A MOMENT SHARED WITH A HORSE
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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a degree in Master of Arts by Supervision in Experiential & Creative Arts Practice

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Abstract

This paper is an inquiry into language as being more than the written or spoken word between humans. It is an exploration of what we can come to know when we (humans) seek out or are provided opportunities to experience connection with ourselves as well as with our ‘wild’ beyond human environment. It examines in an emerging way what this language has to tell us about the other, our world and ourselves.

The paper sinks and swims in its attempts to get closer to understanding how flesh, perception, creativity, imagination and memory are connected with and in dialogue with our surroundings. It aims to be gentle and quiet so that it can hear the reverberations that exist within our own recesses as well as those of our non-human others.

The research topic uses the creative arts as a therapeutic method for working with, often, very traumatised young people. It acknowledges that so much of our journey through life is difficult to express in words. It explores how the creative arts can provide an alternative language to the more traditional talk based approaches.

In conducting this research I employed an emergent, arts-based inquiry. I used a ‘bricolage’ of qualitative research methodologies from the postmodern and the post positivist paradigm. The methodology included phenomenology and The MIECAT Institute form of inquiry.

Keywords: safety, trust, creativity, presence, pre-verbal language, arts-based research, intersubjectivity, connection and emergence
Declaration

I certify that this research project comprises my original work except where indicated in the text. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used in the body of the work.

*Name:* Barb Miles

*Signature:*

*Date:*
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their participation and support.

Firstly, to the three young people who volunteered to be participants and who generously shared their experience of ‘a moment shared with a horse’. To Cindy Biggs for allowing my creative art therapy sessions to follow the equine sessions she facilitated. To Chris Tammer for her friendship, presence, support and assistance with interviewing the participants’ images.

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And finally, to the river flats, that live as memory within my flesh. Your presence in the form of images, textures, smells and emotional cadence has companioned me tirelessly throughout my life. You have taught me much about tracks and belonging and I have been fortunate over the last two years to forge a new and more contemporary relationship with you.
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Navigating the paper

Aesthetical considerations have influenced how this paper has been formatted and as such it does not always follow APA 6 guidelines. The paper is written in the same font, unless otherwise indicated. Italicised, bold or underline font has been used to assist the reader to navigate the paper.

I began writing the main body of text almost a year ago. Interspersed amongst this writing are journal entries that I have written over the two-year period that the inquiry was undertaken. These journal entries appear mostly as poems and can be distinguished from the remaining text by having been placed centrally on the page.

Other entries include my reflections on the sessions I conducted with both the ‘original’ and ‘new’ research participants. These reflections were written at different times. I wrote my reflections of the session I conducted with the three young people who I refer to as my ‘original’ participants as each session concluded. I wrote my reflections of the sessions I conducted with images that the ‘original’ participants had created much later. These images are referred to as my ‘new’ participants. My reflections on sessions with both ‘original’ and ‘new’ participants appear in different italicised font.

The titles of representations/images created by the research participants and researcher appear as bold and italicised. And finally The MIECAT Institute procedures employed and referred to in this paper, appear underlined and in bold font.
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A word or two before heading off

When I stop
and reflect upon how I came to this research topic
I find myself standing still

I see a country littered with tracks
some start and then stop, others crisscross
despite the complex patterns
I can make out several that are familiar
they now make sense.

I notice that many
are looking to each other
acknowledging their shared journeys
there is a sense of congruence
of what has and continues to be important
I can see my values imprinted in their footsteps
a statement of how I choose to make sense
of my own life and that of others

perhaps all of this has been necessary
in getting me to this point now

and where is now?
Now is the beginning of a new inquiry.
Introduction

Welcome to my inquiry into ‘a moment shared with a horse’. This is an inquiry that acknowledges the subtleties and complexities of how we make sense of our lives. It has been presented in three parts and in the order that I felt made sense rather than in the chronological order of how the inquiry occurred. Each part reflects a different aspect of the inquiry.

Part one provides the information to show the context of the inquiry, to make transparent my values as researcher and to make explicit the methodological framework that guided the inquiry.

Part two documents the process of how I worked with my research participants. Initially I worked with three young people following their participation with an equine facilitator and her small herd of horses. Later I worked directly with the images these participants created. These images began to function as my new research participants.

Between the sessions with my research participants, I walked. I walked slowly with my head facing the ground. I was often deep in thought, reflecting upon what my participants had been telling me. As I walked with the bush, I collected fallen leaves, clumps of lichen and curled cracked mud. At other times, I walked along beach and collected fragments of coloured nylon rope that had been washed ashore. The physical aspect of collecting these fragments mirrored what I was collecting emotionally when working with my research participants.

Part three concludes with discussing the strands of knowing that emerged from my inquiry. These strands of knowing or telling were all different. Some were long and complex. Others were short fragments of understanding, akin to the short pieces of found rope. What emerged from the inquiry was not always neat. I explored these strands visually and presented the artwork in an exhibition that accompanied this paper.
The beginning

Hot and overcast
I write my way in
with these words
you read now
the hum of a small fan
keeps me company
this moment I savour
raw, new and unknown
hot and windy
the beginning has begun

Journal entry March 27, 2013
I am about to enter new country. I savour this moment knowing that it will be different several times over before this inquiry concludes.

Journal entry March 27, 2013

Figure 1. Barb Miles (researcher). *Memory that shadows our journey*
PART 1

Setting the scene

It takes time to hear the collective voice of the people with whom we work. Not simply just the spoken words, although they are important, but the unspoken which we come to know and experience in other ways.

Journal entry October 2012

Locating the inquiry

The decision to locate this inquiry at my workplace reflects the deep respect I have for the young people who voluntarily attend the residential drug and alcohol withdrawal unit, where I work, in country Victoria, Australia.

Many of the young people I work with have a history of experiencing traumatic events. They experience feelings of shame and self-loathing and many see themselves as defective, unlovable or in some way to blame for the lack of connection extended to them by their primary caregivers. Gordon Wheeler (1996) suggests that shame arises from a break in “natural connectedness between me and my surrounds, where others refuse to receive me” (cited in Fisher, 2002, p. 79). Trusting others can be difficult for these young people and the inability to do so can exacerbate feelings of being alone. Many of the young people attribute their drug and or alcohol misuse as an attempt to numb painful memories that result in feeling disconnected from others.

My workplace, like numerous other welfare services, has had a history and preference for talking therapies. The young people were often encouraged to ‘share’ their story. This approach risked re-traumatising them as well as exposing the worker to vicarious trauma. Attempting to make sense of what we are experiencing with words alone can increase feelings of frustration and hopelessness. Brandt (2004) acknowledges, “that verbal language always will be...
limited in its capacity to explain an embodied non-verbal language system” (p. 301). There were many times when I witnessed the frustration of the young people as they attempted to find the words to match what they were feeling.

As a drug and alcohol worker, I value the effort that these young people make to improve the quality of their lives. I have worked hard to try and match their effort. I searched for ways to communicate that did not rely solely upon the spoken word. I brought into the workplace a way of working inspired by the experiential and multimodal form of inquiry developed by The MIECAT Institute.

It felt a natural extension to locate the research inquiry within my workplace. This research was never about conducting an inquiry only to restate something already known.

For as we have seen, the primary result of most scholarly inquiry is discourse itself. And, rather than simply repeating the taken for granted assumptions of the culture…rather than "telling as it is" the challenge for the postmodern psychologist is to "tell it as it may become” (Gergen, 1990, cited in Bishop 2007, p. 12).

I value the opinions and experiences of the young people attending the residential alcohol and other drugs withdrawal unit, where I work. I wanted to demonstrate and model a way of researching that was respectful and inclusive. Perhaps this way would be different to what they had previously experienced.

Schulz (2011) makes reference to the views held by Rappaport (1990), of the importance of qualitative methodologies because “they allow research to be conducted in context of the participant” and that this “gives voice to those concerned” (p. 7). In my experience young people are the best teachers when sharing skills with workers, and with their peers. It was my hope, that the participants involved in the research would go on to share what they had found useful and helpful with their brothers, sisters and friends.
**Why a horse?**

I wrote up the research proposal ‘A Moment Shared With A Horse’ in August 2012 and submitted this to the MIECAT ethics committee. As a drug and alcohol worker, I had become disillusioned with talk-based therapies. I had been offering creative art therapy to clients for several years. And while many clients found this way of working helpful there were some who didn’t. I had observed how these young people were often drawn to animals or to natural areas for companionship. In 2012, a colleague began offering equine therapy to the young people attending the withdrawal unit. I was curious to see what might eventuate from combining two styles of therapy that did not rely solely on verbal communication.

I was deeply interested in intersubjectivity. Wallin (2007) defines the essence of intersubjectivity as “the interaction of two distinct subjectivities – in which each is capable of participating psychologically in the experiences of the other” (p. 111). I had observed this interaction of subjectivities to be sometimes complicated between humans when one or both had experienced some form of trauma. It appeared to be less complicated for these individuals when they interacted with animals. I observed this at my workplace and was genuinely fascinated by the transformation I repeatedly noticed in clients who participated in equine therapy.

I am watching a client walk back towards the house having completed an equine session. His face and body is moving across the lawn in a way that is softer, gentler. I find myself wondering… what happens out there between horse and human that can create this shift?

Journal entry May 2012

I was deeply curious about the interaction that was occurring both at an intra (within self) and intersubjective (between self and other) level. I could see it and feel it, but found describing it difficult. Brandt (2004) states as part of her ethnographic study exploring human-horse communication that “…a human-nonhuman animal relationship highlights the ability of different species to achieve intersubjectivity and communicate with one another” (p. 299). Her comments reflected what I had experienced intersubjectively in encounters with non-human others.
I found myself wondering if the communication that existed between human and non-human might in some cases be more useful and more helpful than the usual, privileged human-to-human dialogue? Was the shift I saw in the young man's face and body the result of a conversation that spoke more directly, more honestly to our pre-verbal, pre-reflective embodied knowing? Later, I became interested in expanding what I learnt from a moment shared with a horse by listening into conversations between humans and animals as well as with the material world.

Figure 2. *Equine session in progress*
Equine therapy

It is not my intention to offer up a detailed definition of equine therapy but I will provide a brief overview to give clarity and context.

The language of the horse operates through the body such that horses must use their bodies to communicate their subjective presence. Because humans cannot convey intentions to horses through spoken language, they too must use their bodies to generate a communication style to which the horse can respond (Brandt, 2004, p. 301).

My own understanding of equine therapy is limited and what I share with you is based on observations, personal experience and my own reading on the topic. The equine facilitator ensures the space remains safe for both horse and human. She initiates experiences that she intuits will support the human in their growth. She does this by closely attending to what she experiences both on an intra (within herself) and intersubjective level (between herself and the other). The horse is seen as a co-facilitator, that communicates what it is experiencing using its eyes, ears, tail, body and embodied energy.

As prey animals, horses have evolved to be highly attuned and responsive to any changes in their environment. They will move away from anything that does not feel safe. Many of the young people I work with have also refined their skills in being able to ‘read’ people and situations. But unlike horses whose behaviour is congruent with what they are sensing, some young people (and adults) behave and project an emotion, which is different to what they are actually feeling.

Horses experience inauthentic emotions as unsafe and will move away from this person. Horses detect any incongruence between what the human is communicating through voice and gesture and what the horse senses. In an equine session, these moments are reflected back to the participants by both horse and facilitator in a non-judgemental manner. The participant begins to experience how they are relating in the world. Equine therapy values the development of congruent presence within the participant that flows into a sense of interconnection between human and animal.
Values

Puffs
of delicate earth
ccoat my feet and ankles,
greeting me in familiar language.

As the earth settles softly upon skin,
I make out the faces of my values.
I can hear their sweet whispers,
encouraging the soles of
my feet to get
 going.

Journal entry April 2013

My values as my travelling companions

MIECAT teaching and learning processes emphasise the importance of values and the connection between our values, our emotions and our choices. Prior to the inquiry I felt that I underestimated the importance of my value system. During the inquiry my values became companions that assisted me to make choices along the track. Postmodern values such as transparency, authenticity and emergence and iterative reflexivity similarly guided the process of the research.

My values assisted me to know how I should be working with my participants, the images, personal content as well as the process of adapting and incorporating other methodologies. What I have come to know of my values are:

- They are not rigid but rather are context dependent.
- They are at the heart of all my choices, judgments and decisions.
- They reflect both what I have and also what I desire to experience.
- They are influenced by social, political and cultural interactions.
I came to know that my values have been shaped and formed by the relational field I have lived in and through the various roles I have performed. The roles I have performed are; woman, lesbian, partner, friend, daughter, sister, student, artist, activist, citizen, employee, counsellor, alcohol and drug worker, advocate and researcher. My past and what I have done with my life, travels with me, informing my values. In this way my past continues to suggest my future choice of direction. I have been an advocate. I have provided a voice for those, who at the time, I felt couldn’t speak for themselves - plants, animals, and marginalised youth.

I sensed early in the research project that there was a connection between all of these advocacy roles. But this connection was not clear. Over the course of the inquiry, I began to hear and detect the presence of other values such as social justice, accessibility, clarity, equality, respect, empowerment and taking action. I began to consider that perhaps plants, animals and young people had something to tell me.

As I began to attune my senses, I could hear the fragments of quieter conversations occurring when in the company of young people, walking in the bush or when making art. These whispering fragments evoked strong embodied memories. I experienced a sense of longing that resonated with the desire for connection that I often heard clients talk about. I felt that these whispering conversations were showing me how we could experience being connected with others, being of the world instead of feeling separate.

Stand still and barefoot
feel the breeze trace the curve of your cheek
can you hear it speak, tell you which way to go?

Journal entry April 2013
I engaged in a process of reflecting upon my work history to identify my values. Somehow I felt my values were the key to being able to hear and engage with these quieter conversations. My professional life had seesawed into what I had thought were separate areas. These areas had been in fine art, social activism, land and animal conservation and human welfare.

I gaze
over my shoulder
I can see the remnants of
other paths I have travelled.
These are the soft powdery
tracks I walked as a child,
seeking refuge from
the family
home

There
are also tracks
that stand firm, righteous
and passionate. Filled with
art and the sounds of human
protest as I fought for social
and environmental
justice

These
tracks step a little lighter,
as I meandered up creek valleys,
climbed basalt escarpments, and
ambled my way through nearby
native grasslands

Journal entries April 2013
I began to see how my values of advocacy, connection and belonging linked these seemingly disparate occupations together. I realised that my choice of occupation had been informed by prior life experiences. Many of which had occurred in childhood. I came to understand that I had been searching for an occupation that I hoped might better express my social and environmental concerns. I believed the expression of who I was resided somehow in where I worked and the nature of that work.

I had not considered that perhaps this expression was as a result of the relational encounters I was experiencing. I also had not realised that some of my values were in conflict with each other. Such as valuing feeling separate and independent while also valuing feeling connected and interdependent. Rather than seeing values as a single layer, I began to experience values as three-dimensional and fluid in their capacity to inform the choices I made. I looked through the layers of my life to unearth my value system. I found that despite feeling separate, I was actually a part of all things and that they were a part of me. This value became the backbone of my inquiry.

At times the process of un-earthing this key idea of intersubjectivity was delicate. Abrams (1997) speaks about intersubjectivity as finding himself “forced to acknowledge that any visible, tangible form that meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it, and to me” (p. 67). As I began to inhabit my own experience of intersubjectivity, I realised that while I said I valued feeling connected with others I had struggled to do this as an adult.

As a child I had felt this deep connection and sense of belonging with the world outside of the family home. I walked the tracks along the river flats and was nourished by the company of old red gums, birds, bull ants, fish and the ever-shifting reflections along the waters edge. I felt I belonged to this place. I wondered if my research participants (and other young people) who had grown up in similar chaotic families had their own special places. My thoughts were that they did.
Methodology

“One aspect of academic work is the practice of building methodological tools for navigating ecologies of information” (Osborn, 2005, p. 16).

Contextualising the MIECAT form of inquiry

The MIECAT form of inquiry is the methodology that has guided my research. Looking from the broadest perspective MIECAT adopts a postmodern, qualitative approach to arts based research. Postmodernism is an overarching worldview or paradigm that embraces multiple ways of knowing. It sees knowledge as always being in a state of flux. Postmodern approaches have developed in response to the limitations of the positivist paradigm. Positivism is only able to perceive one objective reality. The positivist reality can be known only by using quantitative methods, such as observing, measuring and counting.

In contrast to this, Richardson (2000) writes that the core of post modernism is by contrast the “doubt that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the ‘right’ or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (p. 928). MIECAT privileges experiential knowing and what people come to know through focusing on and exploring their own experience using the arts. The postmodern worldview similarly values multiple ways of knowing and celebrates differences. The MIECAT form of inquiry sees that “meanings are not absolute, but are built upon as the process of understanding continues over time” (Lett, 2011, p. 287).

The methodology of MIECAT also draws on phenomenology, which is situated within the post-positivist paradigm. The post-positivist worldview asserts that reality can be observed but that it is impossible to separate out the subjective from the objective experience. Because the observer cannot be separated from the observed, the truth is not definite but only probable (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).
Abrams (1997) defines phenomenology as a philosophical approach which seeks to “describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience” (p. 35). Phenomenological description provides a verbal or written account of just what is seen, without using interpretation or symbolic reference. We begin to experience the phenomena as it actually is, rather than what we think it should be, based on how it may have been previously seen. Stern (2004) describes phenomenology as concerned “only for the appearance of things as they present or show themselves to our experience” (p. 8).

The MIECAT methodology moves between aspects of both post-positivist and postmodern paradigms depending on the method employed by the researcher. However MIECAT’s position remains essentially postmodern because “a postmodernist position does allow us to know ‘something’ without claiming to know everything” (Richardson, 2000, p. 928).

**Bricolage and the role of the bricoleur**

The postmodern concept of ‘bricolage’ has proved particularly useful in my approach to research. McLeod (2001) cites Denzin and Lincoln (1994) who describe a bricoleur as someone who “understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting” (p. 120). The bricoleur is above all practical, using whatever comes to his or her hand or what is already available to be used. Postmodern research methodologies, including the MIECAT form of inquiry, have adopted the concept of the bricoleur, to enable the researcher to seek out additional methodologies while allowing the researcher to see their own influence and role in the research process.

Bricolage also allows the researcher to avoid the temptation to water down the inquiry so that it fits an existing methodology. Cherry (2008) writes “the challenge is not to simplify the issues so that research becomes limited to looking under lamp posts where the light is better” (p. 22). Shaw (2011) warns that when we attempt to “domesticate something that is complex and wild…the spirits fly away
Bricolage assists the researcher to identify and borrow from related methodologies and as such is a deterrent in simplifying or domesticating research issues.

Lett (2012) describes the MIECAT form of inquiry as a “bricolage methodology” (p. 4). The MIECAT form of inquiry has links with other postmodern methodologies such as participatory inquiry. MIECAT shares with participatory inquiry the concept of an “extended epistemology”, as articulated by Heron and Reason (1997). This extended epistemology separates knowledge into four interwoven strands of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing.

Both participatory inquiry and the MIECAT form of inquiry see experiential knowing as the primary basis of knowledge. “The mind’s conceptual articulation of the world is grounded in its experiential participation in what is present, in what is there” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 277). Heron and Reason (1997) refer to presentational knowledge as being “grounded in experiential knowing” and that it “clothes our experiential knowing of the world in the metaphors of aesthetic creation, in expressive spatiotemporal world and the primary meaning embedded in our in our enactment of its appearing” (p. 281).

MIECAT places more emphasis on incorporating a multi-modal, arts-based approach. It acknowledges that it “plays a significant role in the representation of mental activity and the activity of inquiring into the meaningfulness of experiencing given form” and that this “attending enables more-developed forming, in order to explore their meaningfulness” (Lett, 2011, p. 285). MIECAT also shares participatory inquiry’s central values around the primacy of collaboration and subsequent co-construction of meaning.
The inquiry procedures

The MIECAT Institute has developed a form of inquiry in response to the human search to access meaning from lived experience.

This is not just another psychological-based theory of counselling, but a form of inquiry that enables experiences, which arise from the raw materials of being to be represented, described, explored, reflected upon and understood within the ordinary language of making meaning (Lett, 2011, p. 2).

The MIECAT therapist/researcher is referred to as a companion. Companioning embodies a quality of presence of how to be with self and the other in the inquiry. The companion does not see herself as the expert. Nor does she interpret the experience of the other or provide diagnosis. Instead the MIECAT companion assumes that both companion and co-inquirer come together with an attitude of mutual respect and equality. Lett (2011) refers to this as, “sharing the task of gaining access to what matters” (p. 270). Both parties are co-inquiring together. It is through these collaborative efforts that we begin to make sense.

The MIECAT companion recognises that significant information is contained in both the verbal and gestural as well as pre-reflective and pre-verbal content. This content is not static, but rather responds and shifts as a result of experiencing the verbal or pre-verbal content of the other. As companion to the research participant, I engaged all my senses. I made choices and decisions informed by what I was sensing (my intrasubjective content) and by what I was sensing in the space between the participant and myself (intersubjective content).

The companion and co-inquirer are in relationship. This relational view acknowledges the influence that our own subjectivity has on the subjectivity of the other. Stern (2004) describes our nervous systems as “constructed to be captured by the nervous systems of others” (p. 76). The MIECAT form of inquiry has developed specific procedures that can be used to represent what it is that our body-mind is experiencing.
Lett (2011) describes the MIECAT form of inquiry as a “collage of coherent procedures” (p. xii). These procedures can be adapted for use in a variety of settings; educational, counselling, arts practice and research settings. While there is a relationship between each of the procedures, they are not seen as steps, systematically being applied as if there was a beginning and an end. Instead they provide the inquirers with the opportunity to explore what is being inquired into from different perspectives.

Sometimes this involves staying with a particular moment or aspect of the inquiry by using procedures designed to amplify or reduce what is present. Both amplification and reduction procedures allow us to view and experience the data anew. These procedures engage with moments within the inquiry that seem to hold particular meaning or significance. These moments create an opening to further explore what this meaning or significance might hold.

What follows is a brief description of the MIECAT procedures I used as part of my inquiry. The ones listed do not represent all of the procedures that are available. I have included excerpts from my reflections written following the sessions I conducted with the research participants to assist describing the procedures. These excerpts will appear in *italics* and in a different font to the main body of the paper. The procedures will appear underlined and in **bold**.

**Representation – multimodal**

A modality is simply a way or mode of doing something. A multimodal approach therefore suggests that there are multiple ways in which something can be represented. MIECAT recognises that much of what we know cannot be expressed using words alone and has adopted a multimodal approach that utilises all forms of expression (visual, sonorous, sculptural, performance) to represent an experience being inquired into.

In my research, for example, I invited the participants to represent their experience of ‘A Moment Shared With A Horse’. I supplied clay, paints, magazines and postcards, pens and paper and a small selection of musical instruments for participants to use. The participants were reminded that they
could also use their body and voice to explore and create a representation. Several visual representations using paint, crayon and mixed media were completed as part of these sessions. As researcher, I continued to make art as a way to understand in presentational form what I had experienced. I began to see a repetition in both images and words, such as feet and the horizon in these representations. Sealy & Reason (2008) cite Heron (1992) who states that presentational knowledge “reveals the underlying pattern of things” (p. 29).

**Intersubjective response (ISR)**

Intersubjectivity is the meeting that occurs in the space between subjectivities. Our own subjectivity influences and is influenced by the subjectivity of those around us. An intersubjective response can be expressed in any modality, visual, written, music, movement etc. It can arise spontaneously or from considerable reflection. Intersubjective responses acknowledge the relational encounter that has occurred and can offer a perspective that can assist to deepen the inquiry.

As researcher, I created an intersubjective response (ISR) for the participant. Sometimes this was in the form of a visual image and on other occasions as a poem.

\[
I \text{ see her looking across to what I have been doing and I bring it across saying this is for you. This is my representation of what came to me when you were re-telling what happened when you were with pinns.} \\
(Session with research participant N2).
\]

**Bracketing – in or out**

Bracketing is a procedure that acknowledges that what is present in our intrasubjective awareness can hinder or help the process of inquiry. We bracket out what we feel will hinder the process and bracket in what we feel will be helpful.
I bracket out my assumption and decide to not ask if the letters were someone’s initials but bracket-in my felt sense that these marks needed to be acknowledged.

(Session with research participant A1)

Bracketing-in my felt sense that the marks were important enabled the participant to discuss issues that were important for him. It acted as an access point.

So I told him that I had noticed the letters and that they felt that they had a lot of energy. He said he would like to talk about it, but he was afraid that once he did it would become a problem...that others would know and it would be out.

(Session with research participant A1)

Description – phenomenological
Phenomenological description provides a verbal or written account of just what is seen. It enables us to experience the phenomena as it actually is, rather than how we may have experienced it previously. The process of describing the image as if seen for the first time can allow something that we had not previously seen to appear.

I adapted a phenomenological method referred to as ‘distancing’ as used by Mala Betensky (1987). When participants had completed their representation, I would ask them to describe their representation from a distance, concentrating on using descriptive language of just what they saw. According to Carolan (2001), this facilitates the process of “distancing from our more entrenched patterns of understanding” (p. 202). I had originally thought that as researcher I would invite all research participants to describe the representations that they had created. I soon realised I could not assume to use all methods with all participants.

The first participant was unsure as to how to describe his image, so I provided a phenomenological description of his representation. At the end, he looked frustrated. I realised that I needed to listen more carefully to what the inquiry was calling for. I did not invite the second participant to describe her representation.
due to not wanting to cut short the process of her art making. The third participant was actively seeking new ways to view her life and embraced the challenge of describing her image phenomenologically.

**Imaginative variation**

Imaginative variation provides the inquirer with the opportunity to identify and change aspects of their representation that they feel are important to how they want to live their life. Sometimes this occurred when I would ask the participant if they would like to add to or remove something from their representation. The ‘new’ participant (image) referred to as ‘Blue line’ identified that she needed to create another representation where she could depict the lines heading in a purposeful direction towards the horizon.

\[
I \text{ might straighten out all theses lines and have them all facing towards the horizon.}
\]

*(Interview session with the 'new' research participant 'Blue line')*

Employing imaginative variation can empower the inquirer to feel that they have choices in deciding what they feel they need to do. This can generate a sense of hope that change is possible.
PART 2

The Inquiry

“What we make, or do, or say, grows and comes more alive for us as it is heard, received by another” (Tufnell & Crickmay, 2004, p. 42).

Voices within the inquiry

I have made a deliberate choice to accommodate and include all the voices or different perspectives that have been present in the inquiry. These included the voices of the young people who I refer to as the ‘original’ participants, the voice of Chris Tammer who interviewed the images referred to as the ‘new’ participants. As well as my voice(s) as researcher/art therapist, which shifted between being the voice of the ‘all believer’ and the voice of the ‘sceptic’. At other times my voice was heard speaking on behalf of the ‘new’ participants. And finally there were the voices from the literature that I reflexively engaged with as researcher.

Working with the ‘original’ participants

I became aware that many of the young people attending the withdrawal unit were wary of the term ‘research’. Many saw research as scientific and using quantitative methods. This reinforced to me, how important it was for the arts space to be informal. I dragged in old couches and tables to differentiate the arts space from the clinical spaces of the withdrawal unit.

Their concerns also informed how I needed to be transparent about how I would conduct the research. I informed the participants of what we might do as a part of inquiring into their experience of ‘A Moment Shared With A Horse’. I told them that I would hold these ideas lightly and to the side, so that our work together could freely evolve. This does not mean I let go of the reins altogether, but rather the reins had sufficient slack to enable the inquiry to form its own path. I also decided that I would not bombard the participants with excessive questions and
instructions. I also decided that I would not record or take notes of our conversations during the sessions. Choosing instead to do this after each session had concluded. In this way, these notes acted more as reflections of what was left with me, rather than as a record of what occurred. As previously stated, these notes appear in italics and different font to separate them from the main body of the paper.

It is October 2012 and I began working with my first participant
the mornings are crisp and the ground still dark
and damp from spring rains.

Journal entry October 2012

Soon it is January 2013 and I met with my last participant
the soft light of spring has been replaced with one that bleaches colour
and the ground now a parched pale brown.

Journal entry January 2013

Two women and one man volunteered to work with me as research participants. All were between 18 and 21 years of age and were attending the residential drug and alcohol withdrawal where I worked. I met each participant twice after they completed a 30-60 minute equine session. The arts therapy session ranged between 1-2 hours in length and explored multimodally, the participant’s ‘Moment Shared With A Horse’. Each session began by engaging in a 5-minute mindfulness exercise, designed to support the transition from the equine to the arts therapy session. Participants were introduced to the various mediums, paint, clay and musical instruments. They were then invited to represent their ‘Moment Shared With A Horse’. Some participants shared verbally their experience, while simultaneously creating their representation. Others created their representation in silence. On occasions I would also draw or paint. I have preserved the participants’ anonymity by referring to them by using an initial from their name and a number to indicate whether it was the first or second session.
Post session reflections - A1 conducted 12/10/12

The equine session finished and the participant A1, entered the art space, sitting down at the table where the art materials were. I asked if he would stand and I led a body scan exercise. As I did this I realised that I was feeling awkward and ungrounded. I didn’t share this with him and I realised later that I wish I had, as this would have demonstrated my desire to be transparent and authentic.

I introduced the mediums on offer, magazines for collage, paints, crayons, clay and a couple of djembes. I invited A1 to represent his 'Moment Shared With A Horse'. He selected a small piece of paper, black crayon and began gently drawing diagonal lines back and forth across the full width of the card. He then picked up a silver crayon, drawing a vertical line running the full length of the card and then drew horizontal lines across this.

Figure 3. A1 (original participant). Untitled
While he had been doing this, I moved to various points around the room. I stood standing side on to him at a bench about 2 metres away. I was still feeling awkward and unsure of how to hold the space.

A1 finished his first image and I invited him to step back from his image and to describe what he saw in his representation. He looked perplexed, so I offered to demonstrate by example what this might sound like. I didn’t refer to this as a phenomenological description, but rather that I was interested in seeing just what was there, without interpretation. When I finished, he sounded annoyed and said impatiently ‘it’s a fern leaf’. I asked him if he was seeing anything different now that he hadn’t seen before. He stated he didn’t. I sensed his frustration.

He turned over the paper and continued drawing on the other side. He selected orange and yellow crayons. He moved the crayons in diagonal sweeps across the paper, forming 3 distinct bands.

Figure 4. A1 (original participant).  *Untitled*
His representation consisted of a central band of orange, flanked either side by yellow and included small marks that looked like letters on top of one of the yellow bands. I bracketed out my assumption that the letters were someone’s initials but then decided to bracket-in my felt sense that this was important and needed to be acknowledged. So I told him that I had noticed the letters and that they felt that they had a lot of energy.

This provided an access point for A1 to say that he would like to talk about it, but he was afraid that once he did it would become a problem. That others would know and “it would be out”. As he was speaking he was pushing the waxy crayon surface of the letters, so that they were slowly disappearing. I asked what that felt like to rub out the letters and he told me that he could still feel them and see them. That they were not going to go away so easily.

He then said, “you will write in the case notes, then everyone will know and they will see me differently”. I thanked him for expressing his concern and informed him that I would not be including our work together in the case notes. He didn’t offer to return to the letters and I didn’t pursue it.

We returned to the table and I invited him to do a drawing using his non-dominant hand and instead of using one crayon, I suggested he collect a fistful of crayons. I collected my own fistful and began drawing. This seemed to ease the tension I felt between us. A1 made more diagonal marks across the full length of the paper. The lines were strong and full of energy. The blue wavy, stream-like band ended at a yellow-orange sun placed in the top right hand corner.
I gave him my intersubjective response (ISR) that I had been doing, and read what I had written on the drawing: “This energy forms a force field, sometimes content, sometimes mixed”. The session concluded discussing his desire to talk and his apprehension to do so.
Post session reflections - L1 conducted 26/10/12

We met before the session and buried ourselves in bags of donated clothing, searching for a pair of shoes to keep her feet warm. She had brought only a pair of thongs and sandals and the sandals had broken on the first day. Her voice was chirpy yet scattered and faltered at the end of each of her sentences. She told me how shamed she was for coming into the unit with no money and having to bottle ciggies off other clients.

When I reflected back on the session I remember thinking how important it was for me to remain calm. I knew that I could only do this if I was present. I wanted to extend my presence so as to gently nudge her presence. I wanted to let her know that in this moment she was not alone, I was here with her.

The atmosphere between us was relaxed. I had known L1 since she was 16, when she first visited the withdrawal unit. Soon she would be 21. I had seen her body blow out, then shrink, depending on the drugs she had been using. I had seen, heard and felt her hope fade, ignite and fade again. Her sense of hope felt fragile and I wondered how many more emotional and physical batterings it could withstand.

I had heard her speak less in recent admissions of her desire to be a strong voice for her people than she had previously done when she was younger and still going to school. It was as though feeling alone had robbed her of her belief. She told me that her dad and sister were sleeping in a car somewhere, smoking dope all day. I sensed her deep longing to reconnect with them. This need felt as real as food is for sustenance. The lack of connection she had with them was palpable. The sense of disconnection felt unbearable to me.

Yet despite this, L1 looked excited. She told me how much she loved doing art in the past. Her voice trailed off as she said “I don’t do any art now”. I made a decision to not ask her to represent her ‘Moment Shared With A Horse’. It felt at the time unnecessary to do so. I contemplated that ‘A Moment Shared With A Horse’ had provided her the opportunity to connect with whatever was present for her and that she would represent this without me having to specifically requests this.
L1 stood facing the sheet of white paper. I sensed her reluctance to begin. I invited her to just make some marks. She told me that she was worried that what she would do, would be ‘crap’. I joked around and I invited her to make the ‘crappiest’ picture. She picked up the blue crayon and started making marks. I encouraged her to leave the crayon on the paper and allow it to simply find its own movement.

![Figure 7. L1 (original participant). Untitled](image)

I invited L1 to close her eyes and to bring her focus on what it felt like as the crayon moved across the paper. I offered her my scarf and she wrapped it over her eyes. Her arm and hand movement became more fluid. She talked of how art had always helped her to feel better about things.

She stopped drawing, removed the scarf and asked a question that felt more to her than to me. “I don’t know why I stopped art”. She continued to speak of this loss while picking up broken bits of crayon and pushing them across the paper, smudging and blending the different colours. She cried as she talked. I felt the depth of loss and was glad that I could be there with her.
I told her that she could use as much paint as she wanted to. I said that she could slop it directly from the bottle to the paper. Her eyes became brighter. She showed me where the paint met on her fingers. We explored this meeting. It was truly beautiful.
L1 did another painting, again with her fingers. She selected the colours of red, yellow and black. She told me it was a mess but she kept going, finishing it with dots of yellow, red and black around the outside. I saw them as stars in a galaxy and the smeared lines of mostly red and some black as a planet that has exploded and I shared this with her.

Figure 10. L1 (original participant). Untitled

L1 looked relaxed and her voice now more steady. Her eyes were bright and held my gaze. It felt to me that the experience of art making had reconnected her with herself. The space within and between us also felt more spacious. I decided against inviting her to give a description of her representations, choosing to end the session.
Post session reflections - N2  conducted 16/01/13

We entered the art space and began the session by both participating in a 5 min grounding exercise. I invited N2 to reconnect with her ‘Moment Shared With A Horse’. She told me that she already knew what she was going to do. I found myself thinking, if I was doing this right, she would allow it to just emerge. I bracketed-out my own internal chatter and I replied with "ok let’s see what comes up”.

N2 requested some clay and began smearing this along the bottom section of the paper. We sat mostly in silence. N2 appeared to be happy with this, but I checked in anyway. I told her I was going to sit nearby. She looked and felt confident and said that she was not fussed and that I could watch her if I wanted to.

N2 represented her ‘Moment Shared With A Horse’ by constructing a mixed media representation of the horse known as ‘Pinns’. She went outside and collected material (grasses and flowers) for her representation. She requested PVA glue and began to stick things down onto the large piece of white paper. I began to make a response (ISR) at an adjoining table.

Figure 11. N2 (original participant). *Untitled*
Upon N2 completing her representation, I asked her if she could describe to me just what she saw. She began describing the clay, which represented the ground that the horse Pinns stood upon. She talked about how Pinns and the other horses were initially stand-off-ish and cranky and how he wouldn’t come over until he had been given some food. N2 told me that his crankiness dissipated and he ended up greeting her with nudging kisses. She told me how the grass she had attached to the left side of the paper represented the food and the yellow-orange was his crankiness. She looked back at her representation and said she was happy with it.

I sensed N2 ease and soften further when I described the unfurling of the hearts, especially when I said “here are your two hearts as one”. It resonated with the words on her representation ‘walk-as-one’, which I had not seen while creating the hearts. There was a brief moment of connection between the two of us. The word connection came back to me. The session concluded and N2 left the art room, leaving her representation and my ISR to dry.
I found out later, when I was back on shift that N2 had shown the equine therapist and several other staff members her representation and the ISR I had given her. N2 told me that she had realised that she didn’t need to be stoned to be creative and that she had been getting back out into the art room, sometimes for more than an hour by herself. I thought she felt more solid, less prickly, less emotionally scattered than I had experienced her to be when conducting our first session together. She now seemed calmer. I felt privileged to witness this. It felt as though she was no longer in a battle with her own body. Her body was no longer her enemy.

~
The inquiry halts

In my role as a drug and alcohol counsellor, clients were always coming and going. My work was constantly about hellos and goodbyes. These greetings formed bookends to the intense work that clients and I would do during their admission at the withdrawal unit. As each research participant completed their 10-14 day withdrawal, they too left the service and returned home and I no longer had any contact with them. I had anticipated that my research participants would accompany me through the inquiry, both in my memory of our conversations; in my embodied experience of our meeting and in the representations they had created. But as time passed, these faded. In their absence the images they had created, felt empty to me.

The period of silence that followed was unnerving. I had broadcasted how I wanted my inquiry to be emergent. How I was ready for the role of “researcher/explorer” (Finlay, 2002, p. 213). But I had not contemplated how exposed and alone I would feel. What was emerging for me was a deeper understanding around why I prefer to work with others. I began to see how the presence of another keeps me grounded. The other person’s presence enables me to feel my own presence.

Crouched low, plants not much higher
sitting amongst the dry floodplain
cracked and patterned land
dry mud stains the trunks
everything can see me
there is no hiding
exposed
alone

Journal entry March 2013
I kept returning to look at the images, desperate to see something that perhaps I had missed earlier. I did this for two months and over time I realised that a relationship was forming with the images. I could sense another language becoming present, separate to the conversations that I’d had with the young people who had agreed to be my research participants.

A fog lingering at head level
words and emotions
hanging there

Journal entry March 2013

I hear the whisperings
a calling from another place
just at the edge of my awareness

Journal entry April 2013
Working with the ‘new’ participants

I discussed my dilemma of feeling lost without the physical presence of the participants at a research supervision group in May 2013. It was suggested that I consider dialoguing directly with the images created by these participants. McNiff (2009) encourages a shift in our “tendency to see images as part of the artist who made them” and instead view the artist as “a co-participant in creation, rather than as the centre of artistic creativity…” (p. 83). I realised I had always viewed art as an extension of the art maker. I had never before contemplated the creator as a co-participant, nor entertained the idea that the image, once created, may have its own voice. I wondered if these were the whisperings I had previously heard.

I returned home and I stood once more before the photocopied images of the participants’ representations. I stood there for a long time. Breathing with them. Staring at the images, which were now spread out across the table.

For a long time we travelled everywhere with her
never far from her side, trapped between plastic sleeves.
Waiting to be seen for the breathing creatures we are.

Some days I feel excited for myself and for the images.
Other days I feel overwhelmed with scepticism and doubt.
I want the inquiry to come up with something useful,
something that I can take back into my workplace.
I shudder at the thought of explaining to
coworkers that I am about to talk
to the images.

Journal entry May 2013
The images speak of themselves

I felt like a child who was about to do something they’d been told not to. I waited till I was home alone and as researcher I asked which image would like to have a conversation with me. One of the images stepped forward, announcing that they would go first. I found myself shaking my head in disbelief that this was occurring and that I was about to record a conversation with a photocopied image. I waited for my sceptical voice to settle and once more returned to the image.

I sat there looking at the image, slowly allowing myself to sink beyond its predominantly blue surface until I had entered a place that did actually feel different. Trusting my own bodily sensations, my all-believing voice came forth and this did make it easier to hear what was being said. I didn’t ask any questions, but simply spoke the words that came to me. Some of the words spoken could have been my own and my sceptical voice was quick to point this out. But there were several others that caught me completely by surprise.

I found myself contemplating that perhaps there was something in this after all. I felt relieved. I wondered that perhaps I didn’t have to know everything. Perhaps the art was its own animal and embedded in its lines, colours, shapes and textures was its own language.

I completed three recordings, performing the role of ‘speaker’ for the images. I then transcribed what I had recorded. I reduced the data by selecting key words and phases, as seen on the following page in blue. I have included the track number for those who wish to listen to the audio recording on the CD. The CD can be located in the appendix.
Stop start
thin blue line going through thick red half circle
Splodges, smudges
like a jigsaw puzzle I am
I'm all over the place
I go here, I go there
I cant kind of settle
Just stops and starts
My life is just stops and starts
Sometimes going over the same thing
Crossing where I went yesterday knowing that then stopping. Arrgh... tired

Figure 13. The image created by L1 speaks for itself
Untitled
(Track 1 - Image L1 speaks)

Oh here I am
all this white around me
My feet firmly fixed on the ground
I gaze up, up into the sky
Into my dreams
Oh I so want to walk as one

Figure 14. The image created by N2 speaks for itself
Untitled
(Track 2 - Image N2 speaks)

I'm in the centre
In this sea of salmon
The banks either side pushing in on me
Their sick yellowy brown soils pushing in
Arrgh I'm lucky I'm flowing through them
I don't have to stay here
But I worry that my water is getting gluggy, gritty
I fear that I might actually stop flowing
I might get stuck between this sickness
Arrgh... spew!

Figure 15. The image created by A1 speaks for itself.
Untitled
(Track 3 - Image A1 speaks)
Dialoguing with the ‘new participants’

I reflected upon my experience of inviting the images to speak for themselves. I was happy for the images to speak through me, but I could not do this as well as ask the images questions. It felt daunting to hold so many voices and I realised that I needed support. I asked Chris Tammer, a friend and a MIECAT graduate, if she would interview the images, informing her that I would speak on behalf of the images.

We met over a three-week period and interviewed each image that I had previously dialogued with. Each session commenced with Chris asking the image if it would like to describe itself. I have not included these descriptions in the main body of the text due to their length. A copy of these can be located in the appendix, both in text and on the CD. Other parts of the interview were much shorter and these have been included within the paper.

The MIECAT procedures were employed as part of the interviews and these appear underlined and in bold. Moments when I have reflexively returned to the inquiry with new reflections or understanding appear in different italicised font. As reader you have a choice in how to engage with the next stage of the inquiry. You can follow the inquiry, as it is presented in the paper, or you can select one of the images interviewed and follow its journey. Alternatively you may choose to drop in on any part of the inquiry.
I introduced the image to Chris Tammer as L1 and replayed what I had previously recorded when I had asked which image would like to have a conversation with me. The image informed Chris that it requested to be known as ‘Blue line’ and not L1.
**Intersubjective response (ISR)** – Chris Tammer listened to the recording when the images were initially invited to speak and provided ‘Blue line’ with the following. (Track 4 – Response by Chris to track 1).

Up down, wist, creaky,
spitty, lippy, stop, start
thin blue line going through thick red half circle
splotches, smudges
jigsaw I am, all over the place
I go here I go there I can’t settle
my life just stops and starts
crossing where I went yesterday
arrgh arrrrghhh, tired

**Reduction** – ‘Blue line’ responded to the ISR by writing a haiku.

Round and round and round
I am going nowhere soon
knowing, knowing that
Amplification / narrative description / representation

Chris Tammer then asked the image ‘Blue line’ if it could describe itself. ‘Blue line’ provided a verbal description and visual representation of itself, writing some of the verbal description directly onto the sketch. (Refer to the appendix for the full interview).

‘Blue line’ identified three characters present in representation that L1 had created (Figure 16). ‘Blue line’ gave each character a name and wrote these names onto the sketch. (Track 5 – Image L1 Blue Line interview).
Reduction – ‘Blue line’ selected key words & phrases that had been written onto the sketch (Figure 16) and combined these to form a poem. ‘Blue line’ read her poem to Chris.

When I cried

the tail where hope is thin

amongst the shit is hope

heart beat underfoot

Chris Tammer informed ‘Blue line’ that she wanted some time to construct a soundscape in response to the poem that ‘Blue line’ had read out. ‘Blue line’ began to draw the three characters she identified in the sketch (Figure 16).

Amplification / representation – ‘Blue line’ represented the three characters and titled the representation using the characters names.
ISR – Chris Tammer returned and informed ‘Blue line’ that she had prepared a response to having heard ‘Blue line’ describe herself.

(Track 6 – Response by Chris to track 5)

Choo-chooo, choo-chooo, choo-chooo, choo-chooo, choo.
Hor i hor i zon.
Zon hor i call. Zon. Horizon calls me
Me calls horizon. Horizon calls me
Horizon calls me comfort
Horizon calls me comfort comfort comfort comfort comfort comfort
Horizon calls me. Horizon calls me comforts the soles of my feet
The souls of my feet calls me horizon. The souls of my feet calls
Horizon calls. Comfort calls
Heart beat underfoot fiit fiit fiit fiit fiit fiit
Horizon calls me, comforts the soles of my feet.

Reduction – As researcher, I selected keywords and phrases from several different sources; the handwritten notes taken by Chris, the sketch ‘Blue line’ had created and the ISR (track 6) that Chris had created. I clustered the key phrases in their own group as these felt more complex than the key words, seen in the column to the right. I then titled the clusters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backwards</th>
<th>Hope</th>
<th>Charged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>smudge</td>
<td>tracks underfoot comfort</td>
<td>so much effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drudgery</td>
<td>straighten steadily heartbeat</td>
<td>the tail where hope is thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effort</td>
<td></td>
<td>comforts the soles of my feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>get through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>my red rainbow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>horizon calls me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sad blue lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>heartbeat under foot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As I reviewed these clusters (several months later),
I noticed how the cluster titled ‘charged’ contained words from
both the other two clusters (comfort, hope, straighten and heartbeat).
I also noticed in the cluster titled ‘hope’ the presence of particular words, such as,
tracks, underfoot and comfort. These words had emerged as significant, as they
connected with my choice to use the metaphor of tracks to describe the inquiry
journey. And also as sensations as I imagined
myself walking along the tracks I had walked as a child. How I would
be comforted from the soft powdery soil underfoot.

**Amplification** – As researcher, I placed a tall mirror that had been standing
nearby on its side. I did this spontaneously and welcomed instantly the deeper
perspective it provided me.

Figure 18. Barb Miles (researcher). *Untitled*
I saw the edge of the mirror where it met the floor as a horizon line. I could look in front of me as well as see behind me. The key words and phrases written on paper now sat on each side of this line. The mirror enabled me to see more. I felt that I was being offered a choice of how I could view things.

*When I viewed the photograph later (Figure 18), it evoked a feeling of spaciousness. This resonated with the internal spaciousness I experienced as I began to trust the creative process.*

*I listened to track 1 Image L 1 speaks. I was struck by the relationship between the horizon line, created when the mirror was laid upon the floor and the key words and phrases that I had previously selected from the recording; “sometimes going over” and “crossing where I went”. The horizon was beginning to represent a place of meeting. A quieter liminal place.*

**Reduction** — I wrote a haiku onto the mirror, using the three key phrases, ‘horizon calls me’, ‘comforts the soles of my feet’ and ‘heartbeat underfoot’ (selected from the cluster titled ‘charged’). I returned to my seat and I looked back at the mirror. I saw in the reflection that my feet were situated next to these key phrases. This felt significant.

*Horizon calls me
comforts the soles of my feet
heartbeat under foot*
As I re-read and reflected upon the haiku

I felt as though ‘Blue line’

and myself as researcher had merged.

The haiku spoke to me of a quality of presence.

A knowledge system that might be embedded in intersubjectivity.

I sensed my own desire to re-connect more fully

with the human, animal and material world.

The horizon felt spacious and expansive.

Capable of holding multiple realities.

**Amplification / representation / bracketing** – As researcher, I bracketed-in the key phrase ‘comforts the soles of my feet’ as well as the reflection of my feet in the mirror (Figure 18) and completed the representation below.

![Figure 19. Barb Miles (researcher). Horizon, comfort and blue lines](image-url)
Amplification / representation / Bracketing / imaginative Variation – I bracketed-in the key phrase ‘horizon calls me’ and the comment that ‘Blue line’ had previously stated, “I might straighten out all these lines and have them all facing towards the horizon” and completed the representation below.

Figure 20. Barb Miles (researcher). *Straightening out the blue lines*

I leave the inquiry of ‘Blue line’ at this point.
Interview with image N2 - Blank white

Amplification – narrative & phenomenological description
(Track 7 - Interview with image N2 Blank white)

I returned to Chris Tammer’s studio several days later. As researcher, I was curious to know more of what this image might have to say. I introduced the image to Chris using the ‘original’ participant's code N2. The interview began by Chris asking the image if it would describe itself. The image was relaxed as the excerpt from the interview below demonstrates. (The full version of the interview can be located in the appendix).

It’s like I have enough solid stuff, particularly what’s underfoot and that’s what I am firmly standing on. You can see here (pointing to two oval shapes that touch the ground) here are my two legs. I am on the ground, very well grounded.

Chris asked the image if it could describe itself in more detail. Chris took notes and constructed an ‘I poem’ as the image spoke.
Reduction – Chris read out her ‘I poem’ as an ISR (left)
(Track 8 – ‘I Poem’ response to track 7)

Reduction – As researcher, I reduce the ‘I poem’ further (right)

I am a long rectangle
I am three horizontal bands, whit, whit, whit
I am white, faun, streaky yellow and dark brown
I am little light brown lights, light brown lights
I am raised off the paper, woosh
I am little patches, phitt, phitt, phitt, phtt, phtt
I am white splotches, splotch, splatch, splotch
I am streaks of blue, woooossh, woooossh,
I am brushstroke marks
I am mostly yellow, but some of me is orange
I am in front
I am long
I am higeldy pigeldy
I am four shapes and oval
I am a dot in the middle
I am also
I am on
I am white
I am blank

I am rectangle
I am whit
I am brown
I am lights
I am woosh
I am phtt
I am splotch
I am woooosshh
I am marks
I am orange
I am front
I am long
I am pigeldy
I am oval
I am middle
I am also
I am on
I am white
I am blank

The ‘I poem’ provided me with the opportunity to see the image as it saw itself.
To hear the words the images used to describe itself. I felt privileged to be able to come
to know more of the image in this way.
I found find myself looking back at the image and stating,
yes, I can see you are these things.
This way of being resonated with how I choose to work with young people.
How I prefer to listen to them, tell me who they are.
**Narrative description** – N2 responds to Chris Tammer’s ‘I poem’
(Track 9 – Image N2 Blank White response to ‘I poem’)

It made me feel whole and I was all of the image rather than just visiting parts of myself if that makes sense. So I got a full sense of the whole body of me all at once. That felt good. Seeing the movement, especially these oval shapes that were coming out. Oh this is me I am moving out into the space. There was something about hearing my words back, I was travelling with them, inside myself (the image) and there’s that part of me, she is making reference to, oh there’s that part. Oh look she’s put that part next to that part. So that was really lovely. I felt really light and I felt off the ground.

**Reduction** – As researcher I selected key phrases from the narrative description that N2 offered Chris, as seen in blue above. I constructed a haiku and offered this back to Chris as an ISR.

```
out into the space
visiting parts of myself
travelling with them
```

*I am aware now that as researcher I had played a more active role. The boundaries between the image and myself as researcher had merged. It was as though there were now three of us offering ISR’s to each other.*

**Reduction** – Chris offered an ISR to the image. She informed the image that her ISR is her response to listening to the image state what it felt like to hear the ‘I poem’ being read. (Track 10 – Response by Chris to track 9)

```
Pulling out whit phhit, phhit, phhit
pulling strings, strings of lightness
pulling, pulling, pulling, oval, over, over, light, light, up, lift, up, light
```

‘A Moment Shared With A Horse’
**Narrative description** – The image described to Chris what it was like to hear her call out her ISR/soundscape. The description provided an access point for the image. (Track 11 – Response by image N2 Blank white to track 10)

It’s making me see the white of me very differently. And that, the white when I am looking at myself now, is almost the most important part of me and it’s giving me space to do whatever. Whatever! And I can lean into it. That’s what it feels like. And I’m going to back flip into the white. There’s an acceptance that the white doesn’t have to be filled up and that feels really good. I’ve just seen something now about that white part of me that I hadn’t noticed before. It’s that bit to the right hand side of me. It just continues. It’s not walled in by anything and it’s directional. My back is facing the wall behind me and I am looking out into openness and unknown. So if I were going to make a shape, I would make one like I was going to dive, like a frog stroke.

**The process of speaking on behalf of the image enabled me to temporarily embody the world of the image. I had to concentrate moment by moment so I could hear what the image had to say. As the image began to relax, so did I as researcher.**

*As researcher I began to experience the unknown as spacious rather than as scary. I too imagined ‘back flipping’ into the unknown.*

**Reduction** – The image read out her ‘I poem’ (below left). As researcher, I reduced the ‘I poem’ further (below right)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I look upwards from where I stand} & \quad \text{I look} \\
\text{out into the blank space} & \quad \text{I stand} \\
\text{I am not frightened or daunted by the emptiness} & \quad \text{I am not frightened} \\
\text{instead I feel relief} & \quad \text{I feel relief} \\
\text{I am in no hurry to fill it} & \quad \text{I am in no hurry}
\end{align*}
\]

The image requested that it now wanted to be known as ‘Blank white’ I leave the inquiry at this point.
Interview with image A1 – Diagonal lines

Figure 15. Diagonal lines (new research participant). Diagonal lines

Amplification – narrative description
(Track 12 – Image A1 Diagonal lines interview)

I returned again to Chris Tammer’s studio to complete the final interview. I was curious about the image I had originally dialogued with. But I was drawn aesthetically to another image. I went back and forth. I finally made a decision preferencing my curiosity over aesthetics.

I introduced Chris to the image using the participant’s code A1. Chris began the interview by asking the image “I'm just wondering how you feel in Barb’s hand… I wonder if Barb picks you up and touches you what you feel like?” The image responded with, “well I am very aware that there has been a discussion about will I be picked… and so now I am…I have been picked…someone actually wants to know me…like really want to know me.” (The full version of the interview can be located in the appendix).

‘A Moment Shared With A Horse’
**Phenomenological description** – Chris asked the image a series of phenomenological questions. Approximately half way through the interview, the image requested that the researcher provide a phenomenological description of what she saw. This temporarily threw the researcher as she was forced to reconnect with her own voice.

*Chris had been unaware that the original participant A1 (the maker of the image) had become frustrated when the researcher had provided a phenomenological description of his image. As researcher I was surprised that the image was now, actively requesting the researcher to give this form of description.*

**Narrative description** – The interviewer then asked the image what it was like to hear the researcher provide a phenomenological description. The researcher swapping voices to speak once more on behalf of the image.

**Reduction** – As researcher, I re-played what had been recorded while the image had been describing itself. I selected from this, key phrases (seen in blue). I then clustered the key phrases and gave each cluster a title.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doubt</th>
<th>Disguise</th>
<th>Pain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will I be picked?</td>
<td>it's a cover up</td>
<td>there's some sadness there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sitting next to this image</td>
<td>but there's</td>
<td>I am feeling my resistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk about myself</td>
<td>resistance</td>
<td>it sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what I needed to say.</td>
<td>a little bit of cover</td>
<td>I don't want to go any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking at me</td>
<td>surface of me</td>
<td>further.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original of me</td>
<td>some disguise</td>
<td>feel the effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>surprised you can't</td>
<td>feel very exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>see</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reduction – I created a haiku for each cluster, using the key phases selected.

**Cluster - Doubt**

will I be picked?
sitting next to this image
talk about myself

**Cluster – Disguise**

it’s a cover up
a little bit of cover
surprised you can’t see

**Cluster – Pain**

there’s some sadness there
I don’t want to go further
feel very exposed

Amplification / ISR – Chris provided an ISR (soundscape) to A1
(Track 13 – Response by Chris to track 12)

Chris referred to her notes she had taken while interviewing the image. She amplified particular words and phrases, often repeating these words several times while adding sounds created from musical instruments. The soundscape is not included here due to its length but can be heard on the CD in the appendix.

Narrative description – the researcher responded to hearing the soundscape.
(Track 14 – Response by image A1 Diagonal lines to track 13)

The researcher experienced empathic resonance with what the image was feeling. I have included excerpts that show the researcher’s voice talking about feeling what the image feels.
When I was listening to you give the ISR the tears flowed. I felt they were the tears from the image. And it wasn't as though I was feeling heard but I felt like the image was feeling heard. Deeply umm, deeply moving. I felt a little bit wobbly... who's feeling what? Is this me (researcher). No it's not me. These tears are the images tears.

I had been reading the book Art Heals by Shaun McNiff (2004) and found myself reflecting upon this experience of feeling what the image was feeling. I realised that I had initially seen my role as being simply a speaker for the image. As if I was some kind of interpreter who had no relationship with the image. I realised that this was not the case. I realised that the image and I were in dialogue, intersubjectively co-creating what would happen next.

The researcher informed the interviewer what supported her when she was feeling 'wobbly'.

Hearing the background music was so supportive...just holding my awareness, ding ding ding. ding ding ding. Every time I was getting a little freaked out, I would hear it ding ding ding stay with me.

The researcher’s sceptical voice re-entered the discussion and was heard muttering in the background as the researcher all-believing voice spoke of her experience of feeling liberated.

...that this other modality of sound has caught her unaware and it has got in without her even knowing. So she hadn't even had time to put up her defences. And that feels extremely freeing. I haven't had my own resistance. Mmmm.
**Amplification / representation** – Chris invited the image to explore and express itself further through movement, inviting it to embody whatever was present. As researcher, I accepted the role of moving for the image.

**Narrative description** – Chris provided a verbal commentary as the researcher moved on behalf of the image. (Track 15 – Image A1 diagonal lines movement)

A stretch. A stretching across the chest. Sticky out, sticky out. It's a stretch across the chest. I’m on the ground, she’s on the ground. She’s going…grrrowl. She’s rubbing her hands on the carpet. She’s flat, flat on the ground. She’s rubbing the carpet every which way, with her hands. She’s rubbing, rubbing the carpet with her hands. Flat, sticky, sticking, can’t get up, can’t get up. Pad, pad lift stretch almost up down, down bang on the ground. Lifting, lifting, nearly up getting up getting up standing up arms outstretched. Wipes sticky stuckness of right arm then left arm releases a long arrgh

**Reduction** – I wrote a haiku.

I can hear stuckness  
I’m a copy of myself  
I am resistance

I reflected upon my experience when I was speaking and moving for the image.  
I found the experience profound and enjoyable. In the days that followed, I noted a sense of spaciousness both within and around me. I felt I was more receptive to what was occurring beyond my own skin. As I walked through the bush, surrounding my home, I contemplated how my non-human others (nature) seemed to be permanently out of their skin. Perhaps this was the state they embodied.  
Always present, available and interacting with their surroundings.

I leave the inquiry of A 1 at this point.
PART 3

The remaining strands

I spent between June and October 2013 reading widely and reviewing what I did when working with my participants. The data and the literature began to speak to each other. It was a back and forth conversation that extended into sleep. I was waking at 3 am with fragments, sometimes a few words, at other times almost a full sentence. I took to writing the inquiry at night, stars as witness as I lay between sleep and wakefulness. It was only there that I could record the conversations.

Stand
firm and open
breathe the howling
wind that sculpts and
smoothes the rough
edges of your
words

Journal entry November 2013
Collecting the strands

I had occasional glimpses of the complexity and subtlety of new knowing, yet it felt just beyond my grasp. I began collecting these strands of new knowing when working with my research participants, dialoguing with the images and walking through the bush and along the beach. I have been holding them lightly for over a year now. It was as if my knowing needed to arrive in its own time. I have wrapped these strands around my fingers. Single words, sometimes sentences have slipped into my palm. Through art making I contemplated the meaning of these stands. I explored the shifting nature of these loosely held strands of knowing using visual and sonorous modalities. I have included photographs of the art pieces that I created and which were exhibited as part of this inquiry.
Gathering

Words are hard for me. I struggle to express the subtle nuances of what I am thinking and feeling in spoken language. Words can constrict and confine what I am saying. It is as though words create definition and separation where I see wholeness. When I came to the stage of reflecting on what I had come to know through my inquiry, I had spent too much time with the written word. I was homesick for images and the process of art making. I made a choice to use art making as a way of deepening my understanding of the inquiry and I trusted that the process of making art would lead me in the direction I needed to go on the page. In a way this was also not a choice, art making was the only way I knew I would be able to make sense of my inquiry.

As I walked on tracks in the bush and along the beach, I gathered photographs of the shadows cast by trees and of my body on the sand. These photographs and aspects of the stories of the young participants become dominant in my mind. The process of gathering my thoughts involved repeated acts of returning to look again at the collected data. Grouping similar thoughts and objects. I began to slowly transcend the exterior appearance of these thoughts, images and objects. I began to represent in human form the interaction between what was left with me of the young people’s stories and my own process in the inquiry.
The three young people who were my participants began to inhabit the three human forms I created. I represented the first participant (L1-Blue line) as Walking memories who was “walking where she walked yesterday”. She found herself on the same path again and again; walking was both transport and torment. I represented the second participant (N2-Blank white) as Internal spaciousness. She had realised that “she didn’t need to be stoned to be creative” and she had begun to see the world from within herself and to feel comfortable in her own skin. The third participant (A1-Diagonal lines) became Growing awareness. His representation had drawn me into the space between the lines and the possibility of emerging from the narrow confines of these lines.

After making the human forms, Walking memories, Internal spaciousness and Growing awareness, I was able to see them as strands of knowing. I identified that these concepts were interwoven and informed and supported each other. I was also able to see how these strands reflected my own process in the inquiry. I felt I had been undergoing a complicated process of absorbing new experiences and insights while at the same time shedding old ways of being that no longer felt helpful. In the next few pages, I reflect on these strands of knowing, my growing awareness of my process and how this impacts on my work with young people.
Walking memories

Figure 25. Barb Miles (researcher). *Walking memories*
My first strand of knowing is ‘walking memories’. I have walked along tracks within dry forest country of central Victoria and along the coastal foreshore of the Bellarine Peninsula. At the same time I have walked in my imagination within a different country. This country holds deep resonance for me. This country is river country. The tracks I walked are the soft powdery tracks I explored as a child by the Murray River. The memory of this country walked within me as I wandered in the bush and along the beaches gathering leaves and lichen, seaweed and strands of nylon rope. The metaphor of walking along my past and present tracks allowed me to walk my way into the inquiry. Martin Shaw (2011) refers to metaphors as “the generous offering of many possibilities contained in one image” (p. 113). The imagined act of walking served to enable me to set my own pace and my own tempo. I knew that I could not rush. I knew that I needed to walk slowly in order to hear my participants.

It was through movement that I was able to integrate more of what I was coming to know. Turnbull (2007) says, “we make our world in the process of moving through and knowing it” (p. 142). Or as Ingold (2000) states “we know as we go” (p. 229). The rhythm of walking grounded the conceptual literature that I was reading and allowed me to have an embodied understanding of the ideas I found there. Walking enabled me to stay present during the inquiry even when I walked myself into unknown territory. It allowed me to wander along paths laid down by other researchers, to hear what they had to say. Walking allowed me to let their words converse with my own and to suspend what I thought I knew so as to not cut these conversations short. Walking supported my process of coming to know things incrementally and gradually. The sense of movement also provided comfort in the moments I felt stuck in the inquiry.

The memory of Murray country and imagining myself walking along these tracks created a sense of safety. This internal safety supported me to stay present with emergent inquiry process. Walking on the tracks of the past enabled me to access my embodied memories of feeling safe and connected to the earth. These memories activated and created a connection to sensations within my own body. I felt physically and emotionally as though I had company and that I was not walking alone. From this grounded place, I could consider more things and
see things from multiple perspectives. In my mind, I could see the tracks before, behind and to the side of me. These tracks embodied memories belonging to my childhood. They told me who I was now and where I had been before. Shaw (2011) refers to the “narrative tracks worn smooth by the ancestors” (p. 63). These tracks contained a language of my own memories and of the country from where they originate.

I was aware that for me walking provided comfort and safety but for participant L1 - Blue line her incessant wondering only served to remind her how lost she was. I realised that in the absence of external nurturing tracks, she would need to make places of safety inside herself. Prior to undertaking the research inquiry, I was unaware of how my internal tracks supported me in making sense of my world. Imaginatively forming images of a familiar country and walking myself along a track is what I have come to know I do when faced with challenges. I have come to see these tracks and the associated memories as my own internal safe place and as a resource that I can draw on to keep me present and calm. This place is spacious and welcoming. Ultimately walking memories enabled me to form new tracks. It also reinforced how important it was to assist young people locate their own internal safe places.

Figure 26. ‘Barb Miles (researcher).  Incremental knowing
Internal spaciousness

Figure 27. Barb Miles (researcher). *Internal spaciousness*
My second strand of knowing is ‘internal spaciousness’. At times in my inquiry I stopped moving and stepped into moments of great stillness and reflection. I stood on the track and opened out my senses to listen deeply to the world I found around me. I grew silent. I experienced a deep internal stillness. I had not felt this stillness for such a long time. In the stillness, I began to experience creativity and imagination differently. It seemed that the more deeply I listened, the more I imagined and created and this resulted in more internal space being generated. I noticed that it was feeling safe which assisted this sense of internal spaciousness to form within me. Feeling safe reduced the amount of chatter in my mind. My senses became more acute. I could see more of the fine detail of the natural world before my eyes and my depth of vision and field of view expanded. I felt calm.

Figure 28. Barb Miles (researcher). *Deep listening*
I saw a parallel between my own process and the calmness and joy that participant N2- Blank white had expressed when stating, “she no longer needed to be stoned to be creative”. Now that I was calm in the stillness, I found it easier to hear what it was that I wanted to express in my art marking. I had often felt that I could not discern what it was that I wanted to express creatively because of the chatter of self-doubt. The internal spaciousness allowed a flourishing of imagined memories, sensations, sounds and images that wanted to be given artistic form. Because I felt safe in this place, self-doubt was less vocal. I am now practicing the skill of paying more attention to ensuring that I feel safe in the space. Safe enough to explore what Solnit (2000) refers to as the “meadowland of the imagination” (p. 289). This is a place where my “imagination has not yet been ploughed”.

Imagination and creativity have been central to leading me to this internal spaciousness, which I now feel has always been there. In the stillness I could step closer to being able to embrace creativity and imagination more fully. Initially I viewed the different modalities, visual art, movement, writing, sound, as being similar to a set of tools. I saw each modality as being capable of loosening or bringing into view new meanings. In the stillness, I began to hear that these different modalities each had their own language. Each had its own way of communicating different qualities or aspects of knowing. More broadly I began to see that all artistic expression had its own voice. I heard this voice of artistic expression as separate from the art maker but also in relationship with the maker.

Reflecting on my own artistic expression, I was able to see how the first strand of knowing, ‘walking memories’ was interwoven with the second strand, ‘internal spaciousness’. I saw that through grounding myself in the safety of walking and taking in the nurture of the world around me, I was able to step into this internal spaciousness, that then gave me better access to my own creativity. I realised that I had underestimated how important it was to feel safe. Fisher (2002) made a similar point when he wrote, “If our world is not a place in which our trust and faith can flourish, then the need for security and control wins over the need for
open contact and growth” (p. 74). I felt that I had come to a point of being able to extend my trust beyond the bounds of my own skin and flesh.

I felt this extension into the world beyond me on a deeply embodied level. This was very powerful. I came to understand that my skin had functioned as a barrier against interconnectedness. I imagined that my participants might have been as trapped within the confines of their own skin as I had been. I had come to see and understand how important it was for me to feel connected with my surroundings, with people, animals, plants and the material world.

Figure 29. Barb Miles (researcher). *What’s outside us, is inside us*
Growing awareness

Figure 30. Barb Miles (researcher). *Growing awareness*
My third strand of knowing, ‘growing awareness’ was based on the foundations of the first two strands. Because I was finally grounded in ‘internal spaciousness’, I was able to understand the felt sense that I had experienced in the beginning of my inquiry. As I saw the changes taking place in the young people following their equine sessions, I felt something. I knew that it was important. This feeling was familiar. I knew it from my walks along the beach and in the bush. It was the A1 (original participant’s) words and actions that led me into a deeper understanding of my felt sense. As I observed this young man’s equine session, the horse dropped his head and brought it in closer to the young man’s body. The young man accepted the closeness and I saw him lean into the horse. They stayed connected in this embodied, non-verbal way for a long time. Later as he drew, he mentioned to me that this moment had reminded him of meeting his friends in the Botanical Gardens. The friends all had joined hands around the base of a large tree and together had lent their bodies into its bark.

I asked myself what did this ‘leaning into’ the horse, to his friends, to the tree really mean? I reflected on the comfort and safety of my own moments of being able to ‘lean into’ animals, other people and the natural world. I remembered that my skin could function as a barrier preventing me from engaging with anything that lay beyond my self. I had moments of resonance with his experience. I felt a delicate interconnection with the world, especially with the county around me. But I could not fully embody and understand this interconnection. It remained elusive because it seemed to constantly shift and grow. It was similar to watching the phenomena of virga, where precipitation evaporates before it reaches the ground. In the fleeting moments I felt the interconnection, I knew I was in the realms of intersubjectivity.

I felt that somehow I was now more available to be present to the world beyond myself and that I was able to be open to the experiences of the world beyond me. I had discovered “a world that is shared, no longer simply inside ourselves, but coming alive and growing between ourselves and another” (Tuffnell & Crickmay, 2004, p. 42). I was beginning to understand the experience of intersubjectivity on an embodied level and understand it’s innate reciprocity.
I felt that I had come home to a feeling I had known in my childhood. As a child I had felt safe walking next to the Murray River. I had felt held by the earth. It was as if the earth was meeting the soles of my feet and giving me the strength and energy to keep upright. Perhaps all humans have this experience of being met by something or someone beyond themselves and perhaps it is this memory that keeps us going. We can learn to extend beyond our own skin, to 'lean into' this world and allow the world to 'lean into' us. As we do this we begin to address our longing for a richer, more connected existence. This longing is not experienced “as a frittering away our lives, but (as) the impulse towards a deeper reality that just our daily chatter” (Shaw, 2011, p XXVI).

I sank deeper into folds of thought. I considered the experiential encounters I have had with humans, animals, nature and the creative arts. This deep reflection allowed me to explore how we are all constantly co-creating with each other and the world beyond ourselves. Through slowing down and patiently waiting for what I was looking at or listening to and feeling into this interaction on an embodied level, I was allowing things outside myself to reveal themselves to me. In these interactions, I could see I was offering a new quality of calm presence that was both accepting of myself and accessible to the other. I felt I was more able to authentically meet and accept the young people as they were and encourage them to ‘lean into’ both themselves and the support I offered.

I felt as though I had stumbled upon a new way of being with young people and of meeting their need for connection. My own sense of being in embodied connection with the world and others had lain dormant since childhood. As I settled into this new awareness, I felt I could offer the possibility of viewing the world in this way to young people. The young people often spoke of a profound disconnection from their families. This disconnection appeared to rob them of hope for their future. I began to see that my sense of connection with others had arrived after I had reconnected with myself. I could see now that both of us had placed the cart before the horse. Maybe the young people were trapped in trying to connect to others before they had a sense of connection with themselves.
I wondered if in enduring life without meeting the other, the young peoples sense of self was flimsy. Perhaps I could assist young people to form a more substantial sense of themselves in contact with the world. I could support young people to identify those special places, animals and people in their lives, both past and present, and encourage them to linger and embody these experiences. I realised the creative arts could allow young people to imagine, to express and to embrace the resource of their own internal tracks.

We could slowly and safely walk along their tracks until the young person could take in the nurture and comfort provided by this sense of connection. My hope is that young people will come to experience this sense of connection with the external world as a resource within them. A place they can return to again and again. In feeling less isolated these young people could begin to focus their care on maintaining their connection with themselves as the first step back into interconnection with others.

Figure 31. Barb Miles (researcher). **Coming home**
Exhibited artwork

Figure 32. Barb Miles (researcher). *Standing before my participants*

I installed my artwork at the MIECAT studio in February 2014. The artwork formed part of my inquiry and was assessed along with my paper.

I selected a section of wall to hang my work. I placed the three life sized human forms in the centre. I placed the bundles of leaves and bark (Figure 23) to the left of these figures and the baskets I had woven from the collected leaves and strands of nylon rope to the right (Figure 22). This wall did not extend all the way to the ground, but instead had a horizontal bench running approximately 600mm above the floor. It was on this surface that I created *Journey*, a *poetic sandscape* (Figure 33), using soil collected from tracks adjacent to the Murray River, gathered leaves, nylon string and text from a poem I wrote.
I stood before the installed artwork. I felt as though I was standing before the three young people who had been my research participants. It was a humbling experience. I was filled with gratitude for what they had shared with me. I realised that it was possible to extend beyond our skin. How we could begin to address our longing for a richer more connected existence. How we could do this by participating in actions that connect us first and foremost with ourselves. This could be as simple as standing still and slowly becoming aware of our own nature. We could support this process by identifying our own internal resources of places or people with whom we feel safe. We could bring alive these memories by representing our experiences using the creative arts. In this way, creating an entrance where we could come home to self. It is from this embodied place that we would be able to connect and meet with others.
Coming home

I step
into the imprint of old
I feel the connection and comfort
heal to toe
I place one foot in front of the other
I hear you, I feel you
I have come home to common flesh
‘Thankyou’
for your company

Figure 34. Barb Miles (researcher). Thankyou
Appendices

Appendix A: Interview with ‘new’ participant (L1)  Titled: ‘Blue line’

Interview conducted 24/5/13. (Duration 12 min 31 sec)

Who are you?
Hmmm. I’m a lot of something and sometimes a lot of nothing

Have you got a name?
Yeah I’m called Blue line.

Why are you called Blue line?
Because people know me, that’s what they call me. I’m just always this blue line.
They see me all over the town.

Can you walk?
Yeah, I can walk. I can run.

How old are you?
Seven.

Where did you come from?
xxxxxxxx

Are you happy?
No. I’m really frustrated. And I’m lost. I feel really lost.

Why have you done to yourself?
What do you mean what have I done to myself. Are you having a go at me?

Hmmm. No, I wasn’t actually. But if you think I am. I guess you’d know.

Sorry, I get really defensive

Do you?
mmm.

So, I’ve got to be careful of what I say, do I?
Yes. Argh no. I’m, I’m not seven now.

Ok, so um defensive.

mmm. Can’t you see? I get defensive like I sort of start coming into something and then all of a sudden I do a U-turn and I quickly get out of there.

So what’s defensive?
Defensive is people sort of asking me stuff.

Oh, I see.

They kind of...it’s not their fault it just reminds me of stuff I haven’t done. That I should’ve done

What does that sound like?
Arrgh

Stuff you haven’t done
Pathetic. It makes me feel frustrated

Has it got a sound?
(Blue line makes a gruff growling sound) yeah

Yeah, Like that?
Yeah, yeah. Useless. (sound) Useless.

Yeah useless, I know that sound too. Um, I can see that you are blue.

Yes.

There’s a bit of yellow there.
Oh, so there is.

What’s that?
You know the first thing that came to mind was urine

Argh piss
Piss, yeah pissed off maybe

*And there is also a little bit of brown just above the yellow*

And there’s a little spot, there’s one tiny little spot of yellow.
Actually maybe it’s not urine. I think I’m gonna call that hope. That might be urine over there, but I’m gonna call that little tiny spec, that’s hope.

*Ok, and what happens here?*

Oh, that’s when I get really scattered and I get really panicky.

*What does it sound like, panicky?*

Blue line makes sound

*Tammers makes same sound as blue line*

Mmmm

*Wow, it sounds like all over the place. Sounds like it’s all around, busy, jolty and jittery*

There’s one line I’ve just seen actually that’s a bit calmer. Its this one that goes straight the red half circle. It is straight.

*It is straight*

It feels calm.

*What’s it like for you? That calm*

Ohhhhh, its nice just walking slowly and steadily and I feel like I can see where I am going.

*How do your feet feel on the ground when you walk?*

Good, they feel good, they feel connected.

*What are your eyes looking at?*

They’re looking at the horizon, they’re looking to where I am going.

*At the horizon. What does the horizon sound like?*

(Blue line makes slow breathing out sound) Peaceful.

*Peaceful*

mmm, not threatening, kind of inviting. Come here. C’mon

*Do you like going there?*

I do like going there; I don’t go there very often

*Would you go there again?*

Yes I would. You know I’m looking at all these tracks of where I’ve been. All these half started round about tracks and I wish that I could actually straighten them all out. That’s what I might do. I might draw another one and straightening out all these round about lines and have them all facing towards the horizon. That makes me want to cry.

*Does it. What does that sound like, blue lines?*

Oh. Sad blue lines, (sigh & sniff)

*Sad blue lines*

Oh, just sad, cos of all the effort, all the effort.

*Is effort heavy, light? What does effort feel like?*

Oh, drudgery. Feels like bloody drudgery. Just (sniff)

*If you could sing drudgery, or make a sound for drudgery. How would it sound?*

(sneeze) If my tears now could hit the table and make a sound it would go (Blue line makes sound pfff pfff pfff)

*How does that make you feel?*

A bit better actually (laughing & sniffing)

*Arrgh. What about...there’s one thing I am wondering about blue lines, there’s a lot of smudgy blue there too. I’m wondering about the smudginess of you.*

(sneeze) Yeah, I’ve been wondering that too. (big sniff) First I thought it was all my tears that had blurred the lines. But I don’t think that’s how it is. It feels like. It feels like the smudges are actually the ground. The ground that I have been walking on.

*What does ground sound like?*

(Blue line makes sounds choo choo choo choo choo)

*Like footsteps on the ground aren’t they.*

Yeah, and underneath that sound there’s a heart beat, underfoot (makes sound choo-chhh choo-chhh choo-chhh choo-chhh). That’s nice
Does that feel comfy and nice?
Yeah, that feels good. So it feels like there’s a lot of depth. I can feel there’s a whole lot underneath that ground. That I am only just connecting with now.

I’m just wondering...I’m inviting you to tell me what you might be, just here, just this, a slightly green tinge through the middle here. I wonder what that might be.
Oh, I think that’s sick making.

Sick making
Yeah, when I look at that now I feel a little bit of nauseous

Do you. Where did that sick making feeling come from? What does it feel like?
Arrgh. It feels like no hope. It feels like, you know, I keep on, I keep on going and that blue line it’s almost a heart shape too but it’s gets broken at the bottom. But it’s a strong line, and it’s like a, there’s two of them there and it’s like I’m gonna have another go. I am going to keep going with this but it doesn’t um...and there’s a lot of (sniff) thick smudges where I have been walking over and over.

Over and over.
And I’m seeing a backward question mark now.

Mmm right, yep. Backward question mark.
So maybe I am walking in the wrong direction. (sniff)

What would it feel like for you if you thought about that, that you have been walking in the wrong direction? I mean in this section here.
It makes me want to laugh actually. Which is surprising cos I thought I would be thinking, oh more bloody time wasted, but actually it makes me laugh.

So is that ok? Or is it not ok? Is it an ok laugh? Or.
Yeah well...yeah it’s... a look at you, dickhead. You’ve been, you’ve been spending years walking with it. You know I’ve got friends who don’t even get out of bed, so at least I’ve been walking. I’ve been having a crack here.

You’ve been having a crack and you keep having a crack.
And there is one straight line. You know I’ve done it obviously before.

And I don’t know if you have noticed, but there is one hell of a big thick half round circle here.

Sitting proudly there. I just wonder what you think of that. It’s got a little dot, a little faded dot underneath it.

Yeah, I’m really curious about that. From where I am sitting now it looks like a red rainbow and um, but it also looks like you know that red little dot in there is on the horizon line. That the blue line has actually turned into the horizon line and that maybe that’s where I’ve gotta get to. It’s like a little lens of looking through. (sniff)

I’m just going to repeat some things for you here. Backward question mark, half heart, red rainbow, horizon line, calm, little red dot sitting there, little yellow, hope, urine, smudged ground (choo choo choo choo), lines going everywhere, broken, (repeats panicky noise made by blue line earlier).
And I see there, two other things; actually there are three symbols. There’s the broken heart, the woman’s head, and there’s an animal with its mouth open. Looks like it’s crying or going arrr arrr arrr arrr.

What name would you give that?
Crying animals heart

What name would you give the woman’s head?
Serena.

And what name would give the broken heart?
Hmm, that’s harder. For now I’ll just call it that’s harder

That’s harder. Beautiful. Let’s leave it at that.
Appendix B: Interview with 'new' participant (N 2). Titled: 'Blank white'

Interview conducted 28/5/13. (Duration 25 min)

So Picture who are you? What are you?
I’m thin and I’m mostly pretty solid but at the moment there’s a lot of spaciousness around me and that is feeling pretty good. I am feeling like I have found my feet and that it is ok now to have some unknown space and I am really aware of feeling that if that had been there a little while ago that would have freaked me out. I am looking up now into that space which is white so when I say space I mean that its’ not filled in with sky, or ground or bush or sun. It’s space for new things to come in.

And you feel like that’s ok?
It feels calm, even though there is unknown. It’s like I have enough solid stuff, particularly what’s underfoot and that’s what I am firmly standing on. You can see here (pointing to two oval shapes that touch the ground) here are my two legs. I am on the ground, very well grounded. And I am looking up into the blue sky and there’s a message that’s been written that says ‘walk as one’

And blue sky, who are you? What are you blue sky?
Hmmm, I’m wishy and washy and I’m not completely solid. There are streaks that you can see right through me. And you can see right through to where there is nothing yet. Some parts are a little more solid; some parts come down in a very weird shape, sort of like a neck.

Why are they weird?
It’s not what I would normally do as sky. So you know most of this part across the top is what I would normally do.

If you weren’t sky what would you be?
Hmmm, well I would be a bird, I would definitely be a bird, with a very long neck at this point. I’m still flying and I am capturing things as I fly. I have caught pieces of clouds and I have caught these three words here. They may be on me or I may be flying behind them.

Are you dark, light heavy?
Pretty light, don’t get too bogged down, pretty fluid.

What is next to you? What surrounds you?
I am filling up the top third of this piece of paper and my blue neck is wrapping around an area that I think is a bush or tree and in behind that, is this lovely fiery mostly yellow with some dabs of orange behind. Maybe, I don’t know what that is. But it feels good. I love being next to the yellow, even though we have got some green that is dividing us. I’m pretty keen on it and that yellow is filling up the last quarter of the top left hand corner and then its travelling down to these spindly dark green thin, elongated little branches and it’s not really connected to the ground. Yeah and the ground where I am standing on could be underwater it could be a sand bed, it’s sort of sandy colour, it’s got pebbles and streaks of yellow and this beautiful bit of magic of yellow. Thirteen little yellow flowers that are on the right hand side. They start at my feet and go up to my eyebrow.

How are you feeling picture?
I’m feeling optimistic and light and I feel that all the hard stuff is in my past and this feels like a window that I am looking out to what might be my possibility.

How does that feel?
It feels that there is some strong connection to me. All of the parts feel connected but I keep coming back to this brown section here that has a green eye with blue eyelashes. Its looking up at the sky and there is some connection between the two.

So its like there’s a connection?
Yes, and it may well be at this point as an image, I identify with this brown shape. It is like the core of my image here. I am just going to turn it (image) upside down to
see if I see it differently. Yeah I feel I am more floating, the ground doesn’t feel like it’s holding onto me so much and there is a feeling of buoyancy. There’s a split second of feeling lift-off. I am just continuing to turn it (image) around. Oh now I feel like I am going to jump into a slipstream. About to literally go into that free space that is predominantly white. Just dive in and what was before sky and ground are just banks. And I am about to jump in there.

Do you have a sound?
Umm, I can hear the sounds of being at the beach, of kids squealing, and muffled people talking and seagulls, and the odd dog barking. A lively, social scene.

How do you feel in that social scene?
I feel like I belong, you know no-one is paying any attention. Just doing our own things. There’s a little bit, I am feeling nostalgia and there is a feeling that I am aware that I like this feeling. I am feeling it and I am aware that I am feeling it.

Awareness of feeling the feeling.
I don’t feel too precious; I’ve kind of just, umm created things here that are all a little bit slap dash and um, that feels ok. I have stuck things down with glue and I am not being over precious. It’s random and that seems a bit different.

Different to what?
I’m noticing it different and that’s different. That is not how I would normally be. There is a freedom.

Walk as one, as one just wondering what that sounds for you walk as one?
Yeah, yeah the sceptic’s is coming out in me a bit. Yeah…I feel a bit uncomfortable with that being there now. Like that’s how I want to live and be but seeing it there for um above, seeing it there for every one else to see makes me feel a little corny and that makes me feel uncomfortable.

The interview changes tack as the image is asked to describe itself.

If you wouldn’t mind just for the moment, I would just like you to explain the things that make up ‘you’. If you could start at a corner, explain the textures, colours or shapes.
I’ve turned the image to a rectangle, with the longest edges on the top and bottom. Approximately divided into 3 horizontal bands, the band in the middle is the largest and widest and it is predominantly white. The bottom band has different textures, colours are fawn, streaky yellow, 1,2,3 streaks of yellow and 1,2,3 streaks of dark brown and there are several thin light brown textured, raised off the paper. And little patches of raised browny-yellow shapes that have white splodges on them. The top band is streaks of blue and on top of that and that band doesn’t go all the way across the top, it goes two thirds of the way and it has three words with one of the words having a picture on it. And on the top left hand corner are upward brush stroke marks of yellow and orange but mostly yellow and in front of those of colours are thin strips of dark green each being maybe 3 mm wide and maybe 5cm long and that comes down highely pigedly on most of the left hand side. What begins on the bottom band are 1,2,3,4 shapes all attached in the centre. It’s interesting I thought there were 5 but there are only 4. Two are dark brown one is mid brown and one is a very light brown. And on the mid brown there is an oval shape that has a pale blue outside rim, then white to the left hand side of the oval and green to the right and the green shape has a black dot in the middle. Also on the white section are 13 yellow rough shapes. All the same colours but different shapes. And there is some smearing, I can see through it. It comes up from the fawn in through the yellow and onto the mid brown shape.

The interview concludes.
Appendix C: Interview with ‘new’ participant (A 1).   Titled: ‘Diagonal lines

Interview conducted 07/06/13. (Duration 9 min 15 sec)  
Interviewer in italics   Researcher speaking for image in standard font

I’m just wondering how you feel in Barbs hand. I wonder if Barb picks you up and touches you what you feel like?
   Well I am very aware that I have been sitting next to this another image and there has been a discussion will I be picked and that has been quiet interesting. And so now I am, I have been picked.

How is that making you feel? That you were picked.
   A mixture of going well so I should have been but also oh, now I am going to have to talk about myself. That’s um...but I am up for it.

I’ll help you by asking you questions so if that helps at all. You don’t have to do much, just relax into yourself
   Mmmm. Well I need to say before we even start that I have been having discussions with the other images. Mostly last night and um I’m getting a bit of an understanding about you know what my part in all of this is. I still have my own parts but I am seeing that in fact other people are looking at me in a way that is different to the way most humans look at me. And as I say this, the looker is patting the bottom of me. It’s unnervingly new. I’m getting a real sense that someone actually wants to know me. Like really know me.
   Her fingers now are travelling over me. I wish she had the original of me, because then she could feel the texture, all the texture. I am having to work really hard to conjure up the feeling of the waxiness of the crayon of my surface. I say just push your finger slower there so it sticks, cos there’s a lot of crayon.

What does the crayon feel like? Is it moving or malleable? Or stopping you?
   It’s sticky, it moves a little bit, but there’s resistance. Yes resistance.

There’s actually a sound to it.
   Yes, yes it goes forward but you can feel the effort that’s required. So that’s what I needed to say.

I’m wondering what I look like to you? Who am I? What am I? Explain to me what you see.
   So! You want me to tell the looker or do you want me to speak for the looker
I’d like you to as the looker tell me what you see in me, what colours, sounds, shapes, lights, darks. What do you see on me as the looker.
   Oh, well I am going to have to change voice now. Because now I am becoming Barb
Oh yes, could you be Barb because as a phenomenological exercise. I’m wondering how do you see me?
   Ok. I see you as a rectangle. I see that there are three bands of colour that are on the diagonal. Arrr. The left hand band is really a triangle, oh as is the one on the right. Umm and the only one that is really straight is the salmon orange colour one in the middle. I see your surface as being bitty, argh and gritty and it’s a bit sort of messy actually and there not blank colours they move into different tones. Yeah, that’s what I see. What’s that like to see?

Yes, I am just wondering now for you painting what do you think what Barbs just said to you. What does that feel like? She said not blank colours. Surface is bitty, gritty, messy different tones. What do you think about that?
   Well Barb has just commented on the surface of me. It’s like my coat. She has commented on my clothing. She hasn’t really looked to see what’s in underneath that. Every now and then the jacket parts and there’s a sneak in there and there are some points where there are sneaks particularly where in the bottom left hand corner where it meets with the salmon and there’s a sneak of different colours. Rusty browns and they hint of something else.

A hint of something else. I notice there’s a little bit of a lull, a little bit of a drop in your voice when you say that
Mmmm well, there is some sadness there and some disguise and a little bit of cover up but I can only cover up so much. I actually feel extremely exposed and I am surprised that you can't see all.

Long pause

*I'm just wondering if that is enough.*

Yes, I think it is. I don't want to go any further. I am feeling my resistance.

The interview concludes.
References


