only the beauty of being on the edge, but the capacity and potential to be on the seam, to join the multiple edges and sew together and show not only that which is spoken, but also that which is implied. (Kalmanowitz, 2013, p. 150)

Much work has been generated in the field of arts-based research, where the arts as ways of knowing have been used in research inquiries in quite different ways. Some inquiries explore methodological issues and ideas relating to using specific arts modalities in research. Some engage the arts as a means to display data. Some engage the arts as a research tool to generate secondary data alongside more conventional research practices. Some engage art as research where the artistic process is the research process. Here I will provide examples of some of the research projects in this very rich field to illustrate how the arts can be used differently.

There is a significant body of methodological articles that describe and discuss ways of using the arts in research; the following is a small sample. Reason and Hawkins (1988) explore different ways of working with
qualitative data using storytelling as inquiry. Lewis also considers storytelling as research stating that “it is through genuine repetition, storytelling, that humans narrate ways of knowing and being” (2011, p.505).

Laurel Richardson explores writing as a method of ethnographic inquiry (Richardson, 2005). Kelsey McNiff (2013) examines the potential of storytelling to enhance understandings of history. Leggo (2008) inquires into poetry as a form of knowing and recording experience. Sajnani (2013) and Levine (2013) both discuss improvisation as an effective “medium of knowledge creation and representation” (Sajnani, 2013, p. 77). Levine states that improvisation “indicates action that looks forward to what has not yet been and what cannot be anticipated” (Levine, 2013, p. 125). As a social scientist with interests in arts and music Daykin (2008, 2009) considers the role of arts, specifically music, in health care research, where music is seen as “a resource for the articulation of self and the making of meaning in particular contexts” (Daykin, 2008, p. 239). The idea of multiple ways of knowing and the potential of visual imagery to “make explicit that which is not yet understood” is discussed by Kalmanowitz (2013, p.141).

The arts are used as a means to display data in the following works. Davis and Ellis use autoethnographic experiences to co-write a fictional ethnographic narrative and strive “for a resonance of truth rather than accuracy” in the hope that readers would feel the story “could be true, that it made sense” (Davis & Ellis, 2008, p. 104). Here story is employed to analyse fieldwork experience and represent research as the researchers understand it. Cancienne (2008) uses dance technique and choreography as a means to present what is known. Working in the area of childhood education she represents “research data through performance as an inquiry process” (Cancienne, 2008, p. 404). Also concerned with performing data, Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer (1995, 2008) explore the potential of reader’s theatre as an arts-based research strategy. Reader’s theatre is the “staged presentation of qualitative data performed by an individual or ensemble of performers” (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 2008, p. 213).
As an example they have written and performed a reader’s theatre of middle school students’ essays about conditions in schools in relation to student development as writers (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995). Another example of performance as a means to display data and also to make social and political statements is the work of Bagley and Castro-Salazar (2012). They refer to their collaborative work as critical arts-based exploration that aims to expose power inequalities and allow subjugated voices of marginalised peoples to “co-recover and interrogate a shared memory and history” (Bagley & Castro-Salazar, 2012, p. 242). They discuss and document a performance of their data on experiences of un-an-documented American students of Mexican origin living in the USA. Cancienne and Bagley also work collaboratively to “dance the data” generated in a research study on special education needs and school choice (Cancienne & Bagley 2008, p. 169). See also (Poindexter, 2009; Cancienne & Snowbar, 2009).

Often artistic expression is used as a research tool within a broader inquiry as exemplified by the following works. Laurel Richardson tells ‘writing stories’ that explore one’s own writing in life contexts (Richardson, 1997, 1995; Richardson & Lockridge, 2004). ‘Writing stories’ she says “offer critical reflexivity about the writing self in different contexts as a valuable creative analytical practice” (Richardson, 2005, p. 965). Willis uses “the poetic pen” and “expressive reflective description” as research tools to explore and portray his lived experience of adult education practice (Willis, 2008, pp. 51&55). Leavy uses poetry as a means to “know the world” and to communicate the “truth that is felt and understood in the moment, truth that may shift and become something else” (2010, p. 240). Furman (2007) also uses poetry as tools in qualitative research and vehicles into the broader topic of existential concerns. Lewis-Hartner (2007) sees visual images as providing new possibilities for capturing “tacit emotional nuances and an emerging edge of experience”, as well as opening up many new and different perspectives (Lewis-Hartner, 2007, p. 167). She explores
possibilities for visual art making as a creative practice in therapists’ personal and professional lives. Guillemin and Westall (2008), when “working with vulnerable people whose experiences make it difficult for them to adequately express meanings and emotions into words” use drawings as a tool to complement word-based research methods (Guillemin & Westall, 2008, p. 122). Rogers (2008) explores the potential of collaborative drawing as social encounter in order to use drawing as conversation and “make visible what happens in an encounter between strangers” (Rogers, 2008, p. 55). The potential of collage as inquiry is explored by Butler-Kisber who claims that “its partial, embodied, multivocal, and nonlinear representational potential” facilitates new ways of understanding (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 265). See also (Conrad, 2009; Jongeward, 2009).

The arts are also increasingly used as a primary means of inquiry where the artistic process is the research process that generates new knowing. In the words of Barone and Eisner “the work of art may, we suggest again, also be seen as a work of research” (Barone and Eisner, 2012, p. 48).

Following are some examples of such work. In an exploration of everyday experiences of working-class mothers and daughters residing on a peripheral social housing estate, Mannay (2010) invites her participants to describe or portray their experiences in visual images. The participants said that their “lives were reconsidered, re-evaluated and made strange” in the process of visually representing their experience, and for the researcher as a native of the estate a ‘familiar’ topic was made ‘strange’ as unique perspectives emerged (Mannay, 2010, p. 101). Cosson (2008) explores using art as research by creating sculpture from word based text. She does this within the context of a/r/tography methodologies. In an autoethnographic short story Scott-Hoy (2009) explores her responses, as a mother, to the events of September 11 2001. Neilsen demonstrates in ‘Housecleaning’, a non-fiction

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3 A/r/tography is conceived as embodied understandings and interactions between art and text, and between inquirer identities of artist/researcher/teacher” (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008).
written work incorporating poetry, dialogue and prose poetry, that “literary genres show us in powerful ways that we can be moved… and that is enough” (Nielsen, 2008, p. 386). Henson uses both prose poetry and poetry in her storytelling to explore “fragments of experience that resist the imposition of coherence, that defy storytelling, that live on the edge of our narrative world” (Henson, 2013, p. 518). Miles Richardson (1998) is an anthropologist who uses poetry to explore and share his experiences of South America. Here poetry is the voice of research. He says, “poetry, as a special language, is particularly suited for those strange, even mysterious moments when bits and pieces suddenly coalesce” (1998, p. 451). Davis “theorises a bebop methodology” in a poem that is “about the poetics of research, the poetics of struggle, and the politics of hope” (2013, p. 525). Her poem demonstrates a bebop methodology where her creative style, linguistic dexterity, rhythm, and pace both reflects and enacts her experience of African-American communities. Brady (2013) writes an evocative poem of a Mohave Indian runner. Blurring the boundaries of anthropology, history, ethnography, fiction and poetry, this explores his belief that “there is more than one way to see and to show things” (Brady, 2013, p. 533). Similarly, Waite (2013) writes twenty poems in a process of exploring what things are without the constraints of categories. Here the poems speak for themselves.

These texts named above are just a small sample of arts-based research that has been generated. They demonstrate the great variety of possible ways the arts as ways of knowing can be engaged in research inquiry. In these texts artistic expression is incorporated as a form of inquiry into and making meaning of experience, rather than artistic expression as object of inquiry. Ultimately, in an arts-based inquiry artistic expression is used as a means to “explore multiple, new and diverse ways of understanding and living in the world” (Finley, 2008, p. 71).
**Multi-modal Arts as Ways of Knowing**

This thesis is situated within this broader field of arts-based research. In this inquiry I use creative arts in a number of modalities as inquiry into experiencing. I believe arts connect us well to what we know of emotional and sensory aspects of experiential being and it is by telling stories in any mode that we express our knowings. They can provide a means to bring into expression that which is less easily accessed or known and help make sense of our resonant felt sensing, of our felt responses to intersubjective interactions with others and the things of the world. Heron and Reason posit four ways of knowing, one of which is presentational knowing. They say that presentational knowing is about bringing our experience of the world up into artistic presentation. Here presentation shows “an intuitive grasp of the significance of our resonance with and imaging of our world” (Heron and Reason, 1997, p. 281).

Gunaratnam uses the arts in various forms in her work as an academic and in palliative care. She speaks of the arts as providing access to sensuous knowing that engages bodies, and also as being able to facilitate access to that which is suppressed, complex, incoherent and ambiguous (Gunaratnam, 2007, p. 272). She states her interest as being in:

> How artistic representation can create opportunities for evoking and affirming some of the poetics of human experience, that is: the non-measurable; the contradictory; that which exceeds identity categories; the ‘indescribable and the und dismissable’; and the hopefulness of a ‘not yet’. (2007, p. 274)

Artistic representation is able to bring experience up in a way that evokes, or has a sense of something. It can access and bring up a range of sensings be they formed fully or not, for us to engage in and reflect on. This can be affirming especially when what is evoked is intangible, not quite known, contradictory, or only dreamt of in imaginings. Lett makes a similar point saying that what we are accessing in this process is “preverbal and pre-reflective and not developed into conscious or coherent frames” (Lett, 2011, p. 282). We know things in many different ways; we know things explicitly
but also implicitly. “Yet these ways of knowing are extremely powerful in both the embodied energy, feeling, and emotion which characterises them...” (Lett, 2011, p. 282). It is then by staying with our embodied felt sensing that we can begin to access the preverbal, pre-reflective, and incoherently formed knowings held inside. These ideas speak to me of a process of building or growing sensory awareness of possible meaning that may not yet be grasped fully. They speak of a movement through resonant felt sensing toward opportunities for clarity and new understanding.

Here processes of making sense and coming to know something are being formed through artistic representation.

Another important idea that Lett holds is that different arts modalities can provide access to and bring up into expression different ways of knowing. He says that “The arts are core vessels giving access to these modes [of knowing]” (2011, p. 14). The idea here is that by way of using different art modes, we can access and express different ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling, different ways of processing and understanding living experiencing. The important thing here is that different arts modalities tap into different ways of knowing, like different languages of the self, which, when merged in a process, can help to provide a more complete and multidimensional picture of who we are (Lett, 1993, p. 14).

An assumption I hold is that we know things in many ways. We know things conceptually, sensually, in an embodied way, visually, and sonorously, to name just a few. Consequently, at the core of my inquiry is the use of multi-modal arts as a means to access and bring up into expression the resonant felt sensing, the pre-reflective, the lesser known and ambiguous responses to living experience that are held inside and in relationship. These responses are manifestations of what we know, which is often implicit and thus not easily or readily articulated with words/language alone. This is a movement from the not quite known to the known. By staying with what emerges in representation, exploring it, sitting with it, sharing it, we can come to make sense of it in a new way, to feel we know something about it, something about ourselves.
Another way that creative arts help to access, form, and co-create knowing has to do with the relationship between self and art materials. The process of engaging with art materials and creatively representing experience is itself one of making meaning. When using creative arts to represent experience I am actively engaging in a process of interaction with the art materials. I make choices as to what materials to use, what creative modality to engage in. These choices are made in a process of resonant engagement between my felt sense and the energetic and physical qualities of the materials.

The relationship between self and art works is also an important means to grow and clarify meaning. In this inquiry I have come to value processes of dialoguing with art works. I find that after creating an art object, or being present to another’s creation of an art object, I need to spend time with that object, to look at it, to reflect on it, to dialogue with it. McNiff dialogues with images as a process of creative exchange in order to get to the meaning of things. He suggests that engaging with images allows us to “dialogue with feelings and concerns that are not easily accessible to conventional thought” also to “open ourselves to the surprise and discoveries that occur through interplay” (McNiff, 2004, p. 91). Such surprises and discoveries are already new understandings or new perspectives, which open up possibilities for gains in understanding.

Elkins takes this a bit further when he says that such a dialogue leaves neither the art work or the viewer unchanged. “Ultimately, seeing alters the thing that is seen and transforms the seer. Seeing is metamorphosis, not mechanism” (Elkins, 1996, pp. 11–12). This really gels with my experience of dialoguing with art objects as an energetic meeting, as a process of growing familiarity that transforms my relationship with the object. The art tangibly draws me in. And as Elkins suggests I too feel that “each object has a presence—a being and face of its own” (1996, p. 12). Throughout this inquiry I engage in different ways and to differing degrees with art objects, or creative representations as a way of accessing and forming knowings.
Resonant Felt Sensing and Emergence

I have just discussed how the arts can help to articulate that which is implicit, not quite known, or difficult to express in order to come to new knowing. Here my focus shifts slightly to the process of this, which has to do with how engaging resonant felt sensing is an emergent process which can lead to knowing.

There is something significant when working emergently about the idea of staying with what resonates and the feeling of that in order to come to some new understanding. This resonance may be consonant or it may be dissonant. More often it is dissonance that holds the most difficulty but also the most potential for growth in understanding. So there is something important here about staying with dissonance, with uncertainty, with the unknown and exploring it.

Germana refers to Maslow’s ideas on the ‘creative attitude’, which is perceived as an “ongoing dynamic interplay between ‘knowing’ and ‘unknowing’” (Germana, 2007, p. 247). He speaks of the virtues of uncertainty and unknowing and distinguishes between them. The virtue of uncertainty according to Germana “is that through the dissonance imposed on us, we are moved to explore the unfamiliar more earnestly” (2007, p. 248). On the other hand the virtue of unknowing “is that through nonattachment to the known... we move ourselves to explore the familiar more earnestly” (2007, p. 249). The way I read this is that there is described a movement from the discomfort of uncertainty into the unfamiliar or the unknown. From here it is by opening up to this unknown or unfamiliar, by holding aside that which is known, that it becomes possible to move toward the familiar or known again. What seems to be important here is the value of staying with/in uncertainty and unknowing.
Often it is when experiencing uncertainty or the not quite known that artistic expression can allow us to explore these places in new ways. We explore in order to evoke something of the feeling of our experience. Gunaratnam beautifully describes the importance of this. “The capacity to feel and to live ‘in the question’ of difference, rather than to categorise and quantify its weight is challenging” (Gunaratnam, 2007, p. 281). The challenge is to stay within the feeling of experience, the resonant felt sense, and to hold aside explanation and outcomes. The work of this then is a work of holding aside or bracketing. This staying with can “enable a responsiveness that is capable of modulating uncomfortable psychic experiences whilst receiving uncertainty and ambivalence” (2007, p. 281). Staying with resonant felt sensing ultimately allows for a response to material, which may be very complex and difficult to articulate.

It is then essential to be open to uncertainty, to the unknown, to the uncomfortable, or to just what is there. Gunaratnam describes her experience of being open in this way, of working emergently. “I feel called, or more often whispered to and pestered, to take account of wispy and unformulated connections. I can find myself drawn to certain images or to photograph something and not know why” (Gunaratnam, 2007, p. 275). This speaks to emergence, where an embodied resonant felt sensing urges or even demands a response. Even if I may not know why this is happening, at some level I just know that it needs to happen. There is something within, a resonant felt sense or awareness that is striving to meet that which calls it, striving to move and emerge as or into something that is not yet known. At times in my work with data I have felt compelled to create an image, or a colour calls me insistently and fills me with a feeling of its rightness. Sometimes poems rush into my mind and insist on being caught. These examples all speak of a process of emergence where “artistic representations emerge or pull me towards them” (2007, p. 275). The path is created as I walk the inquiry.
It could be said that all research or inquiry processes are to some degree emergent. Even in a theory driven piece of research there is a degree of uncertainty regarding where the data may lead. Yet there is certainty that the data and the research will be contained within the broader parameters of the theoretical field within which the inquiry takes place. I believe that a point of difference and value in the kind of inquiry I am exploring is that it is not contained by theory or method. In this regard it operates in an unbounded field. Necessary conditions for working emergently are openness to what arises and calls us as well as flexibility.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an action born out of and thus closely linked to emergence. Reflexivity is a process of circular dialoguing with self and others through time. Merleau-Ponty’s work on reflection speaks to me of a reflexivity in all perception of, and embodied engagement with, self and the world.

As I understand it for Merleau-Ponty perception has to do with embodied sensing, where to hear, see, and feel holds much meaning. He says perception is “grasped from within by authentic reflection” and it is the process of reflection on perception that “infuses meaning (sens) into the sensible” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. 39). In this way then reflection within reflexive dialogue with self is a process of making sense. It is for me important to dialogue with myself, to check in with my experiencing of “the process of the passage of events” (Mead, 1934, p. 176). I check in with what happens for me, with my resonant felt sensing, my responses, my feelings. This is what Denzin refers to when he says reflexivity is about “recording a constantly changing internal and external world” (Denzin, 1997, p. 202).

Mead says the ‘I’ is “something that is, so to speak, responding” to that which is being experienced (1934, p. 177). He says “the ‘I’ of this moment is present in the ‘me’ of the next moment. There again I cannot turn around quick enough to catch myself” (Mead, 1934, p. 174). It is important to try to catch up with oneself, to engage the ‘I’ then with the ’me’ now, to track responses to experiencing, and the shifts and turns they take. This is
referred to as a reflexive looping of ‘I’ and ‘me’. “It is the reflexive looping of I and me which effectively allows the subject to engage in dialogue with itself and thus to decide, with a fair degree of conscious awareness, what it wishes to do” (Crotty, 1996, p. 56).

Throughout this thesis and as part of working emergently I regularly reflect on my experiencing in an ongoing reflexive process. Sometimes I stop and reflect, other times I reflect on the go. This process is important to me as it allows me time and space to check in with myself and my own experiencing, as well as with my participants, peer-companions, and their data. Reflexivity is not just about reflecting on and engaging with self in experience, but also about reflecting on and engaging with others in experience. Denzin speaks of reflexivity as a relational activity which involves others who participate in an inquiry (Denzin, 1997). Crossley agrees saying that “the view of others is necessary in order to complete the reflexive loop” (Crossley, 1996, p. 57).

Reis makes the point that in her experience it is necessary to maintain “a constant dialogue with research participants to continually reframe the researcher’s own understandings” (Reis, 2011, p. 4). Thus it is by way of reflexively engaging with self and others that it becomes possible to ‘reframe’ perceptions and understandings, to make choices on the bases of understandings gained and move forward. As previously mentioned, my others in this inquiry include art materials and art works. Lyle describes the way reflexive looping facilitates growth and change. “Each time I move forward again, I take with me an altered or deepened self-knowledge gained from my reflections on prior experiences” (Lyle, 2009, p. 294).
Actioning Values which Inform My Method

This forgetting... it is a wakefulness so alert, so lucid, so new that it is a good-bye to night and a pure opening onto a day to come.

(Foucault, 1987, p. 56)

Introduction

The notion of forgetting as a wakefulness, as a means to access new openings, holds great importance for this inquiry. It points to an attitude of openness and aware presence to what unfolds, which I value. I am exploring moments of living experiencing in an inquiry into qualities and processes of being with/in intersubjective spaces.

In the previous sections I discuss the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this inquiry. In this section I discuss how the values I hold are actioned in this inquiry. I attempt to articulate how the methods I adopt are informed and shaped by the values that underpin this work. To give you an outline in broad steps there are four parts to this section. First, the context of the inquiry is time and space, present moments of time in shared intersubjective space/spaces. Second, this exploration is made by way of engaging in a series of cycles of inquiry. Third, in a dynamic process I move between bracketing in and bracketing out what I think I know. Fourth, I value maintaining a descriptive attitude.

In Time and Space

Our experience of being in the world occurs in and through time and space. Daniel Stern in his book The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life says that “now is when we live our lives... The only time of raw subjective reality, of phenomenal experience, is the present moment” (Stern, 2004, p. 3). By focussing on how we are in a moment of time we are focussing awareness on experiencing the now of that moment. By speaking from ‘now’ we bypass the distance of talking about and begin to grow
a greater awareness of and presence to self in life. We speak directly from a position of ‘being in’ experience. Even if we are re-experiencing a past moment “we may be reliving something, but the reliving is going on now... Telling is a now experience, even though it refers to a present moment that occurs in the past” (2004, p. 23). We may be re-living or re-searching a past experience but the living and searching take place in a present now. Stern speaks of this as a “tight locking of experience into the present” (2004, p. 23).

This work is an exploration of living experiencing of being in intersubjective interaction. The units of living experience I initially explore are moments of time, or more accurately several series of moments, which take place in therapeutic interaction. Stern writes of the importance of exploring present moments as they are lived (Stern, 2004). “An event must be lived, with feelings and actions taking place in real time, in the real world, with real people, in a moment of presentness” (Stern, 2004, p. xiii). So again, what is important is living experience in the world with others. What Stern adds is the focus on the context of time. Living experiencing occurs in moments of time and it is very important to be present to just what occurs in those moments of time. He posits that there is a “need for an examination of the temporal architecture of the present moment and the realisation that it encompasses a short emotional ‘lived story’” (Stern, 2004, p. xv). I like the idea of a ‘lived story’ or a ‘living story’ being held in the time and space of a series of moments. To unpack that story is to allow a telling of it.

In this work I explore and tell the story of four living experiences of being in interaction. Each of the four examples of living experiencing that I and my participants explore are shared moments in time and space. In each I or my participants begin by focussing on one moment, which then opens up into a series of moments. We represent these moments in various different creative modalities. Each series of moments, tells a living story of the confronting moments inquired into. I believe that these moments are also spatially framed by the relational intersubjective spaces in which they occur.
There is something very important for me about the intersubjective space of interaction as it includes, yet is much more than physical space. It is the space of me, the space of you, and the space of what lies between us, what moves between us, what grows of us and transforms us. Thorburn and Hibbard comment on this saying:

Kay documented the spatiality, pace and rhythm she observed in our movements. It was a dance of “us” rather than a room that contained him, her and another. “Us” included our conversations, our bodies, our drawings and other creative representations that emerged in the session (Thorburn & Hibbard, 2008, p. 160).

So here the ‘space of us’ holds much. It holds time, it holds the rhythm and pace of our movements, it holds our inter-actions. The ‘space of us’ holds our conversations in all forms, our spoken words, our storied and poetic words, and our images. It holds our bodies also. This is an intensely rich and dynamic space, a space that breathes with the rhythms of our experiencing and grows in co-creative processes of forming.

This is the kind of space I am inquiring into in this thesis, the intersubjective relational space of us. Stern specifically speaks of time as structuring the intersubjective space of interactions moment by moment.

What interests me is a sense I have here of the crucial interrelation between the space of us and the time of us. Stern says:

... the intersubjective motive is also at play in directing the second-by-second regulation of the therapeutic process, where the sharing of mental landscapes is desired and must be negotiated. It is in this context that the present moment takes on its role and relevance as the basic negotiating move or step to establish the nature of the intersubjective space in psychotherapy. (Stern, 2004, p. 111)

So here sharing is desired and must be negotiated. Sharing the space of us is the context of an interaction. Within this intersubjective context Stern sees the time of a present moment as serving a specific role. It serves the role of providing a step to, or facilitating a move toward establishing the ‘nature’ of the intersubjective space. While Stern speaks specifically of therapeutic
interaction, I believe this is applicable to all forms of interaction. Thus within the space of us, the time of us provides a structure that creates possibility for gaining in understanding of intersubjective spaces. This is precisely what I am attempting to do. Not to ‘establish’ as Stern says, but rather to know more about qualities of intersubjective spaces.

**Exploring Experience**

When engaged in inquiring into moments of living experiencing I have worked to embody, to practice, the values and philosophical ideals discussed so far. This is what shapes the method by which I have chosen to engage and work this inquiry. My approach to inquiry is partly informed by a phenomenological method. Here I just want to say that I consider phenomenology to be primarily a philosophy and not a theory. I understand it to be a philosophy that addresses how we are in the world, how we experience the world, and how we make sense of the stuff of life. What I do not take on board here is the possibility of arriving at essential or absolute meaning, which some phenomenologists aspire to.

Crotty posits two kinds of phenomenology, the old and the new. He is critical of the ‘new phenomenology’ for shifting focus from the phenomena of human experiencing to the experiencing subject. He says that too often it is the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the subject of inquiry that become the focus of inquiry (Crotty, 1996, pp. 1–4). He calls for a return to ‘old phenomenology’, which does not rush to make sense of individual experience. Rather, the assumption that all experience is intersubjective creates an imperative to allow the interactive process of being in experience to unfold. Crotty says,

> What phenomenology requires is a radical attempt to return to pre-reflective, pre-predictive experience—to our experience as it is immediately given to us before we make sense of it. This means a return to the possibilities for meaning which our experience offers. (1996, p. 4)
What I adopt from this is the emphasis on the how, on the process of being in and exploring experience, which is, I believe, important to making meaning. What I do not adopt from a phenomenological approach is the focus on exploring particular phenomena with the goal to arrive at its nature or essence. I am interested in exploring living experience not the things or phenomenon of experience. As Van Manen says “phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a ‘thing’ what it is” (Van Manen, 1984, p. 38). This quest for essence, for ‘that which makes a thing what it is’ is not one I choose to follow in this inquiry. I believe that the best we can achieve is an approximation to meaning, a statement of what we know now.

What I present in this thesis is a series of interactions with other people, with myself, and with data. These interactions or engagements represent cycles of inquiry that are linked, but which also involve a variety of different perspectives, positions, and contexts. My interest is in representing, exploring, and articulating processes of intersubjective engagement. For it is I believe the very processes of engagement, within time and space, which work to shape and form our intersubjective interactions. This goes back to the how of intersubjectivity, the how of being in relational spaces. Richardson speaks of the importance of transparency of process, where readers “want and deserve to know how the researcher claims to know” (Richardson, 2005, p. 962). It is precisely the articulation of processes of engagement that allows for openness, transparency and access to claims of knowing and meaning-making.

To take this a step further, from a postmodern perspective what we know is always in relation to the context (historical, social, temporal, and spatial) within which the experiencing self engages. In relation to this idea Richardson says “writing is always partial, local, and situational and that our selves are always present” (Richardson, 2005, p. 962). A key assumption here is that how we are present is necessarily fluid and shifting, as what we
are present to is not fixed but rather shifts and grows according to changing relational contexts. Richardson makes the point that this approach or perspective frees us up to tell and re-tell in many ways (2005, p. 962). It is by telling and re-telling from different positions, perspectives, from different places and times, and with different others that it becomes possible to build up a truly multidimensional telling. In the words of Richardson, “there is no such thing as ‘getting it right,’ only ‘getting it’ differently contoured and nuanced” (2005, p. 962).

What is important for me here is the idea of telling and re-telling in many possible ways to produce knowings that are many contoured and nuanced, that are many-faceted, and that are ever growing rather than fixed and finite. Richardson uses the metaphor of the crystal to describe this process of coming to new knowings and making meaning.

The central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose. (Richardson, 2005, p. 963)

I feel this metaphor of crystallization fits with what I do in this thesis. It is by way of a series of cycles of inquiry that I arrive at many different stories or tellings. These stories describe different facets of engaging with/in intersubjective space, and also describe what I and others have come to understand from each of these facets.

This way of working allows for a journeying through cycles of experiencing where each part of this journeying process contributes to the form, quality, and structure of the inquiry and meanings made. Rumbold, Allen, Alexander, & van Laar (2008) refer to Richardson’s idea of a crystal but
focus on the metaphor of a prism. They say, “knowing together differently is a dynamic process; the process is always growing and changing, it is many faceted, intersubjective, and contextually positioned... knowing moves from one form to another, it changes speed, things become refracted as well as reflected” (Rumbold et al., 2008, p. 318). What is important here and resonates with the way I have formed this inquiry, is the idea that this way of working is a dynamic process. It is a dynamic process, which involves intersubjective journeying through different temporal and spatial contexts, with different companions, and employing different creative modes of expression. Each cycle of experiencing sees knowing co-created in fluid processes of intersubjective engagement with creative representations of experiencing, with others, and with self.

**Bracketing Out and In**

When forming this inquiry it has been necessary to consistently stay with, to stay within, living experience. For me this means to be open and flexible, and more importantly to always speak from and not about experience. To return again to phenomenology, Willis speaks of the importance of staying with lived experience, of slowing the researcher down and focussing on “the lived experience of some activity” (Willis, 2001, p. 3). So how then can we work to slow things down as well as stay with and illuminate specific qualities of a living experience? Phenomenology says firstly, by being non-interpretive and not making assumptions and secondly, by avoiding explanation and interpretation by maintaining a descriptive attitude. Bracketing out, or epoché, this idea of holding aside assumptions and biases (Spinelli, 2005, p. 20), is important to me in the context of phenomenological description. Yet I believe it is also very important, in the context of intersubjective engagement and responding, to also bracket in what we assume, think we know, and feel. This is because in order to be fully present to another and authentically offer up something of our experiencing in response, it is necessary to bring our own feelings, knowings, and perspectives into the interaction.
In this inquiry, my interactions with participants, peer-companions, and myself, with art materials and with co-created art objects, are all forms of intersubjective responding. Intersubjectivity and intersubjective responding as Stolorow speaks of it is not about bracketing out, rather it is all about bracketing in. He speaks of “reciprocally interacting worlds of experience” in “intersubjective transactions” (1994, p. x). This suggests to me an engagement in a dialogue between two robust beings, a transaction where each brings into it their own experiences, senses, pre-conceptions, and what they think they know. Thus, it is important in the process of responding to another to bracket in what we think we know and what our felt senses are telling us.

For me what happens in experiencing intersubjective interaction is a bit of bracketing out and a lot of bracketing in. This is a very important point. Here I will address bracketing out. Part of the work of maintaining an attitude of openness and being present is to try to bracket out all that may distract me. Crotty makes the point that it is precisely by staying with what presents itself, by bracketing out our bias and assumptions that we can maintain a critical attitude. He says: 

Phenomenology is about putting that meaning system in abeyance. Far from inviting us to explore our everyday meanings as they stand, it calls upon us to lay them aside for the moment and... see what emerges for us. (Crotty, 1996, p. 6)

Thus for Crotty, the holding aside of assumptions is a means to re-think, re-look, re-experience. Bracketing out what we know thus allows for a truly critical attitude. This requires openness to and allowing of what is present, which speaks of freedom and fluidity as opposed to strict control. As Willis says it is important to keep “an investigative mind deliberately open... and remain attentive to what is present” (2001, p.1). What presents itself in such an inquiry may be uncertain or unknown, but it is important to ‘see what emerges for us’ and to stay with what emerges. When I begin inquiring into my own experiencing I initially work hard to be present to, and maintain
openness to, my experiencing. I work to stay with what emerges as it emerges. I do not try to direct or control. When companioning my participants I initially work to hold aside anything I might know or assume about their experience of ways of working. My focus is on being as fully present to them in their experiencing as I can be. I am there in the experience with them and for them. Bracketing out in this way allows me to ready or equip myself to be open and present to what emerges. I want to keep my eyes open and unclouded. This is the kind of bracketing out I do in this context. It is for me preparatory work; it is about preparing myself and coming to an experience aware of what I bring and how I bring it.

Once I am engaged with another in a process of experiencing I work to selectively bracket in. This is about present moment embodied awareness leading to decisions about what and when I bracket in and out. When I am present to and engaged in a process of intersubjective interaction I am there for the other and work to bracket in (or out as appropriate) all that I think, feel, see, and assume in response to the other. I also take this value of bracketing in to my work with data.
Description

The practice of description and of maintaining a descriptive attitude is important to the way I work. I feel that it is necessary to bracket out when doing phenomenological description. Phenomenological description is about really looking at something and opening ourselves up to it. For me the value of bracketing out and description is in providing the opportunity to see if something surprising and unexpected can happen. How then do we look to see, to see just what is there? The answer is, as Giorgi says, to maintain a ‘descriptive attitude’.

I would say that description is the use of language to articulate the intentional objects of experience... The key point here is that a descriptive attitude implies a certain necessity demanded by saying that one describes what presents itself precisely as it presents itself, neither adding or subtracting from it. (Giorgi, 1992, p. 5)

So the important thing here is also to stay with just what is there and to not try to explain or interpret. Description is a process that can work to clarify the how of experience by revealing underlying structures of individual experiencing. For example, if there are patterns or variations it is necessary to simply describe them in order to account for them, explanation is bracketed out (Giorgi, 1992, p. 8). If there is ambiguity and uncertainty, again just describe it rather than try to make sense of it (Giorgi, 1992, p. 13).

Giorgi says above that it is language that is used to articulate, to represent and describe experiencing. In this thesis I do use language to describe the objects of experiencing, but I also use visual images to describe. It has become very important to me in this work to be visually descriptive, to visually tell the stories of living experience. Using images I am able to describe the form, the shape of relational spaces and their parts. I am able to stay with a very close description through cycles of experiencing by using tracing paper to describe/re-scribe the forms and shapes of spaces. In this way I am able to move around in the spaces, juxtapose spaces, and work
from different perspectives in order to describe what is there, in a way that I don’t think I could have done otherwise. So for me visual description allows me to set the field and then move around in it, to view, feel, experience it from different perspectives. This potentially opens up unexpected new ways of seeing and understanding.

Throughout this inquiry I also do a lot of description of my resonant felt sense of engaged moments. I work hard to maintain a descriptive attitude in this context in order to share my process of engagement with experiencing. This is very important to me as it allows for a transparency of method and reflexive practice to be maintained. This is possible if my process of being with the data (and my participants, peer-companions, and myself) is clearly articulated, including all moments of uncertainty, of doubt, of struggle. It is important to stay with just what presents itself and describe it. I am describing the how, my process of experiencing and responding.
An Emergent Arts Inquiry

If we indeed know more than we can tell,
then we should try telling what we know
with anything that will carry the message forward.
(Eisner, 2008, p. 9)

Introduction

The approach to, and form of, emergent art based inquiry I adopt in this thesis is developed from the ontology, epistemology, and axiology discussed previously in this chapter. This approach and its conceptual underpinnings is adapted from and influenced by a process of experiential arts-based inquiry developed over a period of time by Dr Warren Lett and several collaborators in Melbourne, Australia. Lett and some of his collaborators went on to form the Melbourne Institute of Experiential Creative Arts Therapy (Miecat). This small group of people worked together experientially to explore how creative arts can be used in inquiry into knowing and meaning-making and developed an open-ended set of procedures for inquiry. The initial purpose was “one of assisting ourselves to know, value and take responsibility for our own potential for inquiry into our own meaningful ways of knowing, which are our human heritage” (Lett, 2011, p. x). Fundamentally, this form of inquiry grew out of a desire to better know, value, and take responsibility for the meanings we make of our lives, our experiences. It is a search of and for knowing about our lives. In a way the Miecat procedures are enactments of the concepts and values I have already written about. In this section I will outline for you these procedures and the ways in which I employ them in this thesis. It is important to note that this form of inquiry is not fixed. It is fluid and emergent and is driven and given direction by all that arises into representation, into awareness, into understanding along the inquiry’s way.
Finally, in order to pave the way for and provide a means to both orient and guide you through the often complex terrain of this inquiry I map the inquiry process for you the reader. I map the various cycles of experiencing, representing, reflecting, sharing, describing, reducing, and arriving at statements of knowing that form the process by which I have co-created, and explored my data.

**Procedures of Inquiry**

Over several years of collaborative and participative work, Lett and his companions developed a set of procedures and a process of inquiry into experiencing using multi-modal arts (Lett, 2001). The process developed is collaborative and open-ended, fluid and adaptable. The procedures are not intended to be rigidly followed. Rather, they provide a guide where procedural steps can be repeated or left out altogether. In this way the procedures for inquiry can be used in a potentially emergent process. I say potentially because how such an open-ended process is engaged is utterly dependent on who is engaged in it. Following I describe this process of inquiry highlighting **procedures** in bold text, and other important aspects or qualities of procedures in italics.

This process of inquiry is experiential, it explores living experiencing. In the words of Lett, “these are lived experiences, told, not in the details, but in the abstracted dynamic of their own experiencing. Content, form and meaning are inextricably interwoven” (Lett, 2001, p. 328). This is what Lett refers to as integrative flow, where knowing, being, and valuing cannot be engaged separately in the flow of experiencing. Rather, every moment of experiencing is integrated in a flowing process of meaning-making (Lett, 2011, p. 278). In this thesis the access points to/for experiencing are confronting moments in therapeutic interaction. This provides the entry to and a context for our experiencing. Experiencing is being present to the felt sense of an experience, to the thoughts, images, remembering, body feelings, and emotions that are currently present in awareness.
An important idea that is adopted in this form of inquiry is that of
horozontalisation. A horozontalisation, or horizontalisation, is where no one
part holds more importance than any other. All parts are equal, are on
a horizontal plane in terms of significance (Moustakas, 1995, 1994; Spinelli,
1989). In the words of Moustakas, “every expression of the person in
therapy, every point on the horizon of that person’s world is accepted
as having equal validity and value” (1995, p. 196). He goes on to say,
“The challenge is to let everything that appears in consciousness, relevant to
the issue, stand out in its own way, accepting all of it, receiving all of it,
valuing all of it” (1995, p. 196). In this way, I also see horozontalisation as
a means of creating an emergent picture of the unfolding of experience.
I start from the beginning of my memories and felt sense and work
proceeding through time.

Experience is represented in one or more arts modalities. In this way
representations are multi-modal. This act of representation is an interactive
one with the material of the world and involves bringing into expression our
response to experience. By using different forms of representation it is
possible to access different ways of knowing about experience.

The next step is description. Description is, as we have discussed, a means
of staying with just what is there, in the now, and thus staying away from
interpretation. I like the idea of description as unveiling, as a tool in the
process of unveiling our meanings and understandings. It is primarily
phenomenological description, which Miecat uses.

From description we then carry out reduction by focussing in on any key
words, phrases, or images that hold resonance. Key words provide a way to
distil a lot of often disparate material into something manageable. They are
also a means to move from the complex and dense matter of experience to
a place of relative simplicity and clarity. In this thesis I isolate key words
from descriptions in a movement toward clarity. It is by bracketing in my
felt sense responses to the words, by staying with what holds energy for me, that I come to make choices about what is important to engage and pursue and what to dismiss. Another form of key words I use is the naming or titling of images. I invite peer-companions to focus in on what resonates for them in the images, and on the basis of that resonance to form a title that names the image. In this way the complexity of a visual image is reduced to key words.

Lett and his companions began to want a sense of connection to their experiencing beyond that which description of representations and reduction to key words provided. Consequently, they developed the procedure of **intersubjective responding** (Lett, 2001, p. 169). This being a collaborative, intersubjective form of inquiry, there is an assumption that our engagement involves **resonant intersubjective dialogue**. It is necessary to bracket in the resonance felt to the other, the other’s representation, description or key words, and create an intersubjective response to it. Lett says this form of response “consists of the deeply empathic/intuitive sense of what is there at the heart of the materials... what is felt to be core or essential, which draws attention and is responded to...” (Lett, 2001, p. 340). Thus, this process allows for an ongoing dialogue of resonant responses in a process of moving toward clarity of understanding and meaning.

After representing experience, and at regular intervals throughout an inquiry process, **reflection** is important. This involves attending to and spending time with the energy of the representations, other material, and/or companions, and tuning in to what resonates. That is the feelings, images, emotions, bodily sensations that are experienced. This is a form of intersubjective dialogue and it is also part of a reflexive process. This way of working allows a constant checking in with ‘what I know now’.

It is by way of a series of cycles of experiencing that I work with my participants, peer-companions, myself, and my data in this thesis. Each chapter presents a different data set; each presents a unique intersubjective dialogue that has emerged through the inquiry. It is by way
of identifying patterns of experiencing that emerge through the inquiry that it becomes possible to focus up possible gains in understanding or meaning. For example I go through processes of reduction by naming or titling images and then clustering those titles. This gives me a sense of patterns within the dynamic experienced and can lead to gains in understanding. Alternatively, at times I continue in a dialogue with peer-companions and the data cycling through procedures until I arrive at a place where I feel that I have gained something significant. This process of ‘arriving’ is described in Chapters Three and Four.

Once a body of data is gathered it becomes necessary to reduce and collate the data in order to be able to make sense of it. This is done by clustering the data. Clustering is more about the pragmatics of working with qualitative data and less about fundamental values. Clustering is a procedure that works to reduce and make manageable large amounts of data. Clustering is another form of reduction and movement toward greater clarity where known data are put into new relationship by re-grouping them. Here resonance to what belongs together is important. I use clustering within the body of the thesis. More significantly, in my findings chapter it is clustering that enables me to review and reduce the significant body of data generated in this inquiry and ultimately come to a creative synthesis.

A creative synthesis is a bringing together of all constructions of meaning in order to come to a statement of what is known now, to come to an approximation of meaning. It is a summary that reduces to key understandings gained and meanings arrived at throughout the inquiry. The meanings we make are fluid and ever evolving, they are constantly being built upon throughout the process of an inquiry, through the process of life. In the words of Allen, this form of inquiry “aims for increasingly refined constructions of meanings” (Allen, 2004, p. 13).4

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4 In this thesis each chapter is independently page numbered. This quote is taken from Volume 1, Chapter 1.
Mapping the Inquiry Process

This thesis consists of four inquiries into the experience of qualities of being in intersubjective space. As mentioned previously I initially inquire into the experience of the companions, not the companionees, and then bring these initial experiences into further cycles of inquiry with myself and other peer-companions. In this way each inquiry follows its own path and develops in different ways as I move through cycles of experiencing, which can be a bit confusing. Consequently I have created for you the reader, a mapping of the cycles of experiencing myself and others engaged in for each of the four inquiries. I include these in an effort for clarity. If you find yourself lost or in confusing terrain reference to these maps may help you orient again.

In these maps the black text refers to me. The coloured text refers to others with whom I participate and collaborate. The purple text refers to the group of me and four of my peer-companions who often met to share with and companion each other. The pink text refers to the dancer, also a peer-companion who responded to some of my images in dance. The blue text refers to another peer-companion with whom I shared images and from whom I received responses. The orange text refers to my participant Jay. The green text refers to my participant Sam.
Inquiry Process Map One

In Chapter Two I inquire into my experience of intersubjective space by exploring a confronting moment I experienced companioning a client in a one-on-one interaction.

Figure 1.1 Inquiry Process Map for Chapter Two
In Chapter Three I inquire into my experience of intersubjective space by exploring a confronting moment I experienced facilitating a group.

Figure 1.2 Inquiry Process Map for Chapter Three
In Chapter Four I begin by working with participant Jay. I inquire into the experience of intersubjective space by companioning Jay’s exploration of a confronting moment she experienced facilitating a group.

Figure 1.3 Inquiry Process Map for Chapter Four
In Chapter Five I begin by working with participant Sam. I inquire into the experience of intersubjective space by companioning Sam’s exploration of a confronting moment she experienced companioning a client in a one-on-one interaction.

Figure 1.4 Inquiry Process Map for Chapter Five
The names I use for the participants are not their real names but pseudonyms to protect their identity and provide confidentiality. Indeed I have not included real names for any of the peer-companions or participants who have a voice in this work. In order to make it very clear to the reader just whose voice speaks when, I have adopted the use of different fonts and format styles. The voice of all participants and peer-companions that is transcribed is presented in italic text:

Peer-companion 1: It is the quality of being present but there is something else located between. The quality of being present has got something very strongly to do not just with what is in one person but how the relational is figured in the between of us.

When I am included in a dialogue my voice also appears in italics:

Stacey: As you speak I am noticing your body language. You arms are open and stretched out in different directions. (I spread my arms out also as I speak)  
Jay: I am stretched (She spreads out her arms again)

My own creative writing, which includes descriptions and stories, is presented as:

It begins very slowly. One letter written on a page, then the page is torn out. One letter written on the next page, that page is then torn out.

Poetic essence statements that are co-creations are shown as:

Complex entities fluttering  
On moving grounds  
To align  
And join the fragments  
To solidify the space in between  
Out to the edges  
I move in  
Seeing sensing being  
I feel a movement  
We sit with  
Settling
Poetic essence statements that are my own are shown as:

An awkward coming together
Then things begin to shift, the ground moves
We are dancing now, moving to meet in the space
There is uncertainty in this movement
More movement and a wave breaks, it both joins and distances us
There is a pause
A space for breathing

The main body of text that surrounds and carries these parts is my own writing, my own engagement with this inquiry into intersubjective space, and is the same as the text you are currently reading.
Chapter Two

Finding My Way: What Lies Between Us
Finding my way
Introduction

I start this project with a very different focus for inquiry from qualities of being with/in intersubjective space that ultimately I arrive at. I begin initially with the aim to explore moments of shift in therapeutic relationships. I focus in on my experience of a one on one therapeutic interaction with a child in which we are exploring anger and safe ways to release anger. While this interaction is quite confronting for me, there is for the child a moment of shift in awareness, which is very significant for him. What engages me initially is a curiosity about just what happens in such moments of shift. I am present to this shift in awareness and attempt to represent it in visual form. This marks the starting point of an exploration of this moment.

This process of inquiring into my experience of being present to a moment of shift, of bringing it up into representation, and then sharing these representations with others, ultimately leads me to a new understanding. When I share my representations with others their responses in turn lead me to an unexpected but welcome shift. This change just feels right for me and for this thesis. My focus changes from moments of shift to an inquiry into qualities of intersubjective space. However, I decide to stay with the exploration of confronting moments in therapeutic interaction as access points for this inquiry. My experience of changing focus does I feel underline the importance of sharing and of working emergently, of sometimes allowing the data to lead, certainly of listening to the stories of possibility the data tells.
The Beginning

The beginning point of this piece of work was decided upon after a conversation with my supervisor. I held inside a general sense of spaces and ideas of interest. A key idea that catches my interest is that of a moment in a therapeutic relationship when a significant shift occurs. Then it is the space of this shift, a temporal space, a moment, which calls out to me. This idea is influenced by the work of Daniel N. Stern in his book, *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* (Stern, 2004). Stern speaks of time as both chronos, or chronological time, and kairos or subjective time. He says “In the world of chronos, the present instant is a moving point in time headed only toward a future” (Stern, 2004, p. 5). Here the present moment is a fluidly and continually moving part of a greater continuum. It is chased by the past and racing toward the future. On the other hand, “Kairos is the passing moment in which something happens as the time unfolds. It is the coming into being of a new state of things, and it happens in a moment of awareness” (Stern, 2004, p. 7). So kairos can be slowed down and opened up, it can hold a picture or pictures of the experiencing self moving through the moment, it is perhaps like a snapshot of a present moment in a state of suspension between the past and future. Furthermore, there is in the concept of kairos something about the possibility for change. What can possibly happen in a moment? The explorations I made for my Masters paper into one moment led me to understand that one moment can be unfolded, stretched, slowed down, and depthed (Bush, 2008). One moment holds all our patterns of being, and thus when unfolded can hold endless possibilities for being. I learnt that it is possible for anything and everything to happen in a moment; I learnt that great shifts in awareness and opportunities for change can result. I know that I now wish to further explore the temporal space of a moment and I decide to look specifically at a moment when a significant shift occurs.
The very special moments of shift, which I have experienced in conversations, in intersubjective expeditions of inquiry, in moments of meeting and sharing with others, are moments that have long held my interest and sparked an intense curiosity in me. I feel that what changes is understanding of self in the relational world. What changes and shifts is the way I see, the way I make sense of my world, for as soon as we shift the angle of sight the view or the picture changes. As soon as we engage in a dialogue with another it is as if a mirror of the experiencing self is being held up. In a moment, a very small piece of time, very great distances may be travelled; oceans of understanding may be traversed. This is precisely what holds my interest. It feels to me that time, as experienced, is truly fluid in its unfolding. Attending to these temporal qualities is important to my process of interaction, to my process of inquiry. I am ready to explore the spatial, relational, and temporal qualities of a moment of interaction in time. The next thing I need to do is to find a moment to focus in on.

**The Moment**

At this point I know that I will work with a moment or moments, but not what moments. I know I am starting with an attitude of openness to what experiences, in this case experiences in my therapeutic work, hold energy for me. At this time my work is with young children between the ages of three to twelve who have experienced the loss of family members through death or divorce. I facilitate grief and loss groups as well as hold one-on-one therapeutic sessions with the children.

It is not long before I experience a highly intense display of emotion in a one-on-one interaction with a child. We are exploring safe ways to release and explore anger by tearing up telephone books. The idea is for the child to focus in on something that arouses feelings of anger and then release the anger by tearing up the telephone books. I stay with the child as
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a companion through the experience while at the same time allowing space for the child to release and explore as she/he needs. We are in quite a small room and as the child begins to gather pace and let go into the experience, I move out of the way as much as I can to observe and to allow her/him space. It is difficult for me to stay with the intensity of the emotion in the space. Yet through this experience, and by way of being able to stay with/within this emotion, the child arrives at a moment of shift, a gain in awareness, which is quite profound. The child is surprised and moved by this new awareness. This experience is both a confronting one for me, yet at the same time holds so much energy for me that I cannot let it go. Especially interesting to me is witnessing the moment of shift in awareness. I decide, on the day after this experience, to choose this moment as the beginning point of my inquiry.

It is important to make very clear that while the experience I explore is shared, the moments that I unfold are moments of my experiencing of the time and space we shared. There are many moments that lead up to the key moment just described. Having decided on the moment/moments I now focus on the next step, which is to represent my experience of this interaction in a series of drawings. I do this while the experience is still fresh.

Representation: A Visual Description

I decide to try and represent my experience descriptively, describing what I feel and observe in these moments. Yet, rather than begin by using words to describe my experience I decide to use images. I feel the need to create a visual description as it is visual images that fill my mind when I think of this experience. I focus in on and immerse myself in my memory of this interaction, this is a re-experiencing. I begin to draw my sense of it frame by frame so to speak in a series of snapshots of moments. The series of drawings I create follow.
Figure 2.1: Releasing Anger #1

Figure 2.2: Releasing Anger #2

Figure 2.3: Releasing Anger #3
Finding my way

Figure 2.7: Releasing Anger #7

Figure 2.8: Releasing Anger #8
Finding my way

Figure 2.9: Releasing Anger #9

Figure 2.10: Releasing Anger #10
Figure 2.11: Releasing Anger #11

Figure 2.12: Releasing Anger #12
Figure 2.13: Releasing Anger #13

Figure 2.14: Releasing Anger #14

Figure 2.15: Releasing Anger #15
After I have finished these drawings I spend some time sitting with them and looking at them. I am in a way back in the experience, immersed in it still. I do feel quite strongly that these images capture something essential about moments in my experience with the child and his anger. Yet somewhere in me I am also a bit unsure of these images. They seem quite childlike and I feel uncertain about showing them to anyone else. I quickly hold these thoughts and put them to one side for now. While still immersed in the experience I decide to now write a description of it, which follows.

**Representation: A written description**

It begins very slowly. One letter written on a page, then the page is torn out. One letter written on the next page, that page is then torn out. Another letter and another page, again and again, as I wonder just what the writing may read. This though is not for me to see. It is I realise something that dredges up very angry feelings for my companionee. The process of writing then tearing slowly begins to speed up. It seems to take a very long time. A bit faster now, slowly faster. Faster and faster until handfuls of paper begin to fly as they are torn from the book. Sitting down and tearing up, in this slow crescendo of building pace one whole book is now gone. Another book is presented and standing now there is a struggle to find balance as with strength and force the book is attacked. How to hold the book and still tear it up at pace? This way, like when reading a book? No! That way I need to use two hands to hold? No! This way? Yes! Book hangs down as one hand holds a corner, the other tears handfuls at a time. Faster and faster in big sweeping movements. Happy now a rhythm builds and it is time for another book. Sweep and tear, tossing the paper with each sweep, red face glows hot and sweaty, magnified by the intense focus brought to this task. Anger and concentration so intense, so close, I feel and see it as tangible waves of emotion. I see the air around us slowly filling with these waves of red heat and anger radiating out from the tearing heart. Another book is gone, scattered on the ground around us as the next is picked up. Watching I feel as if there is barely room for me in this space. I find I have moved to the corner of the room, holding myself small and quiet I am immersed in watching, in attending, wanting to allow space and time. I can feel that my eyes are very big in my head. All eyes now I feel them opened wide, popping out of my head. My heart is beating fast. Throughout my body I feel muscles tensed. It is difficult, confronting,
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and a little bit scary, to be in the room with such strong and intense emotion. It is as if all this emotion is being released into the room along with all the torn paper. I am holding my knees with my hands just watching and at times holding my breath. I feel awe at the power and energy of this emotion. Sitting in the corner arms wrapped around my knees, big eyes and heart thumping, in awe.

I am struck by something here, which I am not sure that I can articulate. It has to do with the very different qualities of the images, which also describe the interaction, and the written word based description. There is something open, something about the relationship of shapes, spaces, and places of being in the interaction that is present in the visual but not in the written. The written description is very evocative of the moments and seems to focus in on feeling and doing qualities of being. I realise that this feeling I have points to the way different modes of expression, here drawing and writing, access different ways of knowing something. This is a good example of the multi-modal epistemology of making sense of experiencing.

To try to get a better grasp of what the feeling doing qualities of this interaction are, I decide to identify some key words from the written description. My intention here is to reduce the larger text to a clearer more defined and essential core. To illustrate the key words and demonstrate their embeddedness in the descriptive text I include again the description but this time with the key words highlighted in bold.

Following are the key words I isolate from this text.

It begins very slowly. One letter written on a page, then the page is torn out. One letter written on the next page, that page is then torn out. Another letter and another page, again and again, as I wonder just what the writing may read. This though is not for me to see. It is I realise something that dredges up very angry feelings for my companionee. The process of writing then tearing/slowly begins to speed up. It seems to take a very long time. A bit faster now, slowly faster. Faster and faster until handfuls of paper begin to fly as they are torn from the book. Sitting down and tearing up, in this slow crescendo of building pace one whole book is
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now gone. Another book is presented and standing now there is a struggle to find balance as with strength and force the book is attacked. How to hold the book and still tear it up at pace? This way, like when reading a book? No! That way I need to use two hands to hold? No! This way? / Yes! Book hangs down as one hand holds a corner, the other tears handfuls at a time. Faster and faster in big sweeping movements. Happy now a rhythm builds and it is time for another book. Sweep and tear, tossing the paper with each sweep, red face glows /hot and sweaty, magnified by the intense focus brought to this task. Anger and concentration so intense. so close. I feel and see it as tangible waves of emotion. I see the air around us slowly filling with these waves of red heat and anger radiating out from the tearing heart. Another book is gone, scattered on the ground around us as the next is picked up. Watching I feel as if there is barely room for me in this space. I find I have moved to the corner of the room, holding myself small and quiet I am immersed in watching, in attending, wanting to allow space and time. I can feel that my eyes are very big in my head. All eyes now I feel them opened wide, popping out of my head. My heart is beating fast. Throughout my body I feel muscles tensed. It is difficult, confronting and a little bit scary, to be in the room with such strong and intense emotion. It is as if all this emotion is being released into the room along with all the torn paper. I am holding my knees with my hands just watching and at times holding my breath. I feel awe at the power and energy of this emotion. Sitting in the corner arms wrapped around my knees, big eyes and heart thumping, in awe.

A Key Word Poetic Process

Now that you can see the key words in their original context I take them out of that context. I leave them in the order in which they appear in the text, but group them together into small meaning groups. These are meaning groups that stand out for me. My goal here is to try and tell a story of the process of this experience using the key words. Indeed the key words once grouped look and read like a narrative poem. Following is the key word poetic statement I create.

Slowly, torn, torn, again and again
Dredges up angry feelings
Writing then tearing
Slowly, speed up, faster, slowly faster
Finding my way

Faster and faster, begin to fly
    Tearing up
    Slow crescendo, building pace
    Struggle, balance, strength and force
    Attacked
    How? This way? That way? This way?
    Yes!
Tears handfuls, faster and faster, sweeping movements
    Happy
    Rhythm builds, sweep and tear, tossing
    Face glows, hot and sweaty
    Magnified, intense focus, anger
    Concentration, intense, so close
Tangible waves, slowly filling, waves of red heat
    Anger radiating
    Tearing heart, scattered
    Watching
    Barely room, in this space
    Moved, corner, holding
    Small and quiet
    Immersed, watching, attending
    Wanting, allow, space and time
    All eyes, opened wide, popping
    Beating fast, muscles tensed
    Confronting, scary
    Intense emotion, released, torn paper
    Holding, watching, holding my breath
    Awe
    Power and energy
    In the corner, big eyes, heart thumping
    Awe

Reading this poem/story I am taken back to the experience again. It quite clearly is a narrative telling of emotional and physical qualities of being in that interaction, being in that relational space. It describes my experience of observing and being present to the child’s strong emotion and is descriptive of the content of the interaction. It tells of strong emotion and of bodily reactions to the emotion present. It tells of the rhythm and pace of tearing the books and of the qualities of action and movement within this. While there are two positions—the observed and the observer—there is little definition of the positions. The emotion and action carries the narrative here.
At this point I am not sure how to proceed with this inquiry. I know that there is something about the images that I need to explore but am not sure how to go about this work. I am holding still that sense of the quality of what the images describe as being very different from the quality of what the words describe and I want to know more about this. I feel that in order to inquire into this I need to share my work to date with others. I have an opportunity to share this work with four peer-companions. I pack up what I have and prepare to meet my peer-companions. As I am on my way to this meeting I am feeling very nervous about sharing my images.

**Sharing With Others**

I arrive and share these drawings, and my written description. I first describe the initial experience, and then show them the series of drawings. They are received as a story, a form of telling story, and this instantly appeals to me. In these drawings I do try to remain very descriptive of my experience in an attempt to convey the string of moments as a coherent representation of an interaction. I am, I realise, telling the story of my experience. It is a story told of a therapeutic interaction broken down in a series of moments stretched out in time and in space. As one of my peer-companions points out, it is somehow connected to episodic narrative story telling. I really like this idea.

However this now leaves me feeling a little uncertain as to my initial interest in unpacking a significant moment of shift. The original moment of shift I am representing comes at the end of the series of drawings when the child and I are sitting together after gathering up all the anger (newspaper) into bags. Even though this moment of shift was my focus, when representing this experience it was very important for me to represent the whole process of tearing up the phone books as I had experienced it. When looking at the whole series now it feels a little like the moment of shift is a bit lost, I feel
I am moving away from this focus. The process of sharing these drawings with others has changed the way I am now looking at and seeing them. I now see new and previously unthought-of or unrealised potentials for exploring these images. My interest is now strongly attracted to the unfolding drama of the series of moments at the expense of the end moment. I realise that there are many moments within this series that I could choose to focus up. I could identify one moment and open it up to an inquiry. Or I could open up more than one moment, or the whole series, by focussing on a strand or aspect of the story/narrative. I now feel that there are several moments that hold interest for me. For example, the moment when I am sitting in the corner ‘all eyes’ holds interest. I feel very curious about all those eyes.

**An Intersubjective Response Received**

As we continue to discuss as a group the potential narrative strands in this story my imagination is really captured. I see that there is a story of the red anger, a story of the newspaper, a story of the eyes, a story of me in the space, and a story of the space between the two figures. So there are a lot of potential stories in this. I can see I will have to make a choice as to whether to stay with my original focus on the moment of shift, or focus on another particular moment within the interaction, or to inquire into some different narrative strands. My four peer-companions decide to each create a visual response to the ‘Releasing Anger’ series of drawings. As they are engaged in creating their responses I am sitting in some discomfort. I am at this time feeling quite confused and in a way emptied out. I realise that I no longer hold my original intention for focus. In its place is now an empty space of possibility. This feels uncertain and uncomfortable.

Then I begin to receive responses from my peer-companions. One response really stands out for me; it feels as if it grabs me and shakes me. This response exemplifies the form an exploration of a narrative strand may take, it focuses in on and develops the story of red anger. It is depicted below.
Figure 2.16: Intersubjective Response Received from a Peer-companion

And the words of this story are as follows:

Angry thoughts held tight
Still held tight
A slight shift
Movement starts
Building up to move out
Spreading......
......Further
Bits everywhere
Strong red legs
I’m over here
The big angry one
Dissipated into the torn bits
Bagged up
Gone!

The example given above by a peer-companion tells of the anger being held; it is ready to burst but is holding on tight in hard small arcs of red. Then something begins to shift, a movement begins and the anger gets
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ready for release. The red becomes more solid and circular, and the edges begin to blur in a seeming outward push. Then with release it spreads out further and further, there are bits of it everywhere, bits of red. Bits of red blurred and bleeding into one another. It is assertive with its strong red legs and demanding of attention. I’m over here’ it says, impossible to ignore. It is big and it is red and it fills the frame. Then all of a sudden it starts to dissipate, it is bagged up. Left now is only an empty space.

This is a beautiful telling of a story of the anger. I say a story as it is but one possible telling. When I look at the representation with the images and words it reminds me of a comic strip. To me in a comic strip the image carries as much narrative content as the text. According to Pratt (2009), words are markers, which provide dialogue, narration, sound effects, and the regulation of time. We can see in the above image (Figure 2.16) that the text does indeed indicate the passing of time. On the other hand images in comic strips without words hold a temporal ambiguity and “could represent just one instant of a casual sequence, it could also depict an unmoving set of objects in any span of time up to eternity” (Pratt, 2009, p. 109). I like this idea of temporal ambiguity, it allows for the possibility of slowing time right down in order to trace the contours of a kairos moment. Images in comics according to Pratt add something very important to the narrative. Firstly, and to my mind most importantly they guide the reader’s perception of spatial relationships1 (2009, p. 110). Comics consist of a sequence of frames, images that are spatially juxtaposed in relation to each other. In the words of Pratt, “the images of comics take up... different spaces on the page simultaneously... a narrative that is displayed in multiple spaces, all of which exist at the same time” (2009, p. 111). They exist at the same time for the reader who then in the reading makes temporal sense of the narrative. To go back again to the image above, in light of this information regarding comics, I can clearly see how the spatial relations in each frame are described.

1 Secondly, images can also by their stylistic characteristics like form, tone, and colour create mood and atmosphere which holds narrative content. Thirdly, images can provide pictorial cues to emotional and mental states. (Pratt, 2009, p. 110)
As I move along the frames I can read a shifting progression of these spatial relationships between forms that tells a story. I can also feel, even with the words, that the temporal framework of this series of frames is ambiguous and open to interpretation. Perhaps it moves very quickly, perhaps slowly, but it does move in and through space in a narrative sense. I feel that this representation does capture a story of how anger manifested in the original experience. It is one possible telling of the story of this anger, which in its form, like a comic, shows me just how powerful and rich such a focus on a visual narrative strand can be. It also highlights for me that visual images specifically articulate spatial relationships.

**A Shift in Focus**

After this intersubjective sharing with my peer-companions I am left with a sense of open possibilities. I feel a little unsettled or like I am on unstable ground. In the context of a therapeutic interaction is my focus still on moments of shift in understanding? No, this no longer holds any energy for me. What then is my focus? I decide to just stay with where the energy is for me, where my interest and curiosity lead me. This is after all an emergent inquiry. It is important for me to trust that whichever path of inquiry I choose will lead me to a gain in understanding, to a making of meaning.

There are two things that I consider at this point. First, I reflect on my process of representing the moment of experiencing I selected for inquiry. I realise that my process of representing the experience does inform me to a great extent. Conceptually I start with an intention for focus, the moment of shift. Yet when I begin representing my experience I am engaging with my resonant felt sense of the experience. I begin not with the moment of shift but the moment when the child begins to engage angry feelings and starts tearing the telephone books. Somehow this feels like a natural starting point, a beginning that holds meaning for me. What comes up into
representation carries its own dynamic, which does not necessarily fit my consciously intended focus. I only realise this later. It is in this way that the very forming of the images informs me of what is important. It seems that there is something in the telling of the story of the unfolding experience of anger that is important for me. I cannot ignore this, just as I cannot ignore that the moment of shift now holds no energy for me.

Second, when I bring the 'Releasing Anger' series of drawings to share with my peer-companions it is this aspect of the series that is responded to. My peer-companions are excited by and engaged in the series of drawings as a narrative telling of the experience. Their engagement opens up for me new possibilities for ways of exploring and being with these images. This is also an important validation for me that yes there is energy here that is vibrant and loud enough to call to all of us. I cannot ignore this. Consequently, I now know that I need to change the focus of my inquiry. My task now is to go back to the drawings, to the data, and work to develop a new focus. I will do this by noticing and staying with my resonant felt sense of whatever holds energy for me and following the path of that energy. This is my process and it is part of being in intersubjective relationship with peer-companions and with the data.

In a slight aside I wish to draw attention here to my own reflexive process, which is demonstrated above. Reflexivity is a very important part of my process of inquiry. As mentioned previously, it is like an intersubjective engagement with myself where I speak from the positions of you (me then) and I (me now) and create a dialogue toward making sense, create a 'new' I. This is how I find fresh ways to move forward in this inquiry. Throughout this thesis I engage in reflexive dialogues with myself as part of my process of inquiry and my constant movement towards meaning-making. This is important also as it allows for transparency. As I reveal my engagement with myself and others in and through this inquiry I also allow for you the reader to engage in each step of my process. In this way reflexive practice is a form of intersubjective engagement as well as being very important to my process of making sense.
New Possibilities

After a short time away from this work I return to it with the intention of developing some different narrative strands. I begin with the red anger and create a series of drawings that represent only the red anger. This series does not really work for me; it feels a bit stale and lifeless. I then do a series that tells the story, visually, of the torn bits of paper. Again on completing the series I lay it out but it also just feels flat and a bit vague. I am beginning to feel quite frustrated but decide to keep trying. Next I attempt to tell the story of the space of the inquiry by just representing the two figures. As I stand back and look at this series it doesn’t speak to me at all, it seems to be insipid, quite lifeless. I decide to lay all of the three new series/narrative strands out together to see if this makes a difference and none of them draw me in. There is no energy calling out to me. I am particularly dissatisfied with the series of figures.

Yet this work has not been in vain. For as I sit with these three series, amongst my feelings of dissatisfaction a new sense of what I need to articulate is forming for me. By experiencing what does not feel right I begin to get a sense of what could feel right. I now ask myself how I can best represent the space of this interaction. I now realise that I feel very clear about wanting to represent the space in between the figures, just that space in between. Also I feel interested in the rhythm of the slight shifts in the placements of the figures. I notice the way the images seem to jump around in the space so I want to see the rhythm of that.

Representation: The Space in Between

I now begin yet another series. I pick up a purple crayon, it somehow has to be purple. I also need it to follow the form of the original series, which represents the initial interaction. This needs to be authentic in terms of the placement of the figures. I use tracing paper to follow the forms in the original drawings and just fill in the space in between the figures. Here I am staying with the figures in the original series of ‘Releasing Anger’
Finding my way

representations quite literally. This is important to me. I am thinking of the shape of the spaces I am forming and am very aware that I could be doing it very differently. Especially with the bigger ones, the ones with the bigger spaces between the figures, where I tend to move from head to head and foot to foot as I am filling in the space between. I am aware that I could define the figures a bit more, fill some of the space behind the figures more completely. I could fill the whole page even. This may leave the figures more alive but it would not be just the space between. It has to be what is between, not what is behind and not what is around. So this is something I am very aware of in my process of representing the place of the space between.

I don’t think of the shape of the space as I create it. I just let that form according to the figures. I notice what I am doing; think about why I am doing it this way, and what it means to me. Following are the images I create.
Finding my way

When I stand back and look at this series of ‘The Space In Between’ I do feel drawn to it and excited by it. It holds me for some time. I can see a rhythm and movement through the piece. I also feel a sense of ambiguity, of something that is difficult to define, difficult to hold visually/figuratively. It is necessary to really look at the purple forms to see the traces of human form that define the space. My gaze shifts constantly from the positive forms to the space around them. There is something intangible, something that is here one minute and gone the next, which grabs me, which invites continued attempts to catch it. It is something that resonates strongly with my sense of the shifting spaces in between self and other in interaction.

**Decisions are Made**

It is only now that I can make a decision on, or rather a choice for, a new focus for this thesis inquiry. I now know that it is the dynamics of this space between us, the relational intersubjective space of our interactions that holds my interest, my curiosity, and my focus. I inquire into this by exploring moments of living experiencing. It was a confronting moment, or series of moments that I began with in this first stream of inquiry. A confronting moment I experienced, of being present to my companionee’s strong feelings of anger within a therapeutic interaction. This worked well for me as an entry point into experiencing. I make another decision here, that the moments I explore in this thesis will all be confronting moments within a therapeutic interaction. At this time I have formed an intention to inquire into three other moments of lived experiencing in this thesis. One will be my experience of facilitating a group, one a participant’s experience of a group, and one another participant’s experience of a one-on-one interaction. The experience of a confronting moment will for each of these moments provide an access or entry into experience. Not only has my focus now shifted, but I also have a stronger sense of the form and structure of this inquiry. This is an example of the emergent nature of this form of inquiry.
Sharing and Responding

After some time passes I have another opportunity to share my work to date with others. I am very keen to share ‘The Space In Between’ series of images and get some feedback. I share with five peer-companions this new series of images. I lay out the ‘The Space In Between’ images, along with the ‘Releasing Anger’ images for my five peer-companions. I don’t describe or explain anything at this point. My intention is for my peer-companions to meet the ‘The Space In Between’ images unencumbered with any prior knowledge of them. We begin by simply looking at and noticing the purple forms of space between. After everyone has spent time looking at the images we begin a conversation. The responses I receive for this series are thought provoking and speak to me of the importance of exploring space, particularly the in-between space of therapeutic interactions. There is a general feeling that the images, in representing only the space in between, are intriguing, novel, and unexpected. This underlines for me both the importance and the difficulty of capturing a sense of space, of the dynamic qualities of space. That my peer-companions were all intrigued and excited by the images also validated for me that this series of images are indeed important in some way and worthy of further exploration.

For one peer-companion this was the first time he had seen any of this work. He spent some time with the images but without any background information. In the light of this he decided to give me a response. “Peer-companion 6: I wanted to check what I felt in response to this which goes like this:

Fragments
Silhouettes
Suggestions
Moving and building
Intensifying
Augmenting
Shaping
Forming
Finding my way

Feeling

Idea

Emergence and meaning”

What strikes me here is the idea of moving from fragments and suggestions through a process of building, augmenting, and intensifying to a shaping and forming of feelings, ideas and ultimately meanings. This is my peer-companions feeling of the movement in the images. He makes the point that this movement he feels “is in all of them”. That is, it does not represent a progression through the series of images; rather it represents a cyclical movement through each of the images in the series. I include this because it somehow speaks to me of my process of creating each image. I build up the purple space by moving between the figures thus allowing the figures a part in the forming of the shape of the space. Yet the space as it grows and intensifies in turn forms and shapes the figures by defining them. My process of creating the images both holds and in turn creates the feeling and the idea of them. The idea and feeling is emergent and ultimately leads to meaning.

Intersubjective Responses

My peer-companions and I decide to individually give each of the images in this series a title. This naming or titling of each image is both an intersubjective response and a reduction. Naming or titling is a means of making sense of something by reducing it to a core meaning. Each of us first titles the whole series and then titles each of the images in order. Here only four of the participants and I respond in this way, so in all I have five sets of titles. We begin sharing the title lists, which remind me of poems.
Finding my way

From Peer-companion 1

The space in between
1/3rd there
Looking back and forth
We become patterned
The vertical becomes present
There is a clearer definition
One big space
The between remains thick and strong
And the centre draws me in
As I feel a movement from the edges
Perhaps a coming together
Leaving the space between less strong

From Peer-companion 2

Three entities
Three entities
Two and the other
The dance of sorts
Seeing through
Space between us is solid
Out to the edges but not touching them
Can I move in this space
Entering the space
Small shifts in space yet same positions
Your hand is down
The outer and inner

From Peer-companion 3

Space between
Fluttering Butterflies
Coming together
To align
And join fragments
Breathing
To engage the space
And inhabit it
The edges soften
And even out
To separate again
Settling
From Peer-companion 4

Purple space abstraction
Facing complex simplicity
   ground moves
   ground moving
   ground moved
Standing and cornering
Standing and cornering
Standing and cornering
Seeing sensing being
Diminishing space
   Sitting with
   Still facing

From Peer-companion 5

Shifting space
   Nearly a touch
   Stretching lights
   Uncertain rising
   The wave breaks
   Distance creates
   Spreading space
   Movement around
   Stepping stretching
   Looking feeling
   Diminishing Space
   Even ground

For me, each of these sets of titles, which I will call title poems, tells a story of the rhythm and movement my peer-companions and I experienced in these images. They also speak to me of energetic qualities of the space represented. We each read out our title poems and then have a conversation about the poems and the images.
Finding my way

A Conversation

Our conversation shifts between the images that are spread out on the floor and the poems that are shared. The first point that is raised is the difficulty of staying focussed on either the purple spaces or the open spaces around them.

Peer-companion 1: It is hard to know whether to put focus on the positive or negative space.

Peer-companion 2: I jumped between them. I got caught up in... knowing what the experience was about and then trying to see the shapes.

Peer-companion 1: I had this dilemma where it was impossible for me to stay with the space. It is only there because of the figures and the relationship between them.

Peer-companion 2: It is like a distraction that one would have anyway in a situation where you are aware of the other and self and what is going on between. You can’t concentrate on the whole thing at once.

There is a tendency for the eye to move between the purple between spaces and the space around. With this is a difficulty in settling on or staying with the purple spaces. I remember I also experienced this the first time I sat with these images. Somehow the awareness that the purple space is there only because of the figures and the relationship between them makes it harder to focus on the spaces. I think this is an interesting idea and has something to do with movement. On the one hand the figures through the series are moving in relation to each other. But on the other hand the eye itself is constantly moving in an effort to make sense of the space, to fix on its form. The eye naturally wants to embrace the uncoloured parts of the page and tries to find form; the open space calls like a distraction. This distracted searching for form is important content, which is revealed through the process of engaging with these images. There is something very illusive about this constant searching for form, for a making sense of what is there between us, which does I feel speak to qualities of intersubjective space. This resonates with me as I sense there is something in relational spaces that can never be pinned down in any definitive way. This speaks to the shifting nature of spaces in between self and other, of the ongoing search for definition and clarity of self in relation to other.
Crossley refers to qualities of perception when he says perception “involves a ‘gaze’ which ‘questions’, ‘ranges over or dwells on’ a world which is ‘pregnant with form’ and which resists it, allowing and also disallowing certain views of itself” (1996, p. 27). What is very interesting here to me is the idea of the space of an interaction as being formed by explorations or wanderings of our ‘gaze’. Here I am interpreting ‘gaze’ to involve and include the energy we bring to an interaction, an energy that is dynamic and does indeed traverse the space of us in rich and varied ways. I have a strong resonance with this idea and am remembering my act of filling in the purple spaces between the figures in each of ‘The Space In Between’ images. I had a strong feeling of travelling from one figure to the other, filling the space in between as I explored its limits. I/we form the space between us, the shape of the space within which we energetically open up to and for each other. Another thing that interests me here is the idea of the space of interaction as pregnant with form. This implies a process of growth and development, a dynamic that consists of movements of embracing and resisting, of allowing and disallowing. As Crossley says “it is an active interrogation in search of form” (1996, p. 27). When we look at these images we search for form, our eyes move restlessly. This is a reflection of the dynamic of intersubjective space where you, I, and the space of us move constantly in an interactive dance to find the shape or form of us.

What then is the nature of this interrogation, this dance? Much of what happens in an interaction when we are immersed in the engagement is pre-reflective, pre-thought responding to each other. “The other body subject is animated and its animation communicates. Furthermore, as a communication this behaviour calls for a response” (Crossley, 1996, p. 30). We are thus in a constant dialogue with each other. There is something here, which I feel is relevant to the imperceptibly shifting nature of the forms in this series of images. In the space of an interaction the dialogue between self and other has a dynamic that is organic and moves with all the subtle shifts of engagement between us. This dynamic suggests that we are
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always, at some level, in interaction with others. There is a constant movement of communication, of expression and response. We express through our bodies, our movements, our micro-expressions, our words what is happening for us and this expression elicits response. This is a constant process, which is not necessarily conscious but largely pre-reflective. This dynamic is I feel reflected in the chimera like shifting of the purple forms. They are in constant motion and this constant motion, like the flickering of a screen creates a sense of mystery, of something that can’t be caught but can only be glimpsed. This is the feeling here.

Moving back now to the conversation between my peer-companions and me, we are still discussing the ‘Space In Between’ images. We notice that the bigger the space between the human forms, the better defined the human forms become. This is noticed as a surprise, where the expectation is that the bigger the space between people their forms will be less well defined. We discuss whether this is the way it is in relationship, the greater the space the greater the definition of form?

Peer-companion 1: I am wondering about the relationship between space definition and therefore self other definition. That is what has seemed to have happened here. As the anger gets bigger you and she/he become more clarified as does the space between you become clearer.

When the emotion runs high the space definition somehow becomes clearer and stronger. It is certainly what seems to happen in these images. As the anger gets bigger the two figures become more distinctly formed. Crossley speaks of emotion in processes of relating. “We are joined to others by emotion... emotion must therefore be dialogically constituted, that is it shapes and is shaped by our interactions with others” (Crossley, 1996, p. 46). Both the ‘Releasing Anger’ and ‘The Space In Between’ series represent my sense of a strong emotion in interaction. ‘The Space In Between’ specifically describes my experience of the space of this interaction where anger is a character, a participant. This makes me think of the anger as both being part of what is happening between us, as well as playing an active part in
forming and shaping the space of us. The bigger the anger the bigger the space between; it is an ‘actor’ in the interaction. The act of bringing the emotion of anger up is already an act of communication, of dialogue. Anger engages in a dialogue with the child, with the telephone books, and with me and in this way helps shape the space. The growing size and intensity of emotion, forms and grows the space between, which in turn clarifies the definition of the figures by encroaching on them.

My peer-companions and I also notice that the spaces between appear to be quite thick and solid. At first there seems to be a contradiction between the shifting un-pindownable nature of intersubjective space and the very solidity of the in between space depicted that is confusing and unexpected. In the title poems above the space is described as thick, strong, and solid. This is different from the way one normally thinks of space as open and very penetrable. Yet there is movement within the solidity, within the in between spaces. The title poems describe many movements: the centre draws me in; a movement from the edges; coming together; small shifts in space. It is dense, thick, strong, and solid yet at the same time also fluid, shifting, dancing and breathing. The title poems also speak of a space to engage, to inhabit, a space that moves, stretches, spreads and diminishes. In this way then intersubjective space is both solid and strong as well as shifting and fluid.

As we are discussing this a question is asked about whether this is an inquiry into qualities of being present to another.

Peer-companion 6: I am thinking that this is about an inquiry into qualities of being present?

Peer-companion 1: It is the quality of being present but there is something else located between. The quality of being present has got something very strongly to do not just with what is in one person but how the relational is figured in the between of us. There is [in these images] a sense of the solidity of that.
Finding my way

Peer-companion 6: What I take from what you just said is that qualities of presence can only occur in a space for a start—something about the context. And the context is relational and presence has to encompass all of these things.

Stacey/Peer-companion 5: Yes, and you are always present to something or someone so it is always going to be relational.

Peer-companion 1: That’s right, it can’t not be.

Peer-companion 6: So space is essential?

Stacey: Yes. Because the space is always going to be defined by the shape of that interaction.

Thus, it is in some way about being present to another but it is not only about this, it is also about what is going on between us. What is going on between us is our relational process. When we are present, we are always present to another, so it is necessarily relational. This is I think that third thing; there is you, there is me, then there is what is between. As we have seen in the title poems there is something solid and strong about this. Representation of the space between is very important to me because it provides the context for all interactions be they therapeutic or every day. The relational space of an interaction is always going to be defined by the shape of that interaction. Therefore I choose not to represent the physical space of the room in which the interaction takes place. Although I do feel it is necessary to acknowledge here that the space around us, for example the shape and size of the room as well as the placement of walls, also impacts and works to define what can be between. The experience I represent here took place in a very small room, which allowed for intimacy, but also worked to amplify the intensity of the expression of strong emotion. There were times when I needed to feel the wall at my back and the position of the wall determined my distance from the child. Yet when I begin to create ‘Releasing Anger’ I make a very careful choice to represent only the living space of this particular interaction, the space of me, of you, of the phone books, and of what we create between us; it is not a physical space it is a relational space.
Finding my way

**Spending Time with the Images**

After this sharing again I let some time pass before I return to the data. I lay out before me all the images in the ‘Space In Between’ series and the title poems. I then play around with the titles and decide to cluster each of the titles with the image they name. I then arrange each of these clusters of titles to form a poetic statement for the image they name. My aim is to see what story the poetic statements tell of the image they name. Will this provide greater insight into qualities of the between spaces represented? Following are the 11 poetic statements I create along with the image they represent in series.
Three Entities

Facing complex simplicity

Fluttering butterflies

Nearly a touch

$1/3^{rd}$ there
Figure 2.29: The Space In Between #2

Stretching lights

Looking back and forth

Two and the other

Coming together

Ground moves
Moving

The dance of sorts

We become patterned

To align

Uncertain rising
Figure 2.31: The Space In Between #4

Seeing through

The vertical becomes present

Moved

The wave breaks

And joins fragments
Finding my way

Figure 2.32: The Space In Between #5

There is a clear definition

Distance creates

Breathing

Space between is solid

Stands and corners
Standing and cornering

Spreading space

Out to the edges but not touching them

To engage the space

One big space
Finding my way

Figure 2.34: The Space In Between #7

Stood and cornered
Movement around
The between remains thick and strong
Can I move in this space
And inhabit it?
Entering the space

The edges soften

And the centre draws me in

Seeing sensing being

Stepping stretching
As I feel a movement from the edges

And even out

Small shifts in space yet the same position

Looking feeling

Diminishing space
Your hand is down
Sitting with
Diminishing space
Perhaps a coming together
To separate again
Finding my way

Figure 2.38: The Space In Between #11

The outer and inner

Still facing
Even ground
Settling
Leaving the space less strong
I am struck here by the story each poetic statement tells and of how the stories sit with the images. They really do seem to speak to them, and to speak specifically to the feel of that purple space between. I feel that the series as a whole speaks to the shifting movement of energetic qualities through the interaction. Here I want to read all the poetic statements together in one long poetic story. I maintain the sequence or ordering of the titles but move some of the titles together into new relationship. I blur the boundaries of each poem in this process of restructuring and regrouping the titles. I want to see what story it tells of ‘The Space In Between’.

The Space In Between
Three Entities facing complex simplicity
Fluttering butterflies
Nearly a touch, 1/3\textsuperscript{rd} there
Stretching lights looking back and forth
Two and the other coming together
Ground moves, moving, the dance of sorts
We become patterned to align uncertain rising
Seeing through
The vertical becomes present
Moved
The wave breaks and joins fragments
There is a clear definition distance creates
Breathing space between is solid
Stands and corners, standing and cornering
Spreading space, out to the edges but not touching them
To engage the space, one big space
Stood and cornered movement around
The between remains thick and strong
Can I move in this space and inhabit it?
Entering the space the edges soften and the centre draws me in
Seeing, sensing, being, stepping, stretching
As I feel a movement from the edges, and even out
Small shifts in space yet the same position
Looking, feeling, diminishing space
Your hand is down
Sitting with diminishing space
Perhaps a coming together to separate again
The outer and inner still facing
Even ground settling
Leaving the space less strong.
Finding my way

Reflection

When I first read this poetic statement something important catches my attention and calls for some reflection. I notice with interest that when I created these images I placed three sets of figures on the first four pages. I did this to see the rhythms between them. They seemed to jump around and I was interested in that. To be honest I did regret afterwards doing it this way but by then it was too late to change as I had already received responses to the images as they are. But I did really think about this possibility of re-doing them so that each page had only one set of figures. I ultimately decided that there was a reason I did them this way, and at the time of creating these representations this reason was important to me. I need to trust that and stay with just what emerged. I bring this up now because as I read the poetic story it strikes me that there is another significance to this idea of three entities. I am thinking of me, of you, and of the space between us as constituting the three entities. “Three entities facing complex simplicity”, and “two and the other coming together” speak to me of the dynamic of being in the intersubjective space, when the space between us becomes as another presence.

As I read this poetic story I also work to hold in my awareness a descriptive feeling response I am experiencing. Afterwards I write down this response and read it through. As I read through the response I see that it is a description and some words and phrases quite clearly call out to me, or jump out at me. They resonate very strongly with me and seem to capture something essential of the dynamic quality of this intersubjective space. I decide to identify these key words and phrases and present them here in bold text. My response is as follows.

First there is the awkward coming together when we are not yet as one or properly met in the space. Tentative we are yet. It feels like there is a third in this meeting. Then things begin to shift, the ground moves. We are dancing now, moving to meet in the space. There is an uncertainty in this movement, more movement now.
A wave breaks. I wonder at the force of this. It both joins and distances us. Now it seems there is a pause, a space for breathing. The rhythm of breathing forming the space which separates us. The space is spreading, it is solid it is one big space now. It is a bit daunting now this space, can it be entered? Yes it can, for as I allow the ‘being in’ the edges begin to soften and I feel a pull in toward the centre. In soft movements of small shifts the space seems to diminish. We come together and move apart. we face each other settled now.

I now pull together all these key words and phrases that speak to the dynamic quality of this space. This story of dynamic qualities reads as follows:

An awkward coming together
Then things begin to shift, the ground moves
We are dancing now, moving to meet in the space
There is uncertainty in this movement
More movement and a wave breaks, it both joins and distances us
There is a pause
A space for breathing
The rhythm of breathing forming the space which separates us
The space is spreading, it is one big space
A bit daunting now
As I allow the ‘being in’ the edges begin to soften and I feel a pull in toward the centre
In soft movements the space seems to diminish
We come together and move apart
We face each other.

In this chapter I have presented a number of different tellings of the story of this interaction. Initially I create a visual description of the moment in the form of a series of drawings. I feel that these images describe shifting spatial relationships, emotions, and mood. Then I write a description of the moment, identify key words and create a poetic statement. This poetic
Finding my way

statement tells of the dynamics of what happens within the space and time of the interaction. It describes emotional and physical qualities of being in this space of interaction. There is a sense of urgency and the rhythm of a fast beating heart. Then I again create another visual description of the space between in a series of drawings in oil pastel. This is another visual story telling. Here, the story that comes of the images tells of qualities of shifting forms and movements within space. It tells of the dynamics of how things happen in the space. There is something softer and less urgent here. It holds the soft rhythm of breathing. After this I receive responses to this second set of images in the form of titles for each image from my peer-companions. I put these titles together to ultimately form a poetic story. From my descriptive response to this poetic story I arrive at a story of dynamic energetic qualities of this space. This story tells of doing and being within the space where the energetic qualities of that occupied space shape, pattern, and define the interaction. I feel that these different tellings demonstrate how different ways of knowing are expressed through different creative modalities. Also and very importantly these different tellings demonstrate how engaging in many cycles of inquiry over time can create different facets of understanding.

Another Sharing

I am very happy with the poetic statements created from the image titles for “The Space In Between” and feel that they do capture energetic qualities of being with another within the relational intersubjective space created through an interaction. Yet I also feel that there is still a lot of data that I would like to reduce further. I have the idea of reducing these poetic statements to one single poetic statement that would describe the quality of the intersubjective space represented, and give a clearer sense of the movement of the piece as a whole.
This is what I bring to the group. This time the group consists of four peer-companions and myself. I lay out all the images in ‘The Space Between’ and place each one with its respective title poem. We decide to make a further reduction where by taking something (one of the titles) from each image, and in the light of the whole series, we each create another poem. In this way we each attempt to encapsulate the feeling of the whole movement by responding to both the images and the poems. I am amazed at the poetic responses received. There are five beautifully clear pictures that each tell a story of the space and movement of an interaction. They are each different yet there is some kind of similarity in movement. There are slightly different emphases but each poem tells a story of being in the intersubjective space.

The five poetic responses are as follows:

**Peer-companion 1**

3 hovering
2 and the other
Aligning
Moving
So the space in between becomes solid
Expanded
Thick and strong
Drawing me in
Then
The space diminishes
Towards separation
And settling

**Peer-companion 2**

Three entities
Two and the other
In a dance of sorts
Seeing through it
Yet the space between us is solid
Out to the edges but not touching them
Can I move in this space?
Entering this space
Small shifts occur
Your hand is down
The outer and inner
Finding my way

Peer-companion 3

Complex entities fluttering
  On moving grounds
    To align
And join the fragments
To solidify the space in between
  Out to the edges
    I move in
Seeing sensing being
I feel a movement
We sit with
Settling

Peer-companion 4

Nearly a touch
The ground moves
  Moving
  Moved
Breathing
To engage the space
And inhabit it
And the centre draws me in
Small shifts in space yet hold the same position
To separate again
Still facing

Peer-companion 5

Fluttering butterflies
Coming together
  As feeling rises
The wave breaks
  Separation
  Reaching out
Claustrophobia
Breathing and feeling the space
Sensing shifts
Diminishing space now
Towards settling
On reading these five responses I realise immediately that there is no one reduction to be had. Indeed there are as many possible reductions as there are people. For each of us experience the space of an interaction differently. One thing that does strike me is the clarity of these stories. There is a similarity in the movement of each poem but the emphasis in each is different, individual, and unique. This underlies a really valid and important point, that one cannot generalise this kind of experience—each of us will have a different story to tell. I am very happy that there are five different stories. This is as it should be.

Someone asked me if when I read these poetic responses I am taken back to my original experience? My answer is no. I experience them each as a story about qualities of being in an intersubjective space. This is I feel important as I am not striving for an essence of the original experience, rather I am trying to create a series of dialogues that travel out from that original experience. So to begin with I take one experience of a therapeutic interaction and represent the peculiarities of that experience in a series of drawings. In so doing I immerse myself in that experience. This is one cycle of experiencing. Then, when I decide to explore the narrative strand of ‘The Space In Between’, I am still reflecting on the original experience but looking at it in a different way. This is another cycle of experiencing. In this way I am holding a specific focus yet shifting position and perspective, and this has to do with asking what other stories and what other dialogues can be generated from this original experience? This way of working in cycles of experiencing ultimately creates a multidimensional lens, like the many faceted crystal metaphor that Richardson (2005) speaks of, through which we can view these experiences of intersubjective interactions, of intersubjective space. Richardson makes the point that crystallisation is a structured process of accumulation (2005, p. 963). There are many possible stories that speak to many different parts and dimensions of experiencing intersubjective space, stories that move out from a therapeutic context.
to encompass more general and diverse relational contexts. “Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (2005, p. 963). We can come to know something in a very multifaceted way, and we can delve quite deeply, but we can never know anything completely or definitively as ‘essential’. This is demonstrated here by this data. I now have five different stories, each of which tell of qualities of being with/in intersubjective space.

**Summary: What I Know Now?**

I am very aware that the direction I have taken is different from that which I originally intended. My initial focus is on moments of shift and I begin by representing my experience of being present to the strong emotion of another. While representing this experience the energy for me is in visually describing my experience of witnessing the building, unfolding, and dissipation of the other’s anger, of representing the space of our shared interaction. After completing the representation and sharing it with others I realise that this is where the energy is for me. I realise that what are important to me and hold my curiosity are the intersubjective spaces of interaction. Consequently my focus changes from inquiring into moments of shift, to inquiring into qualities of intersubjective space.

I include my original focus for an important reason to do with my process or method of inquiry. This form of inquiry is an emergent one. It is important to be fluid, flexible, and open to allowing the form of the inquiry, and what emerges from the inquiry, to sometimes lead. So my original beginning place is important for it held the energy that then led me to places yet unimagined. I arrive at a series of stories that speak of the dynamic qualities of intersubjective spaces. Throughout I attempt to make transparent my process of inquiry. For often it is in the process that important content arises, content that can as we have seen lead to new directions for travel.
By way of representing the space in between visually I now know that within the space of us there is a constant shifting dynamic of resistance and allowing, which prompts a constant search for definition and clarity of form. There is a constant movement of communication, of expression and response; much of this dialogue occurs pre-reflectively. This constant shifting movement creates a sense of mystery, of something intangible and not quite within reach. Within the space of us there is you, there is me, and there is what is of us, this dialogue of interrelationship. The space of us is a relational space. I also now know that there is something solid and strong about intersubjective space, yet there is movement within the solidity. It is dense, thick, strong, and solid while also being fluid, shifting, dancing, and breathing.

Through this inquiry strand I am also able to see how different modes of expression, different people, different times, and different cycles of experiencing reflect different ways of knowing. There are many different stories generated in this inquiry strand by different people. Some are generated from written representations, some visually in series of images, and some in written response to visual representations. These stories are all unique. I feel now that stories generated in the mode of writing hold a different quality to those generated in the mode of visual image. I have come to know that the visual mode privileges a telling of space and spatial relations. This is something that I look forward to exploring further in upcoming chapters. Finally, the five unique stories that my peer-companions and I arrive at consolidate and confirm for me my belief that there is not one knowable truth or essence to be found. I work in cycles of experiencing, which engage with different people and different modes of expression at different times. In this way I attempt to move toward greater clarity by building up in a crystalline fashion a series of different yet connected perspectives that ultimately can offer up a multidimensional picture of living experiences of intersubjective space. This is a dynamic picture, it is fluid, ever growing, and can provide a rich and complex picture of approximate meanings.
Finding my way
Chapter Three

Many Together:
Energy and Movement in Space
Many together
**Introduction**

With my focus of interest now being qualities of the spaces in between us, of the lived relational spaces of an interaction that work to define the form of an interaction, I am ready to start another stream of inquiry. As I have mentioned, at this time my therapeutic work involves both one on one counselling and facilitating groups. In doing this work I have noticed that these are two quite different relational contexts that make different demands on qualities of presence required. I would like to know a bit more about how these relational contexts are different and am now curious as to how an inquiry into the intersubjective space of a group will unfold. I begin this work by focusing on a confronting moment facilitating a group. This is my access point. I wonder what understandings may be gained of qualities of the intersubjective spaces of a group interaction. What can I learn about the spaces that fill the between places of a group?

**The Moment**

I decide to focus in on my experience of facilitating a grief and loss group for 3–5 year old children. While I have facilitated many grief and loss groups for older children this is the first time I have facilitated this younger age group. So I am feeling a nervous anticipation because this is a first time experience for me. As it turns out this particular experience of facilitating a group proves to be a difficult and challenging one. It is difficult for me because in the group is a 4 year old child who, from the beginning of the group is unable to sit still and engage in any of the group activities. It is the moments in the very beginning of the group that I choose to focus on as this is when I felt the disruption was most intense. There was certainly for me a feeling of chaotic energy as this child is unsettled and not open
Many together

to being engaged in any way. She/he is constantly moving in, out, through, and around the group. I immediately start to feel that I am not holding the space as I should and fear the group will descend into chaos. This is the moment for me.

I think there are two things here. One has to do with my fear and anxiety, and the other with my energetic focus as a facilitator. I am aware of being focussed on the unsettled child and worry that this is at the expense of the other children in the group. I feel my attention is stretched and strained and I have to work at holding my attention on the group as a whole while keeping an eye on the unsettled child. As a result, and this is straying from the moment, throughout the time of the group I am aware of anxious feelings knocking at my door. I try to just notice them and let them be but am concerned I have already let them in. I am aware that anxiety in me can only feed potential chaos and I fear losing control. Thus, the unsettled feelings that are triggered for me at the beginning of the group stay with me till the end of this group.

After the group is over I receive feedback from the buddies¹ who do not feel the group is chaotic at all; they feel that the restlessness in the group is acceptable. This surprises me but also makes me feel better about the experience. Nevertheless, I am left with a feeling of discomfort and dissatisfaction. It is because of this residue of discomfort and dissatisfaction that I decide to explore this confronting experience in facilitating a group and to find out something more about it.

¹ In these groups we used a system whereby each child is companioned by a ‘buddy’. Each group had two facilitators as well as a buddy who sat with and companioned each child. The buddies are trained specifically to work with the children in this context and work in a volunteer capacity.
Many together

**Representation: Pastel Drawings**

I decide to represent my moments and begin by focusing in on re-experiencing the dynamics of the group and the moments of discomfort and anxiety I experienced at the beginning of the group. This is my access point. I spend time remembering, reflecting on, and re-experiencing facilitating this group of 3–5 year old children. I find that I do not have a strong narrative sense of my experience in these moments early in the group. So much is happening at any given moment that it is difficult for me to focus in on telling the story of a specific chain of events. There are lots of things happening separately and simultaneously in the space of this group and I am sending my attention out over the whole of the group, constantly observing and monitoring. Consequently what I carry is a resonant felt sense of feelings, of shapes, of spaces, and of colours that I want to represent. There is a softness and something indistinct or obscure about these resonant felt sensings I am holding when reflecting on my experience. Consequently I am drawn to soft pastels as a medium of expression. I feel that their soft and chalky texture, as well as they way they easily blend and smudge is well suited to my felt sense of what I am about to express.

Within this resonant felt sense is a very strong sense of the shifting energy of the group through the space and time of the moments just after the group began when the child started being disruptive. So again it is not just one moment but a series of moments, as Stern defines a moment, which I focus on (Stern, 2004).

Another thing that I reflect on at this point, just before I begin drawing, is the need once again to create a series. I have a strong feeling of movement in the group as I have mentioned, and this is a big part of what I want to express. I want to capture my resonant felt sense of the in movement of energy through kairos time. To do this I need to create more than one image. I need to track the progression of shifting energy as I experienced it.
Many together through both time and space. Somehow this reflection, while quite simple seems important. It has to do with bringing up into expression the interrelationship between the energy of all the participants interacting as I experienced it, the time of the interaction, and the space of the interaction. It is dynamic.

I create a series of four pastel drawings, which represent my experience of the movement, of my resonant felt sense of an escalating chaotic energy within the group. In this way it is my experience of the shifting energy of the group that I try to capture. I try to capture it in a series of moments. Following are the four drawings I create.
Many together

Figure 3.1: Group Image #1

Figure 3.2: Group Image #2
Many together

Figure 3.3: Group Image #3

Figure 3.4: Group Image #4
Reflection

After finishing these drawings I spend some time looking at them. I am left with the feeling of being not quite satisfied with these representations. I feel that they do capture my sense of shifting energetic qualities and of an escalating chaos or spiralling out of control. Yet I am not convinced they capture my resonant felt sense of movement through space and time in a satisfying way. This is a vague and nagging feeling of something un-pin-downable, which I can not quite understand. I think about the previous series where my focus is on a confronting moment during a one on one interaction. The representations I produce are quite different in quality and in form. They clearly capture a sense of movement through both time and space, a series of events described figuratively in a visual narrative.

In Chapter Two I descriptively portray the space of interaction in a way that stays very close to my experience of the interaction, movement by movement, moment by moment. I describe the movements of figurative placements in space and through time. Somehow while this is quite possible to do in relation to representing the one on one interaction, it is very difficult to do in relation to representing the group interaction.

I do not feel that I am able to represent this group interaction by visually describing it moment by moment in a two dimensional figurative way. Somehow the dynamics of a group are too complex and densely interwoven to allow for this. Indeed the images that emerge for me are distinctly abstract; they speak to the feeling and energetic form of my experience of this group intersubjective space. Consequently what I have done is to represent the space of this group interaction by visually describing it in an abstract way. I am still working descriptively, but what I describe is an abstracted sense of the feeling and energetic qualities of movement I experience in and through time and space. What emerges in the ‘Group Image’ representations speaks to my sense of the energetic qualities with/in
Many together

the intersubjective space of this group. I am finding myself frustrated that these images feel much less accessible in their abstraction than the ‘Releasing Anger’ series. I now wonder if representing this experience in a three dimensional mode would prove to be more satisfying?

I wonder at the content in my process here. Clearly my frustration says something about the intersubjective space of a group as being less easy to track and to hold than the intersubjective space of a one-on-one interaction. For now I will just stay with the four images representing my confronting moment with the group. I will stay with my feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration. I will stay with my sense of the less accessible and unpindownable qualities of the intersubjective space of a group that I have arrived at through these representations. I am keen now to share my work and these concerns with others. Armed with the four ‘Group Image’ drawings I meet with my four peer-companions.

Sharing With Others

A Conversation

I show my peer-companions the four drawings and describe to them my original experience of a confronting moment with the group of children. One thing that is noticed straight away is that this series appears to represent my emotional experience. My peer-companions have of course seen the ‘Releasing Anger’ series and we discuss how this series is quite different.

Peer-companion 1: I get a much stronger sense with these that this is all you. Whereas with the other ones because there were two figures there is a sense of a responsibility on the smaller figure as well as the bigger figure. But now it feels that this is you, it’s your holding, your sensing of something that you are reaching out and trying to gather... I get a sense of a different kind of responsibility that you are taking on board. There is a more dynamic or more demanding quality
Many together

Here we are touching on the different kind of holding, of qualities of presence, which are required when facilitating a group. For me presence has to do with qualities of being with others/another. I see presence as a quality of energy, of heightened awareness and stillness, of being open to what is extended by others as well as of reaching towards another/others energetically. Presence I think has to do with attention and where this is directed. It has to with energetic exchange, energetic dialogue, and the qualities of energy brought to intersubjective engagements. The dialogue above seems to point to a difference in the qualities of presence required when companioning in a one-on-one interaction and when companioning a group interaction. It points to a different kind of responsibility, or a different quality to the responsibility that a group demands. I find it fascinating that my peer-companion can see this difference so clearly reflected in the two sets of representations, ‘Releasing Anger’ and ‘Group Image’.

I also share my sense of dissatisfaction with the two dimensional representations. I share the importance to me of the feeling I have of this interaction as being in space, through time, and in constant motion. Through our discussion it becomes clearer to me that ultimately it will be necessary to depth these images further using another mode, which is three dimensional. It also becomes clear to me that these images are telling a story of the movements of energy, within the lived space of my group interaction.

Describing the Images

This ‘Group Image’ series is, as we have all noticed different from the ‘Releasing Anger’ series. It is abstract and consequently provides less obvious data. Consequently my peer-companions and I decide to do a group description of each image. We choose to do two kinds of description. First, we do a phenomenological description of the images. Second, we do
a ‘What do you see’ Betensky style description (Betensky, 1995). We do this in order to move from a place of focused looking at just what is there in the images, to a felt responding to what is there. Our idea is that description will allow for a reduction to core structures that will allow a greater access into this set of data.

**Phenomenological Description**

The purpose of doing a phenomenological description of the drawings is to look at them “from the perspective of how they are experienced” (Giorgi, 2009, p. 88). Each person sitting around the table looking at the drawings will experience them differently and notice different things. By doing a phenomenological description we aim to articulate the object of experiencing, in this case four drawings that represent a lived experience. When looking, seeing, interacting, noticing, and articulating it is necessary to focus only on what is there, only on the object of experiencing.

Phenomenological description attempts to “get back to ‘the things themselves’ and to set aside preconceptions and tendencies to analyse, generalise, or theorise, and attempt to contemplate the thing itself” (Willis, 2001, p. 10). We do not explain, or try to “account for what is presented”, rather we “simply exhibit what is given” (Giorgi, 2009, p. 89). It is necessary to stay with just what is there. This is not an easy task and Willis makes the point that this is a “challenge of inventiveness, of ways to ‘get past oneself’” (Willis, 2001, p. 7). But when we do manage to ‘get past oneself’ it is possible to see things in new and surprising ways, “to remove veils which obscure or disguise” (Willis, 2001, p. 7). Thus description can allow us to see things in an object of view that we had not seen before. Describing the shape, colour, directionality, density and texture of forms in an artwork and also how the space is occupied can be laborious. Yet it can also be very revealing of underlying structures and patterns. Georgi says that “whatever presents itself can be described according to how it presents itself” (Georgi, 1992, p. 7). The how here is potentially revealing of structure and it involves articulating variation, patterns, and ordering of elements that constitute the viewer’s experience of the object of description.
‘What Do You See’ Description

After we have done a phenomenological description we then move into describing our feelings or resonant sensings. By also doing a ‘what do you see’ type description, which is more of an emotional response, it is possible to unpack feeling and relational qualities of the underlying structures that have emerged. When Betensky asks ‘What do you see?’ she is inviting attention to not just the forms and structure of what is on the page, but also the feelings elicited through the looking. There is here a “conscious effort to connect the artwork with the inner experience” (Betensky, 1995, p. 19).

This has to do with the how, the process of looking, feeling, engaging, and interacting with an artwork. As mentioned before intentional looking allows us to see things previously unnoticed. What we see is usually content and structure, Betensky sees the dynamics of structure or how the structural parts relate to each other as being of key importance. She says that “from the phenomenological perspective, discussions of the content are somewhat less fruitful than are the possibilities offered by the dynamics around structural components of the artwork” (1995, p. 19). Betensky also believes that the relational dynamics of structural elements hold expressive qualities. In turn expressive qualities hold feelings and emotions, which can be described (1995, p. 17). To sum up, this kind of description is concerned with isolating the relational dynamics of key structural elements in order to isolate the expressive qualities of these relations and through this the feeling and emotion of them.

Our Process of Group Description Begins

To return to my peer-companions and me, we sit at a table and look at each image one at a time. For each we move from a phenomenological description into a ‘what do you see’ description. In this process I have a sense of slowly moving into each image and there is a feeling of growing familiarity and revelation. At times I am stunned by a new awareness of qualities an image holds that I had not seen or felt before, and yet which resonates with my original experience. Engaging in a ‘what do you see’ type
of description my peer-companions and I have an opportunity to depth or unpack our phenomenological descriptions. We do this by looking with the intention to describe our resonant felt sense of and our emotional responses to the structures and dynamics we have isolated and become familiar with. I understand the structural components of the images to be the configuration or make up of the forms within the image. The dynamics of the image are I believe the way the different structural parts are interrelated, the way they seem to move and feel in dynamic relationship. The expressive and feeling qualities of the images speak to dynamics. Following are both the phenomenological and the 'what do you see' style descriptions for each image. For each set of descriptions I underline key words that speak to me of structural elements, expressive qualities, and feeling qualities. I then pull out these key words in an attempt to arrive at a sense of the story they tell.
Phenomenological description

The pastel goes to the edges of the paper.
There is a smudged pink spot in the middle.
It is concentric.
There is orange on the outside.
There are five orange smudges.
A dense core of pink is in the middle.
Patches of white show through.
The orange smudges are joined in the pink.
There is soft pink and dark pink.
There is smudged pastel and circular pastel lines.
There are scratches to the surface of the five orange spots.
There is darker pink around most of the orange smudges.

‘What do you see’ description

It is like a solar system, a cell and nuclei, it is centred and contained.
There is a sense of fullness warmth and love which is inviting and womb like.
It is a diffused space without definition which is soft and strong.
A wheel in motion, held together with cogs moving around a centre.
There are strong boundaries which are blurred at the edges.
It feels energetic and safe.
It is magnetic—the centre holds the five in place, held within circles moving in different directions.
There is a feeling of the orange looking in and being held on the outside.
Many together

I now pull out the key words from the phenomenological description and arrange them to tell something of the structure of this image.

Concentric circular lines which go to the edges.
The smudges are joined and there are scratches to the surface.
A dense core in the middle which is smudged.

The story here is of a structure with concentric circles and a dense core that fills the space it occupies. Moving into the ‘what do you see’ description I am interested in isolating the structural parts, their expressive qualities and the emotions held in them.

Structural parts
A solar system, a cell and nuclei
A wheel in motion
Cogs moving around a centre.

Expressive qualities
A diffused space which is centred and contained
Strong boundaries blurred at the edges
Held within, the centre holds
Circles moving in different directions
Being held

Feeling qualities
Soft and strong
Fullness warmth and love
Inviting and womb like
Energetic and safe
My next step is to stay with all these different descriptive parts to see what story they tell. What I hold on to is the idea of an underlying structure and its parts, how the parts relate to each other (kinetically, spatially, and texturally), and the feeling qualities of all this. In my process of doing this I write my sense of the story that these key words and phrases tell.

**A Telling**

Here, within a diffused space, there is a holding which is centred and contained. The feeling of this holding is safe, inviting, full, warm, and loving. Those being held have strong boundaries with soft edges. They energetically circle around this centre moving in different directions.
Many together

Figure 3.6: Group Image #2

Phenomenological description

There are open ovals.
There is purple in the centre surrounded by pink.
There are places where the pink and purple blend.
There is white around the pink and purple, white paper and white paint.
There are five orange splotches and some are very scratchy, two have purple scratchy marks.
Pink lines can be seen through the orange.
Overlapping.
White paint leaks out from the centre.
There is a hint of a purple smudge in the white.
The orange splotches are more scribbly, the shapes are less even.
In the first image they were roundish and now they are just odd shapes.
The image does not meet the edges.

‘What do you see’ description

There is fast movement which is less held by the pink.
It is soft around the centre, vibrant and exciting, playful and a little bit erratic. There is openness—a way in and out.
It feels slippery, richly textured, soft and fluffy. There is a greater depth as if something is happening.
It gets more exciting as the pace changes, like musical chairs when the pace hot up. It is soft in the centre like the eye of a deer.
The strength of the centre is keeping the formation of it.
Many together

From the phenomenological description I now pull out the key words to see what they tell of the structure of the image.

Open ovals, odd shapes and overlappings which do not meet the edges
   More scribbly and less even
   Very scratchy, scratchy marks blend
   The centre is surrounded
   White paint leaks out from the centre.

Here there is still a centre that is surrounded but there is an opening through which it is leaking out. The centre is surrounded by open ovals, odd shapes and overlappings. From the ‘what do you see’ description I pull out key words.

Structural parts
   Strength of centre and soft in the centre
   Openness—a way in and out

Expressive qualities
   Fast movement less held
   Something is happening, the pace changes
   The pace hots up.

Feeling qualities
   Soft and fluffy
   Playful
   Vibrant and exciting
   Richly textured and slippery
   A little bit erratic
Many together

I stay with all these different descriptive parts to see what story they tell.

A Telling
Now there is a feeling of being less held and of an opening out. There is an opening out from the centre, its softness is leaking out. Surrounding the centre are ovals which are also open. There is a richness of scratchy, scribbly texture in them which feels playful and a bit erratic. There is also a feeling of fast movement, something is happening as the pace of movement around the centre speeds up.
Many together

Figure 3.7: Group Image #3

Phenomenological description

The purple line reaches up to one corner and moves down diagonally to the opposite corner. It ends up in a swirl.
There are five orange splotches.
The purple line curls around one orange form.
It is more of a swirl than a circle. There is no middle.
There is a small purple mark.
There is a horseshoe orange shape that curls around and fits inside a pink swirl.
There is pink between blotches of orange.
The image almost touches the top and the bottom.
Every form is connected.
There is white in the swirl as well.
The image stretches diagonally across the page.
There are large areas of white.
There is a tiny speck of colour in the white.
The pink line doesn’t run through the orange and the purple runs over both the pink and orange.

‘What do you see’ description

There is a feeling of swirling and reaching.
The inside is encased in pink.
The orange reaches.
There is a feeling of speed, of “hold on” its spinning and we’re going really fast. Yet we are still together, held together.
The movement holds it together.
All is spinning yet things remain together.
Many together

From the phenomenological description:

There is no middle
It reaches up to one corner and moves down diagonally to the opposite corner
It stretches diagonally and almost touches the top and bottom
Between a line curls around
More of a swirl than a circle
A horseshoe shape curls around and fits inside.

Now there is no circular form, just a diagonal form that stretches across the space. Other lines curl and swirl between and inside it.

Structural parts
Spinning movement with inside encased

Expressive qualities
Speed, we are going really fast
We are still together, held together
The movement holds it together
All is spinning yet things remain together

Feeling qualities
Swirling and reaching
Holding on
Again from all these different descriptive parts I write a story telling of this image.

A Telling
There is no centre now, just long horseshoe shaped forms which swirl, curl, and spin around and inside each other. They encase a central area and move very fast, swirling, reaching, and holding on. They are held together by this really fast spinning movement. All is spinning yet things remain together.
Many together

 Phenomenological description

There are three pink smudges in the top left corner.
There are two strong purple forms, elliptical forms that cross over circles.
There are five orange forms, they are small and circular and some are smudged.
One orange spot is surrounded by an oval form.
The big purple ellipse has an orange dot at each end.
There is a large amount of white space.
There is an arc of strong crimson pink with an orange dot.
There are multiple lines.
A crossing space of purple forms is filled in with orange.
There are three pink smudged shapes reducing in size to the corner.
Everything seems to be connected but not held in a circle.

The forms and shapes all touch.

‘What do you see’ description

The pink is tightly wound around the orange spot.
The pink feels like it is reaching out, the pink feels like it is holding on.
The orange sections feel like they are withdrawing.
It feels like hiding.
Dispersing yet held.
There are pathways of purple with clear and strong direction.
They are separate yet also connected.
The purple overlaps all the other colours.
There is a feeling of fast movement.
It is no longer circular, everything seems connected but not held in.
From the phenomenological description:

Elliptical forms cross over circles
A crossing space filled in
An arc and multiple lines
Small and circular and smudged
Surrounded by an oval form
A big ellipse with a dot at each end
Everything seems to be connected but not held
The forms and shapes all touch

The structure here is less easily defined and not clear at all. There are many different forms, which cross, touch, hold, surround. They all are connected.

Structural parts
Pathways
No longer circular

Expressive qualities
Clear and strong direction
Dispersing yet held
Overlapping all others
Separate yet also connected, connected but not held in

Feeling qualities
Tightly wound
Reaching out
Holding on
Withdrawing and hiding
Many together

For the last time I write a telling of this last image in the series.

A Telling
There is no centre just a feeling of clear and strong direction. Elliptical forms, arcs, lines, and circles are tightly wound together like many places and pathways. These pathways and places are separate yet they overlap each other, they reach out and hold on to each other. In their separateness is a feeling of withdrawing and hiding. They are separate and yet connected, connected but not held in.

~.~.~

What I Know Now
Here I am struck by the realisation that all the parts of this image are connected. This is an unexpected and important awareness for me. I was afraid I had lost control of the group, that I was not able to hold it, and that it was disconnected and dispersed. This series tells a story of maintaining connection even while the energy of the group disperses and spreads out. The group is still held through these movements from close central holding to establishing separate pathways and places. Perhaps this progression towards freedom of space and movement within a group is important. To hold but with an open hand is to allow a dispersal and spreading out, to allow for individual needs, growth, and movement. This is an important new knowing for me, which relates to companioning skills. The child who could not settle in this group needed to move around, to express whatever feelings were motivating her/him. The rest of the group and the child’s buddy were able to accommodate that, ultimately I now feel that I also was able to accommodate that.

Titling Each Image
After this process of description I invite each of my peer-companions to title each drawing. Consequently, I now have five sets of titles, or title groups for the images. I have kept each title, in each group, in order from title one through to title five. I do this in order to see if the title groups themselves
give a sense of a story or a feeling of the movement through the four images.

Following are the titles from each peer-companion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From peer-companion 1</th>
<th>From peer-companion 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ring-a-rosie</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dancing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excitement: something’s happening</strong></td>
<td><strong>Invitation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Together here we go</strong></td>
<td><strong>Held in</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Everything touched everything else</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spreading out</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From peer-companion 2</th>
<th>From peer-companion 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magnetism</strong></td>
<td><strong>It is contained movement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No strings attached</strong></td>
<td><strong>Birds nest soup</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Here we go</strong></td>
<td><strong>Something’s happening: hang on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connectivity—we all touch lightly</strong></td>
<td><strong>Holding it all</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From peer-companion 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electric motion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hold on tight</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaching for meeting</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each title group tells a similar story of relational movements within the space of this interaction, as represented in the four images. They each portray a sense of something starting to happen, something that needs to be held in some way. There is also a sense of connection despite, or maybe due to, that which is happening. In order to try to gain a greater clarity around the story these titles tell of this relational space I cluster the titles into four new groups according to the image they title. In doing this I am aiming to create a poetic statement in response to each drawing. These poetic statements and the images they name follow.
Magnetism
Holding
Dancing
Ringa-rosie
In contained movement

Figure 3.9: Group Image #1

No strings attached
Invitation
Excitement: something’s happening
Electric motion
Birds nest soup

Figure 3.10: Group Image #2

Something’s happening: hang on
Held in
Here we go
Hold on tight
Together here we go

Figure 3.11: Group Image #3

Spreading out
Connectivity—we all touch lightly
Reaching for meeting
Everything touches everything else
Holding it all

Figure 3.12: Group Image #4
After forming these poetic statements and placing them with the images
I re-read them in sequence. I am interested in the story they tell. Here they
are together in one poetic story.

Magnetism
Holding
Dancing
Ring-a-rosie
In contained movement
No strings attached
Invitation
Excitement: something’s happening
Electric motion
Birds nest soup
Something’s happening: hang on
Held in
Here we go
Hold on tight
Together here we go
Spreading out
Connectivity—we all touch lightly
Reaching for meeting
Everything touches everything else
Holding it all.

This tells a story that is similar in its movements to the story that emerged
from the descriptions. This title story is though like a truncated or
condensed version of the story the descriptions tell. Nevertheless this poetic
story becomes important a little down the track and it is for this reason
I include it here.
Many together

Dancing the Images

As mentioned previously I am not fully satisfied with the image responses I created. I wonder if there is something about two dimensional drawn images that does not allow for a faithful representation of my resonant felt sensing. My resonant felt sense has something to do with moving through space, it is definitely three dimensional. And while I am confident that the images do catch the feeling of the energy and movement I am sensing, I still want to try and create a deeper, more dimensional representation.

In order to do this I ask a dancer if she would be willing to give me a response in dance to my four images. Happily she agrees. I give the dancer the images without any background explanation or description of how I have arrived at the images. I want her response to be purely to the images, to the forms and energy she perceives. As she spends some time with the images I start to set up the camera and the space.

I want to create a space within which the dance can take place, to find the frame of the camera. The dancer joins me and we both begin to delineate the space. We are not sure how to define it at first; the boundary has to be inconspicuous but clearly visible for the dancer and the camera. We decide to use string and set about laying it down together. When this work is done we are ready to start. In writing this description I am feeling that there is important content in this process of setting up the space. The way a space or image is framed plays a powerful role in how it is viewed and how it looks and feels. Choices about framing are never neutral. The work of setting up and delineating the space within which an engagement can take place is important both practically and conceptually. This is something I will return to and develop later in this thesis. Creating boundaries is also important work. The idea of boundaries as being both inconspicuous yet also clearly visible resonates with me in the context of all relational interactions. Once we have set up the space of the dance floor I give the dancer some time with the images. She places them off screen and begins by picking up the first image. After a short while she puts it down and begins the first dance.
As she begins I am engrossed in her movements. I am thinking that they are so different to what I am expecting. That is, I have the feeling of racing rushing chaos in my mind/body, which of course comes from my embeddedness in the original experience. I imagine fast racing, spinning movements, this is not what is unfolding, her movements are soft and even quite contained and slow. As I watch I begin to get quite excited by the forms I can see the dancer’s body lines tracing. Even though at times there is not much movement around/within the space, her body is always moving. It moves in a contained way. By the third piece I can begin to see some beautiful configurations, which seem to me to be key movements or forms. The third image is for me representative of being quite out of control, and energetically feels like the fastest moving. Yet the dancer’s movement is quite soft contained and slow at times; it is also the shortest dance piece. This is fantastic, I now feel quite excited by it. I can see myself tracing the form of her movements in the space. I also find myself wanting to isolate some of the key forms within her dances, for example some of the holding arm forms and the stretching leaping leg forms. There are two streams of images I can see as possible to map. I wonder that as I watch it I am thinking about how I will work it. I can’t stop this thinking and am getting quite energized by it. During this thinking process I catch myself moving with the dance, echoing some of the dancer’s movements.

**Sharing the Dance**

I now tell the dancer the story of the images. I share with her that they are a representation of a confronting moment in a group interaction and outline that moment for her. She says that she is glad I had not shared this with her before she responded. As a primary school teacher who has worked with small children she says it would have been impossible not to bring her own experiences with groups of children to bear on her dance. While this in itself is not problematic—we cannot but bring our past experiences
to bear on any engagement—the dancer preferred to meet the images without any prior knowledge of their context. She preferred to respond only to the qualities she perceived and resonated with within the images.

The dancer and I now sit and together watch the video I recorded of her dance movements. As I re-watch the dances I notice again how contained the movements are. Yet it is interesting that now I no longer feel, or experience, the movements as being slow. Now I experience them as being quite fast. Already I have moved away from the original experience. This distance frees me from the preconceptions and expectations I carried. I am seeing the dance this second time with different eyes. Sharing the viewing with the dancer also brings to the viewing another perspective and a greater depth.

She begins to describe to me her experience of dancing the dance. In the second image there is a white space that breaks the circular form of the image. The dancer speaks of this white space as a ‘gap’, a ‘break’ that has drawn her attention. She describes approaching this ‘break’ and coming to a halt. She says “that’s the break” and she is not sure how to get across it. She makes a series of strong leg movements trying to stretch and step over the gap. She approaches from each side without crossing it. Now the dancer is jumping over the gap, she says she is trying to find the edges of the chasm. In the end, having explored the gap and found the edges she curls up.

We comment on the arm movements in the third dance. They begin quite open in a holding position and end in a close holding. She says that she “just felt a need to hold it close” and that this is important in some way. As I listen to her describing her experience and resonances I am struck by how similar these words and phrases she uses are to the words and phrases that my peer-companions and I arrived at when describing and titling the images all that time ago. The ideas of holding, of holding on, holding in, and being held are very present in the poetic story I put together from all
the image titles. There is a definite thread here, which travels from the
original experience, through my representations in pastel drawing, to the
danced responses. I now want to see the poetic story again to confirm
my feeling of congruence; I also want to give it to the dancer to read.
Following is the poetic story again.

Many together

Magnetism holding
The dancing
Ring-a-Rosie
In a contained movement
An invitation with no strings attached
To electric motion
A birds nest soup
Excitement now: something’s happening
Something’s happening: hang on
Held in
Here we go
Hold on tight
Together here we go
Spreading out
Trying to hold it all
Reaching for meeting
For connectivity
We all touch lightly
Everything touches everything else.
Many together

Response from the Dancer

After reading the poem the dancer has quite a strong response. She feels a strong resonance with the poem and says that it feels like a response to her dance movement. This is an important validation, which hints at key qualities that are carried through and are being felt through this series of responses. I ask the dancer if she would be willing to give me a short written response that reflects these feelings she shared with me. Following is the first part of her response then the second part. The second part of her response was written to the poetic story I gave her. I will recreate the form of that for you.

From the dancer: Part one

Holding, taking in and being moved by your images—organically with no story—literally ‘moved me’. The experience of watching the video file with you and telling you my 'story' of dancing your images was a deepening, connecting process—strengthening the feeling I had during the movement and my feeling of connection with the actual images.

Then when you debriefed and gave me the poetic response that had been generated from the inquiry you had done around the confronting moments, I was amazed...

As I read the words that had been collated and put together before I had even encountered your images, it felt to me as though I was reading a poetic response to my movement... Words that resonated with moments of experiencing as I moved inside your images.
From the dancer: Part two

I felt as I initially held your images, there was a kind of magnetic pull to the earth as I circled my hips, taking it in on a cellular level.

Dancing in a ring, round the edges Contained by string—moving within that boundary

As we set the space up, intuitively we choose string... I made a conscious choice not to cut and tie the string to make a completely separate circle—I wanted to leave the string attached to the spool so left the ends loosely overlapping and trailing off to the source.

There were moments in dancing the ‘scratchiness’ of parts of the 4 images that felt to me as though my body was electrified. Swooping around the pot, arms mixing it all together

The feeling of the energy building up as I opened my arms, swinging and jumping around like a monkey

The feeling of inertia as I reached ‘the gap’.

My body-stomach held as I teetered ‘on the edge’

Readying myself to leap across the chasm...

Mustered up the energy...

The final feeling of dancing a culmination of the four images combined.

Legs reaching, arms stretching wide...

Spinning and whirling to my centre.

Across the gap—this was a really strong feeling for me in the movement.

Trying to reach the other side

On my belly—face down, hand lightly exploring the surface of the carpet.

Images outside, inside, body, space, carpet, skin, eyes looking up to you Stacey—seeing your ‘thumbs up’—feeling grateful and privileged to have been invited into your world through art.
Representation: A Visual Description.

Somehow having witnessed the dancer dance her response to the 'Group Image' series creates a shift in me. I now hold inside an embodied felt sense of this experience, a body sense of the images translated by way of movement through time and space into three dimensions. This is what I felt was lacking before. Now I feel a strong desire to represent my resonant felt sense of witnessing and recording this dance, of the dynamic qualities I experienced, and I want to represent it visually in two dimensions.

There are two things I am interested in. One, in how the dancer moves through the space. I want to map the path of the dances and see what patterns they make. Two, I am caught by the forms made by arms and legs and this makes me want to somehow isolate and describe the spatial relationships between these beautiful forms. It is for these reasons I want to return to visual description in two dimensions. I want to slow it down and isolate the parts of the movement so as to arrive at a kind of collapsed time picture of a complete dance movement. What I mean by collapsed time here is to put together into one frame the many moments of the dancer’s movement through the space. While I cannot catch each and every moment, I can catch many moments. I want to do this to try to see the dancer’s movements from another perspective.

The first thing I do is to isolate stills from each of the dance movements. This is very time consuming and tedious work. At times I do wonder whether the time and energy spent is worth it, but I stick with it. I think that if I can do the first dance movement I will be able to get a sense of if, or how, this might work. I am aware as I am isolating stills that this is a form of reduction. There is no way I can isolate every single part of the movement. There are many movements and forms within the dance movement that I have missed. The best I can do is capture isolated moments of the movement. Of course the moments or frames I isolate may be different to frames another may isolate. I think about the choices I am making and how
this will of course determine what the finished images will look like. There is choice, I am very aware of this, and the choices I make are the mark, the trace, of my voice in this representation. Yet I am staying with what is there, even if it is not all that is there. To give you an example of how I begin working with the dance movements here are some frames I isolate from the second movement.

When I finish isolating stills from the first dance movement I have 101 such images. This alone feels daunting. The next step is to Photoshop the images so as to clear all background noise and just leave the figure and the dance floor. Here are some examples of how I work the images shown above with Photoshop.
Once I have worked all the stills I am ready to begin the work of creating my response/representation. I am thinking as I am engaged in the work of preparing these images that what I am trying to do is stay in the descriptive attitude. I am trying to visually describe the dance movements in as authentic a way as I can.

For the next step I quite literally trace the worked images using tracing paper and pencil. The first thing I do is to trace the shape of the dance floor. This is my constant, the only fixed point within which all the dance movements take place. Then I begin tracing each still image, onto the page. They build up in a sequence of movement through space and in a kind of collapsed time as previously discussed.

On the following pages are the images I have created in response to the dancers movements. For each dance movement I create 2 images. The first is ‘Figure Through Time and Space’, which I describe above. The second is ‘Map of the Dancer’s Path’ where I map the path the dancer follows through the space of the dance floor. On the following pages I present the ‘Figure Through Time and Space’, and then the ‘Map of the Dancer’s Path’ for each original image.
Figure 3.25: Figure Through Time and Space #1

Figure 3.26: Map of the Dancer’s Path #1
Figure 3.27: Figure Through Time and Space #2

Figure 3.28: Map of the Dancer’s Path #2
Figure 3.29: Figure Through Time and Space #3

Figure 3.30: Map of the Dancer’s Path #3
Many together

Figure 3.31: Figure Through Time and Space #4

Figure 3.32: Map of the Dancer’s Path #4
Reflection

After completing these two series of images I want to see them alongside the original ‘Group Image’ series to which they respond. To do so I put all three series up on to the wall. I sit back and just look. I am interested in how, or if, the ‘Figure Through Time and Space’ and ‘Map of the Dancer’s Path’ images refer to or relate to the original ‘Group Image’ images. I find that they are indeed very much connected, in communication even. It does feel like they are talking together and my sense is that they are obviously of each other.

I ask myself what these three series of images may say of my topic: of spaces in between us and of intersubjective space in interaction. These works are very different from the works in Chapter Two. Here the space between is not clearly defined and these works have clear boundaries within which interaction takes place. Are there spaces in between in a group interaction? Certainly not in the same way as there are in a one-on-one interaction. There is no ‘open’ space between; the space is filled with energetic movement. This underlines or amplifies my sense in the beginning of needing to represent energetic qualities. It is filled with movement and energy. Also the need to establish boundaries and ground the space is evident in representations of the group interaction. This is interesting and I think really important. The qualities of my experience of the intersubjective space of a group are fundamentally different than those of a one-on-one interaction. It is qualities of energy and movement that hold primacy. Tracing the movement within these spaces can I feel help to describe the form and quality of dynamic energy.
Spending Time with the Images

I spend quite a bit of time with the images, looking at them, dialoguing with them. In Chapter Six I provide a detailed description of this process of dialoguing with the images. For now I present some of the content that emerged from this interaction. As I sit and look at the three series of images I begin to get a sense of structural and dynamic qualities in them. I look at all the #1 images together as a set, all the #2 images as a set, and so on.

I decide to write a description of each set of images. After I have done this I spend some more time just sitting with the images. I find that key words are coming to me, words which seem to encapsulate the energetic qualities and quality of movement in each set. I include four keywords for each set. So here the key words are not pulled out from the descriptions as I have done previously. Here key words are arrived at by me in direct response to my resonant felt sense of qualities of energy and movement in each set of images.

In the following pages I present for you the images in their sets as I have viewed them, each set is followed by its description and key words.
Figure 3.33: Group Image #1

Figure 3.34: Figure Through Time and Space #1

Figure 3.35: Map of the Dancer’s Path #1
Description and Key Words: One

For each set of images I write a description. I then outline in bold text key structural elements, expressive qualities, and feeling qualities that are present in my description. Next, I pull out these key words and phrases and form a telling. After this I arrive at four key words that encapsulate my felt sense of the images. These key words follow the description.

Description

These images trace a circular form. In ‘Figure Through Time and Space # 1’ there seems to be a break in the circle at the lower front right section. This gives me a feeling of the movement as being more of a zig zag through the space than a moving around. Even though the map shows that it is moving around. The energy of it is restless. The points of contact seem to wander. They are connected but quite loosely. They form a loose circular form without a defined centre.

A Telling

There is a loose circular form without a defined centre. There is a break in the circle; it is like a zigzag through space. There is a restless moving around where the points of contact seem to wander, they are connected but quite loosely.

Key words

Meandering
Rolling
Loosely Held
Scattered
Figure 3.36: Group Image #2

Figure 3.37: Figure Through Time and Space #2

Figure 3.38: Map of the Dancer’s Path #2
Description and Key Words: Two

**Description**

‘Figure Through Time and Space #2’ forms a clear circular shape. The movement feels like it travels around the space in a rough circle. Places within the areas of movement are of varying density and intensity with the right hand side of the image being darker and more filled. There is quite a lightly filled area in the front left section, there is only one layer of figures here. This is not a clear space but feels like a gap. This gap is a mirror of a gap in the original pastel drawing. ‘Map of the Dancer’s Path #2’ clearly describes a circular form. The points of contact are less dispersed than in the previous map, they are closer together and denser. There is a slightly off centre, small and tight circular form within the outer circle.

**A Telling**

There is a clear circular shape which has a slightly off centre, small, and tight circular form within it. The movement travels around the space in a rough circle. There are areas of varying density and intensity, in places darker and more filled, in places lightly filed. The lightly filled place is not a clear space but feels like a gap. The points of contact are close together and dense.

**Key words**

Winding
Dragging
Tight centred
expanding
A Chat with the Dancer

The dancer told me she focussed in on a gap she saw in the original pastel drawing and explored it in her dance. The gap is on the front left section of the drawing. She felt it as an unknown that attracted her. She wanted to know more about it. I know this because she told me. The dancer represents this gap in the following way. She suddenly stops, she is at the gap. She stretches out her leg reaching across. Then she moves back around the dance floor until she arrives at the other side of the gap. Again she stops and reaches out her leg feeling the gap. Back around the circle again till she is back at the other side. This time she jumps across the gap. Then again jumps back across the gap. It is interesting that her movements are actioned in the front right section of the dance floor. It is precisely the act of engaging with and recreating this space in movement that allows displaced space for it. I can see both the actioned gap in the arc of legs and the emptiness of non-action that sits next to it.
Figure 3.40: Group Image #3

Figure 3.41: Figure Through Time and Space #3

Figure 3.42: Map of the Dancer’s Path #3
Description and Key Words: Three

Description
The action in ‘Figure Through Time and Space #3’ is very dense and contained. It is situated in the centre back of the dance floor. I get a sense of arms and legs reaching out from every edge of this figure group. It feels like spinning, turning, and reaching up and out, a many armed and legged creature is a seething mass of spinning movement. While not strictly elliptical it is very roughly so. There are two areas of density. When I look at ‘Map of the Dancer’s Path # 3’ I see one tight mass of movement on the top centre right of the dance floor. There is a loose mass which takes up more space and moves around from the back centre to the back centre left.

What I know now
This feels dense and contained, reaching out, spinning, turning, and reaching up and out. It is a seething mass of spinning movement which is roughly elliptical. There is one tight mass of movement and a looser mass.

Key words
Spinning and reaching
Leaping
Contained space
contracting
Many together

Figure 3.43: Group Image #4

Figure 3.44: Figure Through Time and Space #4

Figure 3.45: Map of the Dancer’s Path #4
Description and Key Words: Four

Description

‘Figure Through Time and Space # 4’ feels like an expanded version of the previous image. This image has a feeling of leaning out from a centre force. Along the rear left hand side heads and shoulders are straining toward the outside. It looks like pulling and straining. I feel a sense of being held. There is in the centre a feeling of collapse, of dropping and pinning down. The slack of this is taken up by a pulling out again, this time to the right. This is a less constrained pulling. It is less dense. There are a few arms reaching out from the right hand side of the image. There is a definite tension held in the centre. The word centrifugal keeps popping into my head. While there is not a sense of spinning there is a sense of carefully balanced tension which is held centrally.

What I know now

There is here a feeling of expansion and leaning out from a central force. To the left there is pulling and straining toward the outside. To the right a less constrained pulling, a less dense reaching. In the centre there is a feeling of collapse, of dropping and pinning down, of being held. There is a definite tension of being held in the centre. A carefully balanced tension held centrally.

Key words

Straining
Pulling apart
Densely spreading
Holding together
Key Word Poetic Statement

Following are the key words from all four sets of images. I put them all together into one poetic statement in order to get a feeling for the story these words tell of the energetic dynamic of this series of images.

Meandering
Rolling
Loosely Held
Scattered
Winding
Draging
Tight centred
expanding
Spinning and reaching
Leaping
Contained space
Contracting
Straining
Pulling apart
Densely spreading
Holding together

Vitality dynamics

When I look at this key word poetic statement I am reminded of Stern’s Forms of Vitality (2010). These words all describe what he calls ‘vitality dynamics’ of movement. Stern’s idea of vitality is interesting in light of my new understanding of the importance of the dynamics of energy within group intersubjective spaces.

Stern explores the experience of vitality and forms of vitality. He says:

We naturally experience people in terms of their vitality. We intuitively evaluate their emotions, states of mind, what they are thinking and what they really mean, their authenticity, what they are likely to do next, as well as their health and illness on the basis of the vitality expressed in their almost constant movements. (Stern, 2010, p. 3)
Many together

So here our vitality forms are an important part of how we intersubjectively engage and constitute another form of dialogue, which is constant and implicit. It is as Stern believes also overlooked. He isolates five key things that give rise to the experience of vitality, these are movement, time, force, space, and direction. He says that a movement “unfolds in a certain stretch of time”, there is force “behind” or “within” movement, it “has to happen in space, so a sense of space is defined by the movement”, and it has directionality (2010, p. 4).

Stern focuses on the dynamics of very small events lasting seconds. He breaks these events down and looks at the movement, time, force, space, and directionality of the dynamics.

The force, speed, and flow of a gesture; the timing and stress of a spoken phrase or even a word; the way one breaks into a smile or the time course of a decomposing smile; the manner of shifting position in a chair; the time course of lifting the eyebrows when interested and the duration of their lift; the shift and flight of a gaze; and the rush and tumble of thoughts. These are examples of the dynamic forms and dynamic experiences of everyday life. (Stern, 2010, p. 6)

It is the idea of unpacking dynamic forms of experience that excites me here, and that I believe holds relevance in relation to the data that has emerged in both this and the previous chapter. While the dance movements are not small events, I believe that the images I have created do demonstrate and hold the dynamic experience of the dance by collapsing a series of small events into one frame. The job is to allow an unpacking of the forms of vitality that constitute these experiences. This can be done by way of the key word poetic statement.

Stern provides a list of words that he says fall between the cracks. They are not acts, they are not emotions, and they are not content. What they are he says is “the felt experience of force—in movement—with a temporal contour,
Many together

and a sense of aliveness, of going somewhere” (Stern, 2010, p. 8).

An example of some of the words he lists follows:

“Exploding
Swelling
Drawn out
Forceful
Cresting
Rushing
Relaxing
Surging
Bursting
Pulling”
(2010, p. 8)

Each of these words conveys a sense of vital movement through time, with a particular type of force and directionality that moves through space. They each have their own flow pattern and “constitute a separate kind of experience” (2010, p. 8). If we now look again at my key word statement it is clear that they are all just such words that describe and constitute a dynamic experience of vitality.

Meandering
Rolling
Loosely held
Scattered
Winding
Dragging
Tightly centred
Expanding
Spinning and reaching
Leaping
Contracting
Straining
Pulling apart
Densely spreading
Holding together

These key words (vitality forms) all describe or reveal the vitality dynamic of this group intersubjective space. Together they tell a story of dynamic movements of vitality and energy.
It is important to note that these vitality dynamics do not speak to the content of these images, rather, they speak to the structural process, or the form of this data. Stern makes the point that “the vitality dynamic gives the content its form as a dynamic experience” (Stern, p. 23). This is relevant to my experience of group intersubjective space. I began with a sense of energetic movement through both time and space. After working with my original images and then with the dancer I come to an understanding that this series articulates the dynamic of energetic movement through time and space. We can see that each of the ‘Figure Through Time and Space’ images have a very different and distinct form. This reflects the different and unique vitality dynamics that constitute and shape the form of the spaces.

**Summary: What I Know Now**

In this chapter I experience a degree of frustration and dissatisfaction because the images I create do not successfully represent the resonant felt sense I hold. The space of a group I realise holds very different qualities to the space of a one-on-one interaction. I wonder at the content in my process here. Does my frustration say something about the intersubjective space of a group as being less easy to track and to hold than the intersubjective space of a one-on-one interaction? Here we are touching on a different kind of holding, of different qualities of presence, which are required when facilitating a group. Also we are touching on different complexities of energy and movement in space. There is an ambiguity that these complexities create, an ambiguity reflected in the abstraction of the images.

By way of my peer-companions and I describing the images I arrive at a sense of the dynamic and energetic structure of this space of interaction. I gain a sense of the movement of energy that I experience within the intersubjective space of this group interaction. The movement is from a close central holding to a separating out, which yet maintains connection of the
Many together

parts. This leads me to think that there is something important about allowing for dispersal and spreading out; allowing for individual needs, growth, and movement; and allowing for freedom of space and movement within a group. This also suggests that the intersubjective space of a group is very robust.

When a peer-companion dances in response to the ‘Group Image’ images, I come to understand more about the dynamic qualities of this group interaction. I come to know that the dynamic of energetic movement is born of the interaction of vitality forms within the time and space of this group interaction. I have come to know that my experience of the intersubjective space of this group is created, shaped, defined, and structured by the dynamics of energetic movement.

I have also come to realise that the shifting dynamic of resistance and allowing, of communication in the form of expression and response that I experienced in Chapter Two, are also energetic movements.
Chapter Four

Layers of Engagement: An Interactive Web
Layers of engagement
Introduction

Curious to explore a further confronting moment with a group I enlist the help of another, my participant Jay. Jay is a creative arts therapist who works with children and adults both one on one and in groups. My hope is that by companioning an exploration of Jay’s experience of a confronting moment facilitating a group, I can come to know something about the qualities of this group intersubjective space. I explain to Jay what I am doing and she agrees to participate in my research project. Together we work to describe and explore her experience.

Companioning Jay’s Description of Experience

A Conversation

Jay and I begin by simply having a conversation about her work with groups. I ask Jay to try to recall a confronting moment she has experienced with a group. After discussing a few different instances of feeling challenged while facilitating groups, she hits on a moment that stands out for her as a particularly confronting one. Jay’s confronting moment occurs in a group she has organised for children at her place of work. She has a co-facilitator to help run the group with her but the co-facilitator has very little experience working with children and is participating as a backup. Consequently Jay is aware that responsibility for holding the group lies more or less on her shoulders. On arriving at her place of work she discovers that a child she has previously deemed unsuitable for the group due to disruptive behaviour has been accepted into the group. While she is a bit annoyed that this change has been made without consultation she decides to take it in her stride and see how things develop. Maybe it will be fine. Jay gives me this background to set the scene. Perhaps before the group even begins Jay’s anticipation is building, which holds potential for anxiety and discomfort.
Layers of engagement

Jay now begins to describe to me her confronting moment. Here I include excerpts of our dialogue, of Jay’s words and my own. These excerpts will appear in italics. I feel it is important to stay with the conversation we have, which is quite a long one, and to represent Jay’s voice as transparently and faithfully as I can. I view the conversation Jay and I share as a primary text which represents Jay’s experience. The words she uses to represent and describe her experience hold that experience in a unique way; they hold the energy of that experience. This would be lost if I simply relate her experience, her story using my own words.

Feeling for the Moment

To continue the telling of Jay’s confronting moment, the child who was deemed unsuitable for the group is at the centre of this story. As soon as the group starts this child begins to disrupt the group activities. Jay describes this disruption as follows: “The whole day the child is running here, running there. It is taking a lot of energy and a lot of space trying to keep [her/him] in line and integrate [her/him] in the group.” In the afternoon there is one activity planned, which involves reading a book to the children. And we are coming to the moment now.

As soon as Jay reads out the title of the book one child responds by sharing a very personal and strong feeling. Jay says “I can’t hear that and not be with that—I just have to respond”. It is “very serious content”; Jay wants to be very present to this child.

I think the moment is when I am deeply connected to that child who is opening up something which I consider is very important to [her/him], and the difficulty of bracketing out the obnoxious behaviour. The other child is loud, [she/he] is physical, [she/he] is invasive, throwing pillows, being loud, moving across the room.
As Jay is speaking of this confronting moment I am noticing her body language. She is spreading her arms out wide as she is speaking. I draw her attention to this. Following is an excerpt from our conversation:

Jay: This [child] is really misbehaving; [she/he] is interrupting all the time. I feel that I want to be present to [her/him] yet also want to stop [her/him] from being so obnoxious. Because it is not conducive to the mood of what is happening, it is so out of touch with what is happening, and I feel I have to hold both. (Jay’s arms are spread wide)

Stacey: As you speak I am noticing your body language. You arms are open and stretched out in different directions. (I spread my arms out also as I speak)

Jay: I am stretched (She spreads out her arms again).

It feels to me like she is stretching her arms out and trying to hold things, which seem just out of her reach.

She feels the need to hold both the disruptive child and the child who is still sharing very significant feelings. Yet she also realises that this is not possible for her. She says:

I got to that cutting off point when I realised that I couldn’t hold them both. They were in totally different places. And again there is that thing about the individual versus the group. A confronting moment indeed.

Being stretched, distracted, and torn left her feeling unable to hold the child who shared, the child who disrupted, or the group as a whole. “I had that real tearing inside me... but I had the whole group to be with also. Who do I be with, a real dilemma?” When facilitating a group, if one person needs special attention it becomes difficult to balance the needs of the individual against the needs of the group. The dilemma is it is not possible to be with both.

To go back again to the moment, the rest of the children in the group had been very engaged by the sharing that took place. Jay says:

It is an opportunity for these children. How often can they talk about these things? I guess I felt that I was letting them down. I was not able to give
Layers of engagement

them my best presence. I couldn’t be completely present to them. I was really
distracted and torn... One part of the experience is also a feeling of
inadequacy in the moment as well. You just can’t be in two places at once.
While I know that I wanted to be, I wanted to be but couldn’t be so I had to
give up. [Opening and stretching out her arms as she speaks].

The chance for sharing has passed and cannot be retrieved. “There were
opportunities that could not be, couldn’t happen, opportunities that were missed.”

There is for me also a feeling of regret here.

Re-experiencing and Representation

The Moment

As our conversation reaches a stopping point Jay is very clear about just
what her confronting moment is. “I keep coming back to the moment when this
child is opening up and I’ve got the other one disrupting.” The task now is for Jay
to represent this experience. I invite Jay to try and focus in on this moment
and just how it feels for her. I ask her to think about how she would like
to bring this experience up into representation. Jay thinks about this, not
drawing or writing she says, and not movement either. She is quite still and
turned inward, thinking and feeling for what is right for her. Finally she
decides on sandtray as a means to represent her re-experiencing of this
confronting moment.
The Sandtray

We move to the sandtray and Jay begins to select some characters. She picks up a small basket and takes her time to select the characters she needs. When she is done she moves to the sandtray and begins. I move away from Jay and sit at some distance from her.
The Space

When Jay is finished creating the sand tray she looks up. I move closer to her and the sandtray and we have another conversation. Again I include excerpts from our conversation in order to involve Jay’s voice and stay with the conversation as best I can.

After selecting her characters I notice that the first thing Jay does is to clear a space, to dig a hollowed clearing in the centre of the sandtray. She does this in a very considered and careful way, slowly pushing the sand out from the centre. I am curious about this and ask her about it.

Stacey: I notice that you were very careful about creating an empty space right in the middle of the tray
Jay: That’s right. I guess I feel the situation is one where you need a space to be and I wanted to create a space for [the sharing child].
Stacey: How did it feel to be able to create a space?
Jay: It felt really good to create the space, it felt right. That was the right thing to do, to open up the space for [her/him].
In the sandtray it is possible to create the necessary safe place, which Jay feels she could not create, or did not manage to satisfactorily create, in the group experience.

**Jay’s Characters**

I now ask Jay where she is in the representation, I am curious about this as there are quite a few characters in the sandtray. She points to the figure of the girl and to the two superhero figures.

![Figure 4.4: Jay #1](image1)

![Figure 4.5: Jay #2 & 3](image2)

I am intrigued that there are three figures that represent Jay. She speaks of the female figure in pink, which I notice has its arms spread in that stretched out position. “I chose her because her arms were spread, like she was searching for some kind of balance. And she has a Tai Qi kind of stance, of keeping your centre of gravity low so as not to fall off balance easily.” So there is something about keeping balance, which is important here.

Jay now begins to describe why it was important to choose the two superhero figures. Originally she picks up the superman figure, which is solid cast and thus inflexible. She puts it back and chooses the batman figure. “I needed this one [Batman] to be mobile, that was for sure, but when I got the other one [Superman] it was not. Mobility was important but strength was also an important element.” While strength is important so is flexibility and initially Jay chooses flexibility over strength. This figure is placed alone outside the safe space. After a short while the conversation returns to Batman and the need for flexibility.
It is that flexibility I have that sometimes doesn’t work for me...
Sometimes I think I need to be a bit firmer; maybe I need this guy [Batman] to be a bit stiff, strong and stiff. I think maybe there needs to be two; maybe they both [Batman and Superman] need to be there. I think they do actually, we need them both there.

Jay places the Superman figure with the Batman figure. As we continue speaking Jay plays around with the placement of the Superman figure. First she places him directly behind Batman but is unhappy with this because he needs to see what is happening. Then he is placed shoulder to shoulder with Batman, but Jay finally settles with placing him behind and off to one side of Batman. She says that now “he [Superman] is ready to make that move if need be. He is just keeping an eye on things but can interfere if need be. He doesn’t need to be in the foreground, but he needs to be there.” Jay also notes that these two figures are “outside the safe space but keeping an eye on things.” These figures are then watching, protecting and monitoring the safe space and those in it. They are ready for action if needs be.

The Children’s Characters
Jay says that the small dog figure represents the sharing child. This figure is placed in front of the female figure in pink. The dinosaur figure she indicates represents the disruptive child. The dinosaur is right behind the female figure in pink.
I am looking at the figure of the dinosaur and its open mouth and many teeth. I feel uncomfortable that this dinosaur is right behind Jay’s female figure in pink character. I ask her about this.

Stacey: I feel concerned that the dinosaur is behind you. What does that feel like?

Jay: Well I am very well aware that something was at my back which could jump in at any moment. But I had these ones [Batman and Superman] keeping an eye on [her/him] as well.

Jay points out that the figures are all lined up diagonally across the sandtray. In the following image it is very clear that the small dog figure is placed between the Female figure in pink and the two super figures.

Figure 4.7: All the Characters Lined Up

I also notice that the small dog and female in pink are both in the safe space while the two super figures and the dinosaur are outside of this space.

Jay: I’m looking at how I placed it [Batman], it is outside that space but it is keeping an eye on [the small dog].

Stacey: They are all in a diagonal line.

Jay: Yes that’s right. We are lined up. [Dinosaur] is behind me and this little one [small dog] is a bit sideways. If this is the firing line it is safe. This is reassuring somehow. Maybe I did manage to keep [her/him] safe. Looking back I did respond to [her/him], I made the contact, I acknowledged what [she/he] was telling me.
The Movement of Jay’s Characters

Here I will briefly move forward in time. After this meeting is over I am back at home and create a series of drawings by tracing photographs of the sandtray. My aim is to try and describe the way the two super figures moved in relation to each other. I feel this is important as it is the only movement in the sandtray experience. Following are the drawings I created.

I then put all four positions together to get a sense of the movement of them.

This image is of the collated positions.
In creating and looking at this image I am interested to see the spatial relationships of the Jay figures. I notice that the super figures seem to move in a way that suggests a cradling and vigilant presence. I write a statement that sums up for me what I understand is happening in the movements represented in the sandtray.

Statement of my understanding
The movement of negotiation between flexibility and strength are parts of self, in their roles of being both watchdogs and protectors of the vulnerable.

Reflection

A Poem from Jay
In due course our conversation with the sandtray finishes and I invite Jay to spend some reflective time and make a representation of what she knows now about her confronting moment after exploring it in sandtray. This serves to both reduce the stuff of this experience to something containable, and also to clarify what may be for her key qualities of this experience, things that rise to the surface for her. Jay decides to write a poem.

Jay's Poem
I dig a hole and clear a space
I shelter you in this vulnerable moment
I feel in my back the other's devouring mouth
I resent his presence in my need to protect you
I watch him in a flexible stance
I miss keeping him at bay
I regret the missed opportunity

Later when I am alone, I look at this poem again and what comes into my mind are 'I Poems'. An I poem “focuses in on the voice of the ‘I’ who is speaking by following the use of this first-person pronoun...” (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg and Bertch, 2006, p. 259). Gilligan et al work with transcripts from interviews with their companions and listen to the different voices within a text. One of the voices they listen to and isolate is this
I’ voice as they believe it speaks of “what this person knows of her—or himself” (2006, p. 259). Jay’s poem reminds me of an ‘I poem’ and it does indeed speak to me of what Jay has come to know of herself in and through her experiencing. When I speak of her experiencing here I refer to the original experience of a confronting moment facilitating a group, her re-experiencing of that moment in dialogue with myself, representation of that moment in a sandtray, and finally reflection on the sandtray and dialogue with myself and the sandtray. Through this whole process Jay has come to an essential understanding of herself in this experience.

Looking at Jay’s poem I reduce it in another I poem. When creating an I poem from another’s words two things are important. “(a) underline or select every first person ‘I’ within the passage you have chosen along with the verb and any seemingly important accompanying words and (b) maintain the sequence in which these phrases appear in the text” (Gillian et al, 2006, p. 25–260). Following these guidelines I have created an I poem from Jay’s Poem.

\[
\begin{align*}
I & \text{ dig a hole} \\
I & \text{ shelter you} \\
I & \text{ feel} \\
I & \text{ resent his presence} \\
I & \text{ watch him} \\
I & \text{ miss} \\
I & \text{ regret}
\end{align*}
\]

This poem seems to further strip back Jay’s experience. She digs a safe place and shelters one child. She feels deeply. She resents another child and watches him closely. There is a need for vigilance and protection. Yet an opportunity is missed and this causes regret. There is something in this reduction that not only speaks of what Jay knows of her experience of being in the space of this group, but for me it also points to the emotional and energetic movements that may structure this group experience and hold its content.
My Response to Jay’s Experience

I spend some time just reading through the transcripts again with the aim to form a creative response to Jay’s experience in the mode of a narrative poem. I do this to try and reduce the large quantity of data I have gathered in transcripts to some kind of a core statement of what stands out for me. It is also to focus up and explore the intersubjective space of this interaction and to give voice to the strong resonant felt sensings I am experiencing in response to Jay’s experience.

I isolate some of Jay’s words and phrases, which really stand out for me and strongly evoke my sense of the interaction. I choose only those that I feel are descriptive of her process in this experience. So the two key things here are to use descriptive language and to be lead by my resonance. In this way the words and phrases I choose are (mostly) Jay’s, but the understanding, the resonant felt sense that informs the selection of words and phrases and the way they are put together are my own. Having said this I just want to point out that I do maintain the sequence of events as they are unfolded by Jay.

**Creating a safe space/I split myself**

One is opening up and needing me
   Another is disrupting
   Two calls for attention

I create an empty space right in the middle
   I want to create a safe place
   To open a space for opening up

I keep the one disrupting at my back
   Aware of the presence
   That could jump out at any moment
   My arms are spread wide
   Knees flexible
   Searching for some kind of balance
   It is difficult to keep
   An eye everywhere
I keep the one opening up at my front
Layers of engagement

Still I need to split myself
To be in two places

One of me is in the middle
Arms spread wide

Two more of me are outside the safe space
Watching, the flexible one stands firm
Shifting, the strong one finds vantage

We three me’s create a safe zone
We keep the one opening up
Between us and out of the firing line

The idea of splitting self reinforces for me the idea that intersubjective engagement is a very fluid and shifting thing. I feel there is something here in Jay’s experience that points to specific qualities of presence that are important to a group facilitator, qualities that allow one to stay with this fluidity and changeability. It is hard sometimes to stretch oneself across/through an intersubjective space that holds many different energies. It is I believe, in such a context, necessary to hold many different resonances or responses at one time. Lett says that resonance is the “deeply felt, resonant, intuitive sharing of the feeling of personal responsive connection”, it is making “the feeling connection alive” (Lett, 2011, p. 16). He also refers to resonance as characterising a dialogue between people. In a group context where there are many people there are many potential resonant dialogues occurring at any one time, many different feeling connections in play. And as Jay’s experience shows us her resonant felt sensings are not always consonant, she experiences a very dissonant response to the disruptive child. The difficulty lies in holding these different and conflicting resonant dialogues. In her representations of herself one ‘self’ is balanced and focussed on protecting the sharing child, and she is also keeping an eye on her other selves. One is flexible and is focussed on watching over and monitoring both the balanced self and the sharing child. One is strong and
firm and is watching over and monitoring all the other selves. This strategy works for Jay in the sandtray context as she ends up feeling quite safe and no longer feels the disruptive child is a threat. Also she feels that she did manage to protect the sharing child because she was able, with the help of the flexible self and the strong self, to keep her/him out of ‘the firing line’.

While these three different ‘selves’ reflect different responses to the group dynamic, I feel that they also reflect different qualities of presence.

Qualities of presence I believe are a part of or arise from resonant responses. I think that this is important as how we are present and intersubjectively engage works to co-create the space of interaction. Buber says that the work of being present is also the work of dialogue and that it is “in ‘dialogue’ that all things ‘say’ something to us” (Friedman, 2002, p. 199). The very act of being present is then already a dialogue, an interaction. It is then through further dialogue of resonant responding that Jay arrives at three characters that represent qualities of her presence. They represent balance, flexibility, strength, observation, focussed attention, and protection or keeping safe; all possible qualities of being present. When facilitating a group and it is necessary to hold many different resonant felt sensings and responses it can be difficult to bring them all up into actioned presence. For me it feels like I have my antennae out and the antennae are seeing different things, attending to different things, orienting to different things. So I am engaging, interacting, and responding, in a series of intersubjective dialogues, in a variety of ways. At times I just get a sense of something and notice it, let my awareness hold it; at times I feel a resonance and may respond with a look, smile or movement of acknowledgement; at other times my response may take the form of a verbal engagement.

Our intersubjectivity is so often pre-verbal that it has to have multiple potential forms. In our engagements with others, our resonances or responses are not always verbally formed, they are more often pre-verbal. We may have just a felt sense of something that is not yet clear, or a felt
Layers of engagement

sense of something that is quite clear, held in the body but not formed yet into a verbal response. Then “there is a movement through this primitive prereflective, varimodal experiencing into the more conscious continuation of playing and forming through representations and dialogue” (Lett, 2011, p.2). Koser writes of his process of being present to himself whilst on a walk. He demonstrates presence to his own at times overwhelming inner experiencing and points to the importance of staying with what arises and working emergently. Part of the work of staying present to his experiencing involved opening up to the unknown and uncertain as a process of coming to know something, and of growth. This opening up entails listening to the felt sense of things (Koser, 2010). I feel that Jay’s sandtray representation where she creates three selves is a beautiful example of such a process of listening to her own resonant felt sense of being present to the group, of being present to many different energies and resonances at once. It is through different qualities of presence that we bring to an interaction through resonant responses that these different forms are given substance.

Representation: A Visual Description

I am curious now to try to focus up the intersubjective space of Jay’s experience as represented in the sandtray. I want to give representation to the parts of Jay’s presence in interaction with others within the space of the sandtray, and to the spaces between and around the characters. Here my idea of the spaces between holds something of Buber’s idea of an I-Thou relation where the between is relational, dialogic and just what is there between us (Friedman, 202, p. 354). In relation to this idea Crossley says interactions that occur in the space between “are formed in and belong to the interworld which forms between them” (Crossley, 1996, p. 12). It is after all within the spaces between us that we are intersubjectively engaged and that our resonances are held and/or formed into responses. These are all interactions, all movements of coming together and acting together. For each individual in intersubjective engagement “their thoughts and experiences are dialogically interwoven with those of their other[s]” (1996, p. 12).
Yet in my experience there is also a physical dimension to the between, where the between is impacted on and thus partly formed by what is around and also by what is at a distance. I feel that in the case of Jay’s confronting experience she focuses on her responding to two participants, the disrupting child and the sharing child. Yet the physical and relational space of the group is more than that represented, more than the space between Jay and these two children. There are many other children in the group all of whom Jay is trying to also be present to, also to hold. These children’s experiences are also ‘dialogically interwoven with’ those of Jay and the two children represented, yet they are not present in the sandtray and not fully present in Jay’s experience of the moment. This demonstrates the struggle Jay faced of how to manage the group and hold the whole group. In this way, the presence of the group, which is at a distance to, yet surrounds, the experience represented, works in some way to impact Jay’s experience of the form, tone, and dynamic of these between spaces. I feel it is important to acknowledge here these thoughts on the spaces between.

I come back to the sandtray photographs and my ‘Tracing Movement’ drawings of the sandtray. I attend to the spaces between the figures in the drawing and decide to try and represent them in a descriptive way. Using tracing paper I begin to form the spaces between the characters. I start with the sandtray configuration with only one super figure. I am drawn again to specific colours and begin with orange.
First I take one sheet of tracing paper and draw the space between the disruptive child and Jay’s balanced self. This is the space of perceived disruption and danger.

Then I take another piece of tracing paper and am drawn to a pink crayon. Pink fills the space between Jay’s three facilitator characters, the space of watching, monitoring, and protection.

Finally I choose yellow for the safe place. I feel that the safe place belongs with/to the facilitator characters as it is created by them, so I include the pink space with the yellow here. Yellow fills the space of the safe place.

I then put all the parts of this first image together to form a representation of the spaces of this interaction. Yet I still want to capture the movement of the Superman figure in relation to the Batman figure. This was the only movement in the sandtray, and it was a movement of negotiation between aspects of Jay’s ‘selves’ or presence. For these reasons I think it is important to capture the small shifts in position of Superman. Consequently, I create
one image for each shift in position. The result is four images, all of which are created in colour parts, layers on tracing paper that are put together to form the complete image. Following are the layered images I create.

Here there is only the flexible Batman.

![Figure 4.16: The Shapes Between #1](image)

Here the strong Superman is placed behind the flexible Batman.

![Figure 4.17: The Shapes Between #2](image)
Here strong Superman is placed shoulder to shoulder with flexible Batman.

Figure 4.18: The Shapes Between #3

Here strong Superman is placed to the side of and slightly behind flexible Batman. This is how they are finally situated.

Figure 4.19: The Shapes Between #4

As I sit back and look at this series of images I am struck by the life these forms seem to hold. It is almost as if they are breathing, as if the spaces are constantly shifting imperceptibly. This brings to mind and demonstrates...
the ever shifting movements of the ongoing interwoven dialogue, which
forms and shapes the space. There are figures enclosed in the space,
fully defined by it, and others at the edges revealed by only partial outline.
It is interesting to note the differing size and form of the pink protecting
space according to the positioning of the super figures, the protectors.

Looking at some of the images I stay with my resonant felt sense of them.
Initially I have a very strong feeling of meeting head on, not quite head
banging but rather a forceful pushing against another. It is a pushing against,
which is held and maintained. Certainly the energy is held in the place
where the pink and orange meet, where the protection and the danger meet.
What arises for me when I look at these four images is the feeling of a slight
frenzy, which is uncomfortable and holds potential for escalation. My felt
sense of this is of the movement of enveloping something. All of this energy,
or the energetic qualities of movement that I see and feel in the images,
is held in the safe place. This seems to me to quite capture the tensions
represented by Jay in sharing her experience of a confronting moment
facilitating a group. Indeed I feel that these representations tell us a little bit
more about the energetic qualities present in Jay’s experience of the space of
this interaction. That is, Jay communicated her experience of facilitating
a group, and the sandtray begins to show both how it happened in space,
and also how she wanted it to happen by re-creating a safe space. The images
I create then zero in on how the spaces of that interaction move against one
another and the energy of that.

**Sharing with Others**

After some more time passes I have the opportunity to share these images
with a small group of four people, including Jay. I am very excited to show
her what I have done and to receive some feedback from her. I briefly
describe the context of this work with Jay, a confronting moment facilitating
Layers of engagement

a group. I show the group all the material I have gathered, the photographs, Jay’s poem, my narrative poem, the ‘Tracing Movement’ drawings, and the ‘Shapes Between Us’ pastel images. Re-reading her poem Jay is glad to be reminded of this story, and excited by the pastel images. She says “it is lovely to be reminded of that story.” She spends some time remembering and reflecting on her original experience. She says:

> Initially I really felt frustrated, that I had a conflicted value in that group where I felt I was not really able to protect that other child who was opening up and feeling really raw. Through the process of this sandplay I realised I did the best I could which was to keep [her/him] out of the firing line. That was all I could do. That was an important understanding for me to come to because I had really had felt torn on that day.

The group are interested in the way I have created the images through a series of layers. One of our peer-companions in the group asks if she can rearrange the layering of an image. I readily agree, and the result is quite a different image. Resonating with Jay’s feeling about how strong the presence of the disruptive child is, our peer-companion moves the orange layer to the top. She feels the child is being kept at bay by being underneath, yet Jay’s experience was of a struggle to keep the child at bay. This rearranged image is very powerful, the difference is subtle but at the same time quite surprising, somehow the whole safe space seems smaller.
Seeing this reworked image (Figure 4.20) prompts a deeper reflection from Jay on the subtle shifts in energy and the focus of her presence during this experience. Just when did the disruptive child seemingly overpower her energy? It is in the beginning that she feels the disruption as most overwhelming. She says:

*I make my presence really felt at the beginning of the group and I try to establish a safe space for everybody concerned. But right away [she/he] is not in the background [she/he] is full on... As I become more and more aware of [her/his] presence I sink to the bottom and the safe space sinks to the bottom and it takes a while to gather it up.*
By the second image (Figure 4.21) the safe place is further receding and the orange presence is still very strong. In relation to creating a safe place Jay says: “you know that is what I try to do... I am trying to establish that safe place but very quickly it is disappearing.” As Jay becomes more and more aware of the disruptive presence she appears to shrink and the safe space seems to sink. She says, “I think in a way the yellow space sinks because he is just so big in it.” Jay now wants to alter the third image as well.

After she alters this image (Figure 4.22) Jay says: “at that point in time I am managing. I think it is like here [she/he] is listening; the real shift would be here. I am gathering strength here; [she/he] is still strong.” In this image the pink space has grown much larger and brighter, “it really feels like I am sinking and then coming back to the surface”.

By the fourth image (Figure 4.23) the shift is consolidated and Jay is managing well. Balance is achieved with the safe place on the surface.

When I look at these restructured images I get a sense of both the pink and yellow spaces sinking down and then rising to the surface again. I also get a sense of an energetic struggle for space and place. I am satisfied that these changes have been made primarily by Jay along with me and our other peer-companions in order to better reflect Jay’s resonance with her original experience. In these representations I have introduced another dimension in the form of layers. This added dimension allows for manipulation of relative placements of the between spaces represented. What I feel that Jay plays with in this second meeting, is the qualities of the spaces and relationships that lie between the characters. She represents the subtle shifts in tone, depth and intensity of these relational spaces as she experiences them. I see these restructured images as an intersubjective response from Jay.
Layers of engagement

Clustering into Title Groups

I now invite my peer-companions to title each of the restructured images. Surprisingly, we all find it quite difficult to arrive at titles for each image. Eventually I have five sets of titles, or title groups for the images that follow. I have kept each title group in order from title one through to title four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer-companion 1</th>
<th>Peer-companion 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boldly present, here I am</strong></td>
<td><strong>Swallowed up</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tussling for centre stage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Surfacing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A meeting of sorts</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Battle</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safe gets bigger</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resistance</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer-companion 3</th>
<th>Peer-companion 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presence felt</strong></td>
<td><strong>Safety closed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A sinking feeling</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lengthening</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I rise to the surface</strong></td>
<td><strong>Opening spread</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Placing myself</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leaking space</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer-companion 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretch</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holding</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these title groups chronicles this confronting moment in a group interaction as reflected in the series of four drawings. Even though each of these title groups is very short and abstracted, they begin to tell me a story of this in between space and of its energetic qualities. Each is different but they all appear to share a similar movement or rhythm. For me the movement of this interaction is one from safety, to being swallowed up by a challenge and consequent tussle for control. There is a sense here of being held uncomfortably in a space of dissonance where there is both motion and emotion in the dynamic energetic interactions within this space. Something ultimately happens to change this state of being held. There seems to be a slow and gentle surfacing in the face of resistance, a rising up and finding a new way to meet, which is once again safe.
Re-clustering the Titles and Re-looking

A little later I am looking at the five sets of titles. Each set of titles is grouped according to the person who created them. I decide to re-cluster the titles according to the image they name. I then play around a bit with each new set of titles. I focus in on my resonant felt response to the images and to what I think I know about them at this time to form a poetic statement. Following are the images accompanied by their title clusters as poems.
Layers of engagement

Figure 4.24: Shifting Spaces #1

Roar

Boldly Present here I am

Presence felt

Safety closes

Swallowed up
Layers of engagement

Figure 4.25: Shifting Spaces #2

Stretch
Tussling for centre stage
A sinking feeling
Surfacing
Lengthening
Layers of engagement

Figure 4.26: Shifting Spaces #3

Meeting

A meeting of sorts

I rise to the surface

Opening spread

The battle
Resistance
Holding
Leaking space
Placing myself
Safe gets bigger
Layers of engagement

Looking at the images again with their titles clustered as poems I see a clearer more focussed telling than the title groups. Following, I put all the title poems together in sequence.

**Roar**

*Boldly Present here I am*

*Presence felt*

*Safety closes*

*Swallowed up*

*Stretch*

*Tussling for centre stage*

*A sinking feeling*

*Surfacing*

*Lengthening*

*Meeting*

*A meeting of sorts*

*I rise to the surface*

*Opening spread*

*The battle*

*Resistance*

*Holding*

*Leaking space*

*Placing myself*

*Safe gets bigger*

**A Change of Modality**

**Representation: A Written Story**

Some time has passed now since I finished working with this series of images. I am left feeling that there is more to know about the group spaces they represent, yet I am unsure of just how to proceed with this series. I feel quite stuck and frustrated in this stuckness. My sense is that I need to somehow find out a bit more about what is happening in these images. This suggests to me a move to another mode of expression or inviting someone in to respond to the images. After much reflection and consultation with my supervisor I decide to write a story response to these
images. My hope is that by shifting to another mode of creative expression I can access other knowings or understandings of the spaces represented. I begin by sitting with the four images and spend some time just looking at them. Following is the story that arrived.

A Silent Underwater Struggle

Two fish share a small pond with other fish. The pond is small but quite deep and has a sandy bottom. This sandy bottom is for the fish a safe place in this pond. It is far from the surface, a nice cool place to rest, and a feeding ground which provides them comfort and nourishment.

One day it happens that two of the fish find themselves at odds with one another. Both want to take control of the pond. It has transpired that Pink fella, being the oldest and most experienced fish has for some time been the caretaker and comforter of this pond. Recently Orange fella has started to crave attention and begun disrupting the pond and generally causing upset. Pink fella feels that the pond is threatened by this behaviour and wants to protect the other fish from upset. This is how Pink fella and Orange fella come into a struggle.

They face each other by the sandy bottom and meet head first. It seems like they are both holding on to the other, attached at the mouth. Orange fella is not as big as Pink fella and his tail looks to be quite shredded, it is a long but tatty tail. I wonder if it works properly? But he has a very strong orange colour which speaks to me of good health and strength. His eyes are closed. Pink fella is a bit larger than Orange fella and somehow more streamlined, but her colour is a bit faded. She has both eyes wide open.

As the struggle continues Pink fella suddenly begins to grow larger, she appears to pulsate and to stretch out somehow. She swishes her tail around forcefully and as she does this the two fins of her tail appear to grow larger. In this flurry of movement where Pink fella’s tail grows larger, Orange fella’s tail seems to fall off, or radically reduce in size to one long tapering fin. This makes his body appear to be a bit reduced, less robust. In this silent underwater struggle these two fish are still
head to head, they are moving away from the sandy bottom up toward the surface of the pond.

As they move toward the surface of the pond the head to head struggle continues. Suddenly Pink fella grows very large, almost doubling in size. Her tail also grows developing another fin. Eyes still wide open her colour begins to get stronger, she is a bright pink now. As she grows and strengthens in colour, Orange fella’s colour begins to fade. Even though he stays the same size, Orange fella now appears dwarfed, somehow diminished. He still has his eyes closed.

As a result of this sudden shift, the two fish begin to very quickly move back down to the sandy bottom of the pond. Pink fella remains quite large, but in a pulsating movement draws herself in a bit. As this happens, Orange fella begins to get his colour back. Both fish now have a strong vibrant colour. In this moment they hit the sandy bottom and begin to sink down into it. As they sink down into the safe sandy bottom they are still head to head, one with eyes open and one with eyes closed. I wonder who will let go first?

Reflection
This is the story that emerged for me ‘A Silent Underwater Struggle’, the process of its emergence took me by surprise. Initially the idea I held was to develop a story around the characters that I had already established from the sand tray story. We have from that the balanced self, the flexible self, the strong self, the sharing child, and the disruptive child. Yet as I sat with the images and began to turn my mind to story writing what jumped out at me was this image/idea of two fish. It was very much a visual sense of fish. Without thinking about what was happening I stayed with the idea that was forming for me and began to write.

When I reflect on the story I consider that I have not stayed with the established characters. It feels good that I have not done so. I start afresh so to speak and look at the series of images from another angle, reframe them.
Engaging in another mode is already a reframing, but I need this telling to stand in relation to the images. Saying this, I am aware that I bring to 'A Silent Underwater Struggle' parts of my experience of Jay sharing with me her experience of a confronting moment and representing that. I don’t claim to bracket all of that out.

I now begin to notice that in allowing this shift, my focus moves from the sandtray characters themselves to the spaces in between them. It is the spaces in between the characters that I represent and try to give form to in the ‘The Shapes Between’ series of images. The qualities of these between spaces and their relationship to each other are refined in the series ‘The Space of Us’. It has only now struck me that in this story I am giving character and life to the between spaces. This is I feel very important.

**Another Story**

I show this story to my supervisor and we discuss it. She suggests dropping all characterisation and writing the story as purely a meeting of energies or spaces. This appeals to me and represents a step back from, or away from, what I think I know of the images, and a step toward the images as they are. By naming the forms as fish and the space as a pond I am restricting or containing them, limiting possibilities for access to their energetic qualities. What is clear is that this interaction, these images represent a struggle, a dissonant interaction within this intersubjective space. I attempt once again to write a story.

**A Struggle**

There is a space which contains several energies. One energy is quite large, it is a soft yellow energy and it occupies a central position in the space. It is round in form. It is as if the space is organised around this energy, yet this yellow energy is also a space in itself. There are two other energies in the space. They are smaller than the yellow energy. One is pink and one is orange. These two energies find themselves at
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odds with one another. They both want control of the yellow space, the still and ever present central force, and engage in a power struggle.

They come together the pink and orange energies and place themselves within the space of yellow energy. They attach to each other. These energies both have elongated slightly elliptical forms and when they attach it feels as if they are pulling away yet holding on at the same time. At the point of attachment there is an empty space between them which sits mostly within the orange energy. This space seems to create a sense of suction, of holding. It feels like there is a lot held around this space which admits a possibility of shifting pressure and tension.

Quite close to this point of attachment, at the top edge of the pink energy there is another small empty space. It is in the shape of two small connected spheres. This space straddles the pink energy and yellow energy spaces in a bridge of empty space, it forms another point of attachment or connection. While this empty space also conveys an energy of binding or holding on to, it carries a less intense feeling than the bigger empty space which is at the point of engagement between the pink and orange energies.

The pink energy is pushing the orange energy out of the yellow energy space. While the pink energy is mostly within the yellow energy space and attached to it, the orange energy is only just within it, attached only to the pink energy. It is somehow holding its ground. Three energies attached within a space of struggle, tensions of pulling and pushing and holding suspend them within this space of their coming together.

At the end of the orange energy there is a large odd shaped empty space. This space fills out the orange energy increasing its size by a third, and makes it appear quite large. This empty space, like the others carries the tension of possibility for flux. Unlike the others it is held totally within the orange energy. Yet even with this extra space, the orange energy is still significantly smaller than the pink energy which seems to be dominating. It does however have a very deep and vibrant orange colour which speaks of strength. Alternatively, while pink energy has size, its slightly faded colour lacks vibrancy. Who is the stronger?
As the struggle continues, at the point of engagement where the pink and orange energies are holding on to each other, there is a shift. Now the empty space where they join appears to have opened up a bit. There is now a hairline space in between the two energies. A pulling apart perhaps, a movement of pulling apart which is nevertheless quite firmly held. There has been a shift from pushing and pulling to just a pulling. The pink energy is trying to pull the orange energy in, reign it in perhaps. The orange energy does not budge, it stays firmly in place.

As this pulling apart is occurring the pink energy begins to grow larger. It appears to pulsate and stretch out and forms a small, odd shaped empty space at its other end. This space gives it extra length and holds a certain tension which seems to balance and ground it. Now within the pink energy there are three areas of empty space. This really seems to firm up the position of this energy in the broader space of interaction. As this movement takes place the orange energy grows smaller, the space at its end opens up diminishing its size by a third. It appears somehow more condensed, and not grounded at all. Has the empty space been transferred to the pink energy from the orange? Did the pink energy suck it up?

As the pink and orange energies continue to struggle in the yellow energy space, the yellow energy is losing its vibrancy of colour. It is fading to a very pale yellow as if it is slowly sinking or moving away. As the yellow energy continues to fade the pink energy grows very large. It doubles in size and becomes a very a bright vibrant pink. The empty space which lay between the pink energy and yellow energy space and which connected them is now swallowed up into the pink energy force. It is now an empty space within the pink energy. The yellow space fades in colour even more.

While the pink energy grows in size and vibrancy, the empty space at its end has now opened up to be replaced by three protuberances. This change happens in a surge of forward movement, a big push. There is now no hairline space between the pink and orange energies. The empty space at the point of engagement seems to have moved now from the orange energy into the pink energy. This speaks of a great push from the pink energy as it encroaches into the orange energy itself. While the orange energy does manage to stand its ground in the face of this force, it has grown a bit smaller, is a bit squashed looking, and has lost some of its colour vibrancy. Part of it has been sucked up into the pink energy, fed the pink growth.
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At this time the yellow energy starts to strengthen again, it becomes a brighter more vibrant colour. The pink energy remains large but in a pulsating movement draws itself in a bit, reduces in size a little bit. As this happens the orange energy begins to gain in colour, become more vibrant again. It stays the same size but there is a change at the point of engagement. The pink energy seems to have relaxed and pulled back a bit. The small empty space between them at this point of contact is now evenly placed between the pink energy and the orange energy, the tension feels evenly held.

All three energies now have a strong colour again. Indeed they all seem to be merging in some way as the pink and orange energies appear to sink into the yellow energy space. They take on some of the yellow energy colour as if they have now become a part of each other. The empty space at the point of engagement is maintained as is the small empty space within the pink energy. The pink and orange are still attached and holding on. I wonder which will let go first?

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Reflection

What strikes me as I write this second story is that I am staying much closer to the images in ‘The Space of Us’ series, and describing what is there in them. I am trusting that the story lies in the images themselves. By conceiving of the ‘characters’ as energy, as space and form, it is necessary to look just at what is there within the context of the images. This precludes imagining an other context such as a pond. I find myself surprised at just how important it is to describe small details and minute shifts in energy.

Further, I notice just how closely I have to look at the images. For example, at first I do not pick up on all the empty spaces. I realise that they are a part of the images and are thus as important as all the other parts. I go back over the story and describe all the empty spaces. I am not sure why they are important just that they are. In this way I look at just what is there without a preconceived narrative agenda.
So in a sense this representation in story form is an exercise in bracketing out what I think I know and getting back to the images as they are. The process amplifies for me the importance of holding aside all expectation and judgement in order to stay with and attend to what is there. What is there says something to me about dynamic qualities of being in struggle, being in conflict. It points to what might be inherent in dissonant group intersubjectivity.

I am surprised at just how long and detailed this story is. It is much like a description and feels quite dry. I want to try to reduce it to something more manageable and accessible, to something more revealing of the underlying structure of this experience. In order to do this I turn again to Sterns ‘forms of vitality’ (Stern, 2010). In the previous chapter I learnt that it is the dynamics of energy and movement that define and structure the form of a group intersubjective space. What then can this story ‘A Struggle’ tell us of the dynamics of energy and movement within this space?

Through the story I have isolated in bold text words that describe dynamic forms of vitality. Following are the dynamic forms of vitality isolated.

**Dynamic forms**
- Still
- Pulling away, holding on
- Suction, holding
- Shifting pressure
- Tension
- Binding
- Pushing, pulling, pushing
- Holding
- Tension held
Now I have a much clearer sense of the energy and movement within this group space. There is a definite predominance of pushing and pulling as well as holding on. There also seems to be a series of energetic engagements interspersed with periods of rest where there is holding and staying. There are different kinds of holding. There is suction holding, tension holding, even holding, and holding on. The vitality dynamic of each of these is slightly different; they each describe different kinds of force,
movement, and directionality. If we can attend to such subtleties we can begin to get a rich picture of the vitality dynamics in different movements of holding alone.

The dynamic forms above tell a story of the dynamic energetic shifts of this group space, the energy and movement that define and form the shape of this group intersubjective space, a dissonant group intersubjective space.

**Summary: What I Know Now**

What stands out from Jay’s play with the sandtray is her representation of herself as three characters. The ability to be present to and to juggle and balance many different resonances when facilitating a group is important and difficult. Buber refers to being present as engaging in dialogue (Friedman, 2002, p. 199). Lett similarly conceives of resonant responding as forms of dialogue (2011, p.16). In a group interaction there are many different dialogues occurring at any given time. This is I feel what Jay responds to by representing herself as three characters. This is perhaps also reflected in the layered representations I create in which the forms hold much life; it is as if the spaces are constantly shifting imperceptibly. I feel this reflects the constantly emerging and developing dialogues that form the space between us. When Jay responds to the images by restructuring them she plays with the qualities of the spaces and relationships between the characters. I understand this as a process of clarifying and representing subtle shifts in tone, depth, and intensity of these dialogical relational spaces as she experiences them.

In both this and the previous chapter multimodality plays an important role. In Chapter Three I find myself unable to move forward from the “Group Image” series of visual images (see pp.122–123). I feel that there is more to know, that it is there just beyond my grasp, just out of sight. This sense drives me to start a new cycle of experiencing and employ another mode of
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representation, that of dance. What arrives through engaging with the representations that are co-created in this new modality, allows me to move forward and make the connections to energetic dynamics that I felt but could not quite grasp. In this chapter I also find that I need to change modalities in order to move forward. I feel that there is more to know that I cannot access by staying with the “Shapes Between” images. It is by changing to the modality of written story that I become aware of the dynamic vitality forms within this intersubjective space. It is by working multi-modally that I am able to shift out of stuckness by finding another way to represent my resonant felt sensing. The work of this is the movement towards a making sense of the experiencing I am exploring. In this case I come to understand something about how energetic dynamics are not only dialogic but also work to shape the ever shifting space of us.