Pedagogical Opportunities for Mindful Practice:
Engaging the Visual Arts Classroom.

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

August 2016
Declaration

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Dedication

To Leona

This thesis is dedicated to my partner in life and closest friend. Your continued love, encouragement, and guidance throughout this journey contributed in no small way to its completion and for that, along with so many other things, I am and shall remain forever grateful.
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Abstract

This thesis contributes to our understanding of the influence and effects that a mindful approach to the teaching of visual arts has on students and on their capacity to respond creatively within a classroom. Current interest in ‘mindfulness’ as a clinical intervention within the cognitive sciences to alleviate disorders is discussed along with its increasing introduction to the school education sector as a way of reducing stress and addressing disengaged students. Engaging mindful procedures to alleviate perceived problems or deficiencies is situated against Buddhist doctrine and found to be at odds with its original expression. This thesis is significant in that it does not accept the emphasis on mindful practice being used as a curative but rather sees it as a way to enhance students’ existing qualities with links to metacognition, creativity and the capacity to make visual art.

The research draws on aspects of Deleuzian thought, specifically poststructural notions of how observed phenomena are experienced by a ‘decolonised’ thinking subject. Deleuzian sensitivities within the research offer multi-layered interpretations of the process of art-making emphasising notions of ‘becoming’ which enables such decolonisation. A broader constructivist understanding of how knowledge is generated configures the methodology in this study. In accordance with theorisations of a phenomenological hermeneutic methodology and a multiple methods approach, the study is a dialogue focusing on observed shifts in visual perceptions within a visual art classroom over a six-month period.

Poststructuralist assumptions of the decentred-self are reconciled with the phenomenological self-as-observer recognising that the self seems fixed relative to the observer but is also continually becoming in a serialised non-linear time sequence. The significance that mindful practitioners and phenomenologists place on being present in the moment is challenged by problematising discreet moments as continuous states of becoming in transition between past and future. Decentring of the mindful self is
considered further within Buddhist notions of ‘no-self’\(^1\) and Deleuzian metaphors of the ‘nomad’ and the ‘rhizoid’ enabling intuitive and non-hierarchical modes of engagement with the data. This blending of knowledge generation is about acknowledging the contributions of poststructuralist thought processes on efforts to understand the social world (that is, the classroom). Deleuzian theory in this regard is seen to inform a hermeneutic approach through its emphasis on losing the self in the immanence of nomadic thought.

The research contends that the focused and practiced acquisition of a mindful attitude to visual arts-making offers innovative possibilities of thought and engagement. The interaction with phenomena within the classroom is hermeneutically interpreted and influenced by selected elements of Deleuzian theory enabling insights into creative processes.

\(^1\) The Buddhist notion of no-self is the foundation of a particular ontology that challenges the concept of a separate ego operating and interacting with the world.
Chapter 1: Watercolour Paper: an Introduction

Student engagements in an art classroom are revealed within this research where particular emphasis is placed on observing and interpreting the effects of mindful engagements and meditative techniques. A consideration of the notion of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari 2013), rather than of being, de-emphasises the hold that the completion of final artworks within fixed time constraints have over many art students and with this de-emphasis, comes the opportunity to consider the process of art-making and the conditions under which creativity is expressed.

Section 1.1 begins by acknowledging and framing the thesis within a personal context and establishes early influences on its content and direction. Section 1.2 introduces the research question. Section 1.3 explores the metaphor of a watercolour artist at work. Interactions between the decisions made by the artist with those required to construct the thesis are offered at the beginning of each chapter. Both the gradual process of producing the painting and that of building a thesis such as this are seen as essentially creative undertakings.

The personal context framing this thesis is then considered within a broader perspective. Section 1.4 contemplates the understandings and intentions embedded within this broader perspective by discussing the current popular adoption of mindful approaches to alleviate personal suffering and/or challenging behaviours in both clinical and educational settings. Rather than seeing this relatively recent adoption of mindful engagements as predominantly a curative device, this thesis acknowledges the original intentions of mindful practice which emphasise personal reflection and non-habitual engagement. The shift from seeing mindfulness as a cure to one of recognising its resolve to enhance the lived experience of students, regardless of their situation, sustains the work. This shift in emphasis will be further discussed in the literature review in chapter two.
Section 1.5 makes a case for the importance of a thesis such as this within the current discussion surrounding the purpose of mindful engagement. It considers the lack of research undertaken within visual arts pedagogy and contends that this area has been undertheorized. The contribution that this thesis makes to methodology is proposed by putting a hermeneutical phenomenological engagement with data to work within a Deleuzian poststructuralist framework. This approach to data analysis and interpretation is further discussed in chapter seven where the case is made for a reassessment of subjectivity which sees it as something more than the assumption of a fixed state of being. Section 1.6 provides an overview of the structure of the thesis with a summary of the main themes contained within each of chapters two through to eight.

1.1 Personal Context

‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.’

(Lao-Tzu, 1996)

The first single step toward this thesis occurred to me within a secondary visual arts classroom in suburban Melbourne. An interest in painting and drawing was already established but it was not until a daily classroom engagement with students that questions started to arise about the importance or relevance of art as a subject of study and of the contribution that might be made toward student engagement in this area. It was not considered a measure of success to produce artists or to provide students with a sustaining interest. The question then of what exactly was the purpose of teaching art within the classroom became a focus of ongoing thought and reflection.

The commencement of a working life in education also coincided with the beginnings of an interest in Buddhist philosophy. Skills involved in observation and drawing seemed to complement a daily meditative practice which was then establishing itself
and is continuing. Ontological development was influenced by Suzuki (1959) and his insights into the sensitivities by which ancient Zen monks approached their artwork and other disciplines. The seamlessness between the contemplative life of the monks and the careful observations of nature experienced within their drawings and paintings ‘deeply reflected their philosophy’ (Suzuki 1959, p. 30) and I looked for ways that a personal art practice might too reflect my thoughts and feelings and those of my students. This interest in Buddhist philosophy was further enhanced through exposure to Pirzig (1974) and Nyaniponika (1973). It was from these writings that a dialogue emerged between Buddhist ontology and my art teaching practice.

Further reading of works by Edwards (1989), Franck (1973) and Arnheim (1969) convinced me that an important function of the teaching of art, beyond the practice of mere technical skills, was to enable students to experience new ways of visual engagement with the world. It became clear that a philosophical base upon which to develop an art pedagogy cognisant with Buddhist philosophies might be possible. This then untested approach to art teaching has only recently become an element of general art teaching practice (Gill 2014; Gude 2013; Smith 2014).

Ontological development continues to be influenced by the writings and illustrations of Andre Sollier (1972) who introduced me to the importance of space within both Buddhist philosophy and much of Eastern art-making practices. I am reminded that ‘space is not empty with both painter and spectator seeing in space the infinite continuity of life’ (Sollier 1972, p. 10). A realisation of the potential for creative expression by students through their adoption of an inner (latent) space is emphasised within this thesis. The classroom experience of adopting an attitude of ‘latent space’\(^2\) as a precondition to artistic practice is discussed in chapters five and seven.

\(^2\) The author’s use of the self-penned, context-specific term ‘latent space’ occurs throughout this thesis.
1.2 The Research Question

An understanding that mindful attention and latent space may have on art students was informed through teaching practice and influenced the research question of this thesis which is, ‘How might mindful engagements enable becoming within the visual arts classroom?’ This question will be further discussed in chapter three.

The emphasis in the question asks for a consideration of the influence that mindful sensitivities to practice may have within an art classroom. A poststructuralist theoretical framework is indicated within the research question through the Deleuzian notion of ‘becoming’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2013) and will be discussed in chapter four.

1.3 Metaphor

The metaphoric device of a watercolour painting is employed to enable an engagement with data generated and concepts discussed. This introductory chapter and those that follow begin by presenting a watercolour painting in progressive stages of development through to chapter eight where the final painting is revealed. Each successive stage of the painting builds upon the previous and anticipates the next. This natural progression reflects the chapter structure and design of the thesis. The voice of the artist is heard immediately beneath each stage of the painting and is identified through the use of italic script. The language used to describe the progression of the painting allude to the purpose and intent of the chapter that follows.

Progressive paintings throughout the thesis serve as a metaphor for the Deleuzian notion of ‘pre-personal singularities’ (Williams 2008, p. 100) described as ideas and thoughts that defy any logical order and form ‘chaotic and free-roaming fluxes’ (Colebrook 2002, p. 18). These fluxes contain within them the inherent understanding that metaphoric concepts attempt to create order from a reality that has ‘no order or fixed being’ (Colebrook 2002, p. 18). The adoption of watercolour as the medium used
for the painting acknowledges and works with the unique and unpredictable nature of this medium. A watercolour is never entirely completed as intentioned and this can be a cause of both frustration and empowerment. Webb (1994) states that such a painting presents as ‘a general intention [which] is transformed as liquid colours collide and merge in unpredicted ways. . .I am intrigued by the complex interaction of the planned and the serendipitous’ (Webb 1994, p. 43).

Just as in watercolour painting, this thesis developed in intentioned but unpredictable ways. Colours merged to form new colours, and ways of imagining and reimagining familiar shapes and spaces were seen to parallel ideas expressed within this thesis, merging and interconnecting to form unanticipated insights and layered meanings. The metaphor of the watercolour offers this thesis an amplified capacity to metacognitively engage with its themes and ideas at unexpected levels. The metaphor becomes an agent in the construction of meaning within the thesis where one thing is experienced in terms of the other (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). The language of metaphor finds expression within the hermeneutically based descriptions of student artwork presented in chapter six. These descriptions make particular use of imaginative or poetic phrases and words in an attempt to describe what is essentially an emotive interaction with data. Seeburger (1975) recognises this dual quality of reality where the visibly apparent meaning of something is perceived at one level but co-exists with other less obvious levels that ask for a more nuanced or intuitive discussion.

When Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert that ‘our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature’ (p. 3), they further suggest that the use of metaphor is an essential skill of human cognition and communication with the capacity to enhance perceptions and thoughts and bring us to a deeper level of understanding (Seeburger 1975). The use of metaphor however is not without risks and its use as a device to reveal conceptual understanding is acknowledged as being potentially unstable. Forceville (2009, p. 26) states:

[that] the stability of a metaphor is dependent on shared and stable understandings of the phenomenon’s characteristic
features and these in turn reveal themselves in the true predcitions that can be used for it.

An over dependence on metaphor as a device to extrapolate meaning also has potential problems. Metaphor can certainly enable hidden layers of meaning to be revealed but its use can also prevent other possibilities and meanings being seen (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). It is also acknowledged that there might be times when the metaphor exhausts itself or fails. At such times this could be problematic but can actually become even more generative and provide even deeper insights.

The placement of original artworks throughout the thesis offer moments of pause and an opportunity to experience the shared stable understanding to which Forceville (2009) alludes. These artworks offer a conduit between the visual expression and the accompanying text. They serve the purpose of creating meaning using the metaphor of a painting and offer an invitation to journey and dream. At times this journey reveals an outlook from which to rest and explore whilst at other times the journey asks that we stop to prepare materials or mix colours that will be later applied to paper. On occasion, it may be best to stop the painting and come back to it later with fresh perspectives and enthusiasm.

The artist (also the author) within this thesis decides on the materials and techniques used to create the painting; the choice of location from which to paint; the subject of the painting; and the techniques used to make the marks on the paper. The technical and aesthetic challenges that arise as a result of this vision need to be resolved and allowed to speak to an audience. The intention is not to convey more than a perceived physical reality but is rather to reveal the way that a scene is experienced at a personal level. Visual phenomena need to be simplified. Busy or conflicting views are subject to intuitive decisions on what to omit and what to emphasise. This process of making decisions regarding simplification, omission and emphasis was also experienced during the development of this thesis and at times operated with a degree of uncertainty. The validity of instinct as a method of inquiry in research is discussed by Senior (2011, p. 60) where an acknowledgement is made of the ‘intuitive instinct within the beholder’
as being valuable and even required in the formation of awareness. Eisner (2002) proposes that work in the arts ‘invites the development of a disposition to tolerate ambiguity, to explore what is uncertain’ (p. 10). This thesis is comfortable with the ambiguities that will arise during its development and expression seeing these occurrences as providing important opportunities to consider other ways of experiencing and interpreting habitual thought.

Figure 1: Author’s Original Artwork 1

The location from which I as the artist, sat and observed the subject, for the purposes of this thesis, was an art classroom. The climatic conditions within which the painting took place were poststructural. The materials used to engage this landscape became the method, and the techniques used to apply paint to paper became the methodology. The continual adjustment of paint and colour saturation is the discussion within the thesis which only concludes when the painting seems finished although I suspect that a thesis, like a painting, is never entirely finished but pauses at a thought-provoking place.
The painting begins with an empty sheet of watercolour paper upon which some preliminary marks are made. It is perhaps a mistake to think of the paper as empty in that it contains the potential for ideas and experiences to be expressed.

Watercolour paper is available in a vast array of weights, finishes and sizes. The combination of these variables has a direct influence on the final work. A smooth surface texture creates a very even looking work where the pigment rests on the paper and is dispersed evenly. Rough paper allows the pigment to settle in the ‘valleys’ of the paper forming pools of concentrated pigment. Rough paper also allows for the possibility of using a dry brush technique that visually amplifies the surface texture of the paper (Wade 2002, p. 13).

The choice of paper affects the way that the final painting will look. It is the support upon which the entire work rests and is the latent space upon which the painting is revealed. The paper may look blank and empty but is already asking the artist to see beyond this emptiness and to imagine the possibilities. At this stage it is not possible to know in exact terms how the final painting will look. It begins with an idea of the subject and perhaps the colour scheme.

The painting that progresses throughout this thesis was completed on location and photographed at various stages of its development. I was conscious of these stages and how they might relate to the thesis structure. The act of painting enabled me to reconsider the thesis structure in terms of its function.

I walked along a section of coastline near my home and looked for a possible location to sit and paint. I did not know what I was looking for except that I wanted to paint an uncomplicated seascape that made a clear statement about my experience of being there. Finding a place to sit and looking at the headland meant a decision had been
made. I had chosen at a conscious or unconscious level to eliminate all other possibilities for this work. My subject was chosen.

Watercolour paintings usually begin with a general pencil outline of where the main areas of colour might be placed. This pencil work is not a realistic drawing of the scene but serves only as a rough guide. It is an opportunity to see what works best in terms of the placement of large masses and of the horizon line. It is important that this pencil sketch remain suggestive only as produce a fully rendered drawing would deny the paint any movement within the work. This fluidity of movement is the very characteristic of the watercolour medium which is sought. The sketch allows for accidents that will occur during the painting process, many of which often become some of the most pleasing elements. This preliminary work allows time to decide on what is the most important visual information to include. It is not possible to draw or paint everything that is seen and it is the artist’s task to decide what to include and what to discard which is often called ‘visioneering’.

Wade (2002, p. 32) describes visioneering:

[as] seeing with the mind’s eye. We play God with what we see before us. Seasons are changed...the time of day...people appear...buildings are added or moved or removed entirely. Visioneering means never being completely satisfied with what is before us. It is the need to give something our interpretation of what is there. It is not enough to paint how something looks. Artists paint how something feels.

The creation of art is usually a personal experience which is on occasion shared by groups of people (Alexander 2012). The phenomena of sharing artwork and art-making experiences in a classroom are explored in this thesis and become an element within the continued dialogue between the realised and the imagined.
1.4 Situating the Thesis within a Broader Context.

This thesis is placed within the current dialogue surrounding understandings of mindfulness, mindful practices and mindful engagements. It is situated on a continuum beginning with ancient spiritual Buddhist considerations of mindfulness to more contemporary usages within both the cognitive sciences as a clinical treatment (Baer 2003; Grossman et al. 2004) and the educational sector as an aid to student wellbeing and performance (Bostic et al. 2015; Gueldner & Feuerborn 2015; Waters et al. 2015). Original spiritual understandings of mindfulness and its recent appropriation by secular organisations and institutions is not without its complications and this is due to a contextual shift in the way that mindfulness is currently understood and practiced within such settings (Monteiro, Musten & Compson 2015).

Meanings of ‘mindfulness’ are evolving and used in contexts unimaginable from those originally intended and this is cause for confusion (Brazier 2013a; Brazier 2013b). Mindfulness was originally understood to be focused on an awareness of body, thoughts and feelings and is an essential Buddhist doctrine (Bodhi 2006). It is considered to be the fundamental foundation upon which many other Buddhist doctrines are supported. (Analayo 2006; Bodhi 2006; de Silva 1979; Olendzki 2009). Until publications emerging in the mid twentieth century by Suzuki (1959), Nanamoli (1964), and later Hanh (1999) and Kabat-Zinn (2005b), mindfulness was generally unheard of in the West and its place within the Buddhist tenet of the Noble Eightfold Path and its promise of a life free from earthly sufferings was still a mystery (Harrington & Dunne 2015).

Secular interpretations of mindfulness that emerged were only possible to the extent of their shared agreement on written definitions but are limited in scope when they ignore the more profound nuances of understanding revealed through personal meditative practice and engagement (Grossman & Van Dam 2011). These nuances speak in part to an acknowledgement of the importance of the relationship between mindfulness as an ethical framework involving the cultivation of wisdom to its acknowledged use as a method of self-reflection and contemplation (Harrington & Dunne 2015). It is in this sense that mindfulness resists being expressed or understood
in formal academic settings which are inherently relational and interpretive. A
dependence on the written or spoken word to adequately encode the lived experience
of mindful practice denies the authority and insight made possible through meditative
experience and misses the essentialness and benefits of the actualised experience

Beneficial qualities that the adoption of mindful practice provides were not lost on
those involved in the treatment of cognitive dysfunctions of varied types and degree.
Psychologists and cognitive therapists first adopted mindfulness as a clinical
intervention over forty years ago and its influence and implementation within this field
has grown exponentially since that time (Brazier 2013b). The context described here
by Brazier (2013b) is that of healing. It is initiated in an environment of service for those
in need of a cure or at the very least in need of an aid to suffering in much the same
way as one might administer a drug or perform a surgical procedure. The notion of
healing is of course a worthwhile pursuit and the beneficial effects of mindfully based
procedures in clinical contexts is well documented and entirely justified where
diagnosed needs exist (Baer 2003; Brown & Ryan 2003; Kabat-Zinn 2005b; Keng,
Smoski & Robins 2011). This curative approach to mindful intervention is discussed
further in the literature review (chapter two) which follows so as to create a point of
difference with the way that the enablement of a mindful approach within the classroom
is used with this thesis.

This model of treatment which sees patients in need, has now moved beyond the
cognitive sciences into mainstream educational contexts and its continued focus within
these settings on alleviating suffering or normalising student behaviours is questioned
(Brazier 2013a; Brazier 2013b). Many students are seen as having actual or potential
behavioural and cognitive problems (Broderick 2013; Coholic 2010; Pistorello 2013)
and mindful engagements are applied here too at times, just as they were in clinical
settings, as a form of treatment (de Silva 1979; Epstein 1995). This is not to say that a
mindful-based curative engagement within an educational setting may not be entirely
appropriate. The incidence of stress-related conditions developing in students and
teachers is of real concern and increasing (Ferguson, Frost & Hall 2012; Flook et al.
2013; Forman 2013; Prilleltensky, Neff & Bessell 2016). In these instances a therapeutic
approach to mindful engagement has proven to be of benefit (Black, Milam, & Sussman 2008; Greenburg & Harris 2011; Schrami et al. 2011) but it was never the original intention of mindfulness practice to be used for this purpose and is far removed from its original intentions (Brazier 2013b).

Contemporary understandings of mindfulness as something to be applied as a curative intervention to alleviate physical or cognitive imbalances is not found in Buddhist teachings (Anderson, Liu & Kryscio 2008; Bishop 2002; Carmody & Baer 2008; Chiesa, Calati & Serretti 2011; Grossman et al. 2004; Hayes et al. 2006). The place of mindfulness within the Noble Eightfold Path is seen within the context of developing an awareness of thought and an acceptance of our given situation from one moment to the next. It emphasises concentrated awareness as the way to experience life with an intimacy and an immediateness not possible through mindless habitual thought. There is no particular interest here as to whether an individual is happy or even whether they are suffering as this is not considered to be the primary objective of a mindful experience although emotional shifts toward a more positive outlook generally do occur (Hagen 1997).

The broad context within which this thesis places mindfulness looks back to its origins with a focus on being present. Rather than seeing mindfulness as something to help people in need, it is seen here as something that enhances qualities which are already present. This is an important distinction as it contextualises mindfulness in a different place to that which it occupies within clinical and increasingly educational settings (Greenberg & Harris 2011; McCormick & Barnett 2011). The contextual approach to mindfulness engagements within this thesis is not based on a *deficit model* which identifies a problem to be addressed but rather an *additive model* which acknowledges the limitless potential that can be realised when students reimagine their world.
1.5 Justification

Considerable evidence is growing in support for mindful engagements within schools as a way to reduce the incidence of anxiety in students and to increase their general interaction with the broader curriculum (Burnett 2011; Campbell 2013; Lawlor et al. 2014). The relationship between mindful meditative practice in educative settings and the subsequent increase in student ability to maintain a sustained level of attention is also acknowledged (Valentine & Sweet 1999). The perception of mindfulness as a possible cure for a range of physical and cognitive dysfunctions as previously mentioned has been prominent in the literature within the areas of psychology and education over the past five decades (Kabat-Zinn 1994; Langer, Heffernan & Kiester 1988; Meiklejohn et al. 2012; Rodin & Langer 1977). Part of the reason that mindfulness was employed as a potential curative intervention is due to its appropriation by psychologists working within the cognitive sciences. In their review of general psychology, Gable & Haidt (2005) discuss the history of psychological practice as focusing on the immediate easing of suffering more than offering any contribution to our knowledge of those fundamental core factors which may cause a person to suffer. Brazier (2013) suggests that Western thought seems intent on pursuing the general idea of being happy at the expense of looking for personal insights and a more meaningful life. The default position generally assumed since mindfulness-based theory became known to this wider Western audience, has been the conviction that an illness requires a cure and that in the case of a cognitive dysfunction an effective cure might be the implementation of mindfulness intervention (Ergas 2014).

Brazier (2013b) suggests that this increasing interest in mindfulness is symptomatic of a particular mindset that prevails Western thinking and culture contending that it is predominantly concerned with ‘finding technical solutions to utilitarian problems’ (p. 117). As definitions of mindfulness become less recognisable from their original meanings (Baer 2003; Brazier 2013a; Brazier 2013b; Gethin 2011) the employment by psychologists of self-reporting scales or inventories on patients to quantify and measure the effects of mindful practices become more prominent (Grossman & Van Dam 2011). Brazier (2013) suggests that the mindfulness movement has been accepted
with such unquestioned enthusiasm that we have lost sight of the bigger picture. In our well-meaning desire to find a cure for our present, presumably unsettled or unhappy state, we have stopped looking beyond the immediate problem of, for example, disengaged students and been seduced by the idea of a quick cure. The literature review in chapter two will establish the dominant themes currently being discussed in the area of mindfulness as it pertains to clinical applications and educational learning spaces and provide the context from which the research question evolved.

The research space that is being created for this thesis understands mindfulness as neither a therapeutical application nor one that is purely metaphysical although it has elements of both. The research is exploring the idea that the establishment of a mindful attitude and method of teaching has a place in the visual arts classroom as a way of encouraging and enabling the ability to observe in non-habitual ways. This approach does not presume that students are in need of emotional or behavioural help or that any students are necessarily deficient in any other way. Further to this it does not presume that students are lacking in or in need of spiritual enrichment.

Mindfulness continues to evolve within Buddhist ontology providing a framework for the systematic and reflexive study of lived experience through meditative practice (Alidina 2010). Such practices are inconsistent with the positivist agenda prevailing within Western psychological discourse (Brazier 2013) where unsurprisingly, Buddhists have not found the need to measure or compare levels of awareness or spirituality against imagined standards. Such measurement would actually be considered an anathema to a philosophy which shares with poststructuralism, a distrust of notions of a separated self existing as detached from his or her surroundings (Brazier 2013).

Emphasis in approach to visual art teaching within this thesis is placed upon encouraging students to experience a mindful engagement with their surroundings. Research into the influence that the adoption of a mindful attitude has on students engaged in an exploration and analysis of meditative practices and self-reflective awareness training is warranted as this type of classroom based analysis has been largely overlooked within the literature (Grossman & Van Dam 2011). This thesis will
also consider whether an appreciation of alertness, quietness and directed focus is beneficial within a mindfulness-based classroom environment. It will further investigate whether teaching visual art can enable these qualities to be recognised by students both metacognitively and to be seen in each other.

Hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger 1962) generates the data for this research and is discussed further in chapters five and six. Such a methodology asks for an engagement with the lived experience at a reflective level but most importantly too, from the perspective of the subject (Bryman 2001). It encourages an attitude of ‘seeing ordinary taken-for-granted living as something more layered, more nuanced, more unexpected and as potentially transformative’ (Finlay 2012, p. 33). This engagement is framed within broader poststructuralist understandings of the self which sees the subject as non-individualised mutually interdependent intensities of forces (Braidotti 2006) and contributes to the methodology by enabling a discussion to occur between subject/object dualities (Davies 2010; Franklin 2012; Kinsella 2006; Young-Eisendrath 2008).

This hermenetically phenomenological approach to classroom analysis sees the inclusion of mindful engagements within the visual art classroom as a source of enrichment to those personal qualities inherent in all participants rather than an intervention required to alleviate a perceived deficit or problem. The work of this thesis therefore is to observe and interpret mindful practices within the art classroom.
1.6 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven further chapters. Chapter two reviews the literature in terms of the historical underpinnings associated with mindfulness and draws on original Buddhist understandings. Current usage of the term mindfulness is placed within this historical context and is examined against contemporary usage and assumed meanings as used within educational and clinical settings. The interdependence of mindful engagements and meditative practice is also discussed within the literature. Assumptions that mindful practitioners should have a personal meditative practice is examined and this leads into a review of those relationships cited within the literature between mindful practice and cognition. The review of the literature regarding the use of mindfulness as a way of addressing a range of cognitive disorders is offered and highlights differences between an understanding of mindfulness encouraging a state of acceptance to one that sees it as a curative intervention within the cognitive sciences and educational settings. The literature review builds on the increasing use of mindful engagements within the cognitive sciences and looks at the space that it now occupies in mainstream classrooms. This examination draws on a number of meta-analyses that look particularly at the effect that mindful engagements have on students. Emphasis in addressing these meta-analyses is placed on assumptions that researchers may have on the influence of a mindful approach to working within classroom environments.

Positive psychology programs are increasing in popularity and as such they are discussed and examined with regard to their similarities and differences to mindfulness-based interventions. Distinctions between mindfulness engagements and those associated with the positive psychology movement are important to be acknowledged as they are often taken as being synonymous and mistakenly interpreted as being the same thing within educational settings (Broderick 2005; Carson et al. 2004; Hamilton, Kitzman & Guyotte 2006; Shapiro et al. 2006).

Chapters three and four place the research within an ontological framework. The notion of personal bias is addressed and acknowledged as being an inherent part of any research undertaking. The research question is examined in the light of ontological
and epistemological beliefs which are essentially constructivist. Ontological views expressed in chapter three also draw upon Buddhist notions of ‘no-self’ and ‘nothingness’ as ways of engagement with positivist and interpretivist assumptions relating to methodology and the theoretical framework. The choice of using a poststructuralist perspective to inform the methodology is discussed and is seen to be in keeping with Buddhist philosophical understandings of the place of the self within a universe where all things are impermanent and in a continued state of becoming.

Theoretical writings of Gilles Deleuze are used within this thesis to inform poststructuralist orientations and particular interest is placed on Deleuzian notions of ‘becoming’, ‘rhizoid’ and the rejection of a subjective human perspective. The notion of the self being denied within a Deleuzian theoretical framework and yet being acknowledged through the methodology is addressed within chapter four where it is proposed and argued that the ontological orientations of both poststructuralism and hermeneutic phenomenological methodology can be complementary and capable of informing each other (Davies 2010; Davies 2011; Howarth 2013). This thesis contends that ‘share a common interest in a critical concept of experience. Both warn against a naïve, uncritical understanding of experience. They thus both represent, in their own way, a critical counterweight to empiricist concepts of experience’ (Stoller 2009, p. 729). The use of a phenomenological approach to data generation is seen to enable a different perspective on experience that a poststructuralist approach alone would not. Where poststructuralism places emphasis on discursive conditions of experience, phenomenology looks more to analysing the experience within the realm of actual subjects (Stoller 2009) as is the case in this thesis. Both phenomenology and poststructuralism are seen to offer different but not oppositional positions in that they are ‘both expressions of a critical understanding of experience’ (Stoller 2009, p. 729).

Chapter five describes the theoretical assumptions upon which the research methodology in this thesis is based and justifies the subsequent methods used for data generation. An understanding of the hermeneutic approach to research is expressed.

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3 Nothingness, also referred to as ‘emptiness’ (sunyata) means that things lack an inherent, independent, self-existence. While being nothing in this sense, nothingness is something in the sense that ‘it’ has a conventional existence in dependence upon various other causes and conditions.
in terms of the way that it informs and builds upon ontological beliefs. The relationship between the adoption of a particular methodology and personally held values is seen as one of coexistence where one becomes a reflection of the other. The focus of the research is described as revolving around four students selected from two larger art groups within a secondary school setting. Descriptions of the interactions between group members and documentation of personal observations and first-person experiences of the students form the basis for much of the generated data. This chapter also introduces the notion of ‘latent space’ which came from the research as a metaphor to examine the potential that meditative practice has as a precondition for art-based activity. A focused visual engagement is seen to have a direct influence on the ways by which students approach the art-making process and is further discussed in chapter six.

A descriptive analysis and interpretation of the data generated is undertaken in chapter six. The style of interpretation and language used within this chapter draws heavily on the hermeneutic tradition engaging a multilayered description of thoughts and feelings associated with data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2013, pp. 23-5). The chapter is divided into four sections each representing one of the students who make up the focus of the research. A nomadic interaction allows for freedom of movement by a multilayered interpretive approach within and between the data (Colebrook 2002; Massumi 2013; St. Pierre 2013; St. Pierre 2000). This form of nomadic interaction and expression ‘privileges change and motion over stability’ (Braidotti 2011, p. 29) and is expressed with a language that often applies an emphasis on less obvious elements within data.

Chapter seven discusses key findings from the research. The concept of mindfulness is addressed with acknowledgement of the importance that memory makes to mindful engagement. The ability to recollect and have awareness of the past is found to be a significant factor arising from the research that enables a mindful sensitivity to prosper. This chapter also discusses the difference between the processes of habitual seeing with purposeful seeing and champions the role that latent space has to play in altering the way that visual arts students engage with their work.
Chapter eight provides a conclusion and reflective evaluation. It contends that the intervention of mindfulness-based meditative techniques enables art students to engage with work with a heightened sense of focus and purpose. It discusses the contribution that this thesis makes to visual arts pedagogy by emphasising the influence on each student that the creation of latent space was seen to produce and restates the insights that using a phenomenological methodology brings to the work. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research possibilities and acknowledges limitations of research design.
Chapter 2: Tonality

Figure 2: Author’s Original Artwork 2

My advice to you is to use the largest brushes that you can in your paintings until it is no longer possible to get the strokes you need. Then change to a slightly smaller brush and so on. Brushes that are too small for the job lead to nigglng and stippling strokes, thus bringing about the ruination of a painting (Wade 2002, p. 13).

This stage of the painting asks that the artist establish the general tonal theme for the remainder of the work. Sometimes this is called ‘laying down washes’. These washes become the foundation and reference point for the stages of development that follow. They literally set the scene and establish the feel for the work. Colours are sourced and blended together to make other colours and other ways of interpreting the scene. This blending process is at times very deliberate but at other times intuitive and unpredictable. One colour leads to another that was not anticipated and may not have been thought possible to blend and make work.
Each unmixed colour in the pallet may be regarded as a separate source of information that is freely available. These colours are however rarely used directly from the tube or pan but need to be toned down with water or fused with other colour for their inherent qualities to become apparent. The colour theme finds its expression at this stage through the blending and fusing of colour where one colour comments on another. It is at this moment that the painting begins to have a life.

Masking fluid is used on the sails of the yachts and on the two people walking on the beach. At this stage it is not certain what colour these elements may have but the option of having white sails or a white shirt needs to be maintained. Once the white paper is lost it does not return. The unpainted surface of the paper is the only source of white in the purist traditions of watercolour painting.

Large washes usually begin with the sky as it is often the lightest part of the painting and once done is rarely revisited. The sky in this painting is suggesting an approaching storm and the overall mood is dramatic. Some of the sky colour is used in the water as reflected light and maintains coherence throughout.

Introduction to Literature Review

This chapter presents itself in nine sections and sets about situating the context of previous research and scholarly material pertaining to the concepts of mindfulness and mindfulness engagements on people within a range of social settings. It presents a critical synthesis of empirical literature and justifies how this thesis addresses a gap in the literature. Section 2.1 looks at the way that any form of communication or information transference has limitations and acknowledges that these limitations need to be acknowledged in a review of literature. It also provides an overview of the history of mindful engagements up to the present by way of providing some context for subsequent discussions. The following section (2.2) looks at the literature associated with meditative practices and its relationship with mindful practice. This section also provides an examination within dominant discussions of what a definition for
mindfulness might look like. Sections 2.3–2.6 discuss the use of mindful engagements within clinical settings as a way of addressing cognitive dysfunction and then looks at the assumptions about the role and function of mindfulness engagements within school settings. These sections also synthesise findings across a range of research studies and compares and contrasts different research outcomes and methods. Section 2.7 analyses the literature and research surrounding the implementation of mindful practices in schools through the implementation of classroom-based yoga activities. The effects on school communities of a positive psychology program is considered in section 2.8 and investigated through a number of key school-based research projects. This section is important because mindfulness-based interventions and positive-psychology-based programs are often seen within the broader context of Buddhist-based philosophies as largely synonymous and this assumption is challenged. Section 2.9 provides a summary of the dominant themes identified within the literature as seen through the work of selected theorists and research studies. It identifies a gap within the literature in the omission of any thorough research projects completed on the effect of mindful engagements within a visual arts educational setting. This is the space in the body of existing research within which this thesis is placed.

2.1 Beginnings

The literature review acknowledges that words and language are socially constructed (Burr 2015; Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner 2015) and that their meanings and interpretations are multilayered and changing. In this sense literature is seen as not only referential and relational but also evaluative (Hayes & Wilson 2003). Perceptions and ideas are created within contexts which are, in turn, interpreted or framed by social and cultural conventions with often little understanding as to how or why particular perceptions arise. Communication is inherently an imperfect process based on the flawed assumption that the interpretation or the decoding of a message by the
receiver is the same as that which was intended by the sender or encoder (Barthes 1972; Bateson 1972). The conversation surrounding the function and capacity of human interaction is thus in broad agreement that communication is a mediated activity and that it is metaphorically more rhizoidal than linear or hierarchical in terms of the ways by which information is both expressed and interpreted (Fairclough 2005; Foucault 1972; Keller 2013; Kress 2010).

The point to be made here is that when a word like mindful is used as it is within the title of this thesis, we adopt a ‘certain way of speaking about it’ (Foucault 1972, p. 193) but it still remains contextually based and therefore subject to a diverse range of meanings. One context within which the discussion of mindfulness has become commonplace is within the cognitive sciences. The concept of mindfulness has, to some extent been appropriated by psychotherapists, personal counsellors and others to describe concepts and practice procedures which usually have little to do with its original meaning. This process of appropriation is clearly expressed by Brazier (2013b) who makes the case that mindfulness and Buddhism have been presented in an apologetic way so as to make them more compatible with the values of Western society. The process of apologetics is in essence an appeal to compromise and this may be seen in the ways by which the practice of mindfulness, which was originally intended to describe the act of a spiritually focused self-reflection, is now more often associated with the treatment of a cognitive disorder of some kind. The concept of mindfulness being used as a cure for a perceived social problem sits more comfortably and perhaps is even more acceptable within a generally secular, neoliberalist society which often emphasises measurable outcomes over personal perceptions. The subsequent use of the word within educational settings has for the most part taken its meaning and intentions from the cognitive sciences and is now often associated with a technique or program provided to young people to alleviate behavioural problems in the classroom (Broderick 2013; Coholic 2010; Pistorello 2013). The dominance of the use of the word ‘mindfulness’ in an increasing range of contexts (de Silva 1979; Epstein 1995) seems very narrow when the richness of its ancient meaning is revealed and

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4 Brazier uses the word apologetic here in its theological sense. He describes it as the process of making a doctrine (mindfulness) more available by presenting it in terms that might be already familiar to an audience.
considered (Brazier 2013b). In its original meaning mindfulness was a method of practice by which one might come to a deeper understanding of the world and our place within it rather than a self-help tool or a medical intervention (Hagen 1997). The teachings of Buddha contain sparse information about how to avoid stress yet it is apparent that much of the current writings on mindful practice are predominately focusing on the ways by which stress might be reduced (Anderson, Liu & Kryscio 2008; Bishop 2002; Carmody & Baer 2008; Chiesa, Calati & Serretti 2011; Grossman et al. 2004; Hayes et al. 2006; Kabat-Zinn 2005b). Thus, it becomes apparent that when a spiritually based practice is imported into a predominately secular society, the potential exists for the original spiritual meanings to be lost or distorted (Cushman 1995; Khong 2009).

It is relevant to look at the literature associated with the origins of mindfulness within its ancient spiritual context and then turn to the more recent secular interpretations associated with its use within the cognitive sciences as an aid to stress reduction and other disorders. EBSCO Host was used to search the following databases: Education Research Complete; Google Scholar; ERIC; Psych ARTICLES/BOOKS/EXTRA/INFO/TESTS; Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection; and the Religion and Philosophy Collection. Search terms used included: Mindfulness AND Schools; Mindfulness AND Education; Mindfulness AND Teachers; Buddhism AND Pedagogy; Positive Psychology; and Buddhism AND Mindfulness. Over eight hundred journal articles written from January 2010 to the present were found using combinations of the following keywords: mindfulness; history; cognition; behavioural science; and positive psychology. After an initial overview of the articles’ abstracts, six subgroupings were established in order to provide structure for a more detailed analysis and the subsequent literature review.

A considerable section of the review is devoted to an examination of the place that mindfulness occupies in current education settings and the differences between mindfulness and positive psychology is discussed. Once again EBSCO Host was used to search the following databases: ERIC; Education Research Complete; and SAGE. Over

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twelve hundred journal articles written from January 2010 to the present were found using combinations of the following keywords: mindfulness; pedagogy; education; and positive psychology. Approximately half of the journal articles were found under a keyword combination of ‘mindfulness’ and ‘education’.

The review concludes with an examination of the extent to which current secular discussion on mindfulness may be limited by the de-emphasis of its spiritual beginnings. Part of my work for this study is based on the contention that a ‘middle way’ of experiencing mindfulness, acknowledging elements of both the spiritual and the secular may be informative and constructive to those working within visual arts pedagogy.

2.2 Mindfulness and Meditation: Interdependence, Origins and Definitions

In classical Buddhist scripture mindfulness holds its place as the seventh of the steps in the holy Eightfold Path which in turn are derived from the Four Noble Truths. These Noble Truths provide the philosophical foundation of Buddhism (Bodhi 2006; Conze 1993; Das 1997; Gethin 2001).

The history of mindfulness can be traced back to the reported words of Buddha through two key texts: the Mahasatipatthana and Satipatthana suttas (Nanamoli & Bodhi 2009). These texts were essentially instructions on how to meditate and it was within them that the notion of mindfulness was first expressed. The link between mindfulness and meditation is prominent within this literature to the extent that meditation is thought of as the essential practice required to experience a state of mindfulness (Suzuki 2011). Both mindful and meditative practice are seen today within

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6 The term Middle Way was used in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the first teaching that the Buddha delivered after his awakening. In this sutta the Buddha describes the middle way as a path of moderation, between the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. This, according to him, was the path of wisdom.
spiritual and non-spiritual settings as being interdependent and this view is consistent with the ancient teachings most notably the Anapanasati Sutra (Rosenberg 1998) from the third century A.D.

The use of the word mindfulness historically speaking is relatively recent. Gethin (2011) states that sati⁷, as used within the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, and first translated by Rhys Davids (1881)⁸ as mindfulness, became the generally accepted term from which a large part of our current understanding derives. Sati has also been frequently described as a state of ‘presence of mind’ which allows the practitioner to see internal and external phenomena as they really are. This would mean seeing the physical world as impermanent, without self, and leading to suffering (Nyanaponika 1973; Tsoknyi 1998; Uchiyama 2004). Describing ‘sati’ or ‘smriti’ as mindfulness was immediately popular with other pioneering academics writing about and translating ancient Buddhist texts (Chalmers 1926). These foundational translations were more often interpreted by scholars who were not necessarily personally influenced by Buddhist teachings and their work had a limited circulation or influence beyond academia.

Gethin (2011) suggests that it was not until the work of Nanamoli (1964), a devoted Buddhist practitioner, that the idea of mindfulness began to influence Western consciousness in the areas of meditative practice and psychotherapy. The translation by Nanamoli (1964) of the Visuddhimagga⁹ is over eight hundred pages in length and apart from its stylised syntax, makes considerable use of technical terms and philosophical interpretations throughout. The text is a very challenging read, even to the initiated, and because of this inaccessibility, its general influence on Western thought was minimal (Gethin 2011). Nevertheless references to mindfulness are prominent throughout the work and it has certainly contributed in bringing mindfulness into a contemporary setting. To this extent Gethin’s (2011) assertion of its

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⁷ The Pali language usage.
⁸ Thomas William Rhys Davids (12 May 1843 – 27 December 1922) was a British scholar of the Pāli language and founder of the Pali Text Society. He had personal affinity with Buddhist philosophy and is attributed as saying "Buddhist or not Buddhist, I have examined every one of the great religious systems of the world, and in none of them have I found anything to surpass, in beauty and comprehensiveness, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha. I am content to shape my life according to that path."
⁹ The Visuddhimagga or ‘The Path of Purification’, is the ‘great treatise’ on Buddhist doctrine written by Buddhaghosa approximately in 430 CE in Sri Lanka.
influence is well taken but a case might be made for other works to be considered as being more pivotal in their influence on Western thought.

The emergence and consequent influence of Suzuki (1959) on Western culture coincided with the beginnings of the United States of America’s countercultural revolution in the mid-fifties. Suzuki (1959) is considered a pivotal influence in the introduction of mindful concepts to a diverse audience (Iwamura 2011; Matsunaga 2013; Shields 2011; Storhoff & Whalen-Bridge 2010; Vaitlallie 1994) and his work was followed up by Hahn (1988, 1990, 1999) a generation later. Hahn’s writings made use of uncomplicated plain language and were able to broadly relate the essence of the suttas to Western culture. He is arguably more than any other writer the one who enabled mindfulness and Buddhism more generally to be understood or at least considered within the general discussion in the second half of the twentieth century (Brazier 2013a).

In addition to sati, the ancient Buddhist term for what is now called mindfulness was smruti\(^\text{10}\) meaning ‘to remember’ (Analayo 2006; Batchelor 1997; Conze 1993). This may be referring to the notion of remembering the past in order to maintain an awareness or ‘remembrance’ (Brazier 2013a) of the present. This original meaning with its emphasis on memory is not prominent in the current literature which pertains to a more present-focused notion as emphasised through its use within the cognitive sciences. This de-emphasising of the role that memory plays within mindful practice has tended to centre the conversation on mindfulness around its ability to be aware of the moment with little regard for the past. It is noted that an important connection between the mindful concept of memory and of being present in the moment is offered by Analayo (2006) who suggests that once a mindful attitude is present, an individual’s memory will be enhanced and will tend to add a greater depth of meaning to the present lived experience. With this in mind, Chiesa and Malinowski (2011, p. 405) remind us that ‘sati\(^{11}\) has frequently been described as a state of presence of mind, which allows the practitioner to see internal and external phenomena as they

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\(^{10}\) The Sanskrit language usage.

\(^{11}\) In this context the use of the word sati is synonymous with that of mindfulness.
really are i.e., impermanent, lacking a self and ultimately leading to suffering and to distinguish between projections and misunderstandings of the practitioner’.

Descriptions of mindfulness are inherently difficult to grasp for those without a meditative practice as they are often written with an intuitive or reflective voice in their attempt to describe what is essentially a personal and changing experience. Definitions of mindfulness derived from and for the psychological sciences tend not to suffer from this problem as they draw from terminologies specifically designed to be used within current psychological and medical research settings. More common definitions of mindfulness have been largely derived from those conceived by Kabat-Zinn (1994) and Bishop et al. (2004) who describe mindfulness as paying attention in a purposeful way, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally. Marlatt & Kristeller (1999, p. 64) add to this understanding of mindfulness by seeing it as ‘bringing one’s complete attention to the present experience on a moment-by-moment basis’.

The large number of definitions of mindfulness used within the scientific community was highlighted by Baer (2003, p. 125) and in an attempt to come to some consensus a general definition being ‘the non-judgemental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise’ was offered. The need for a useful and generally acceptable definition, at least for those working within the cognitive sciences, is also recognised by Bishop (2004) who proposed a two-component model suggesting one directed toward the self-regulation of attention on a target and another focusing on an orientation to experience. These models varied only in the degree to which the mind focused on external stimuli and the degree of curiosity one attached to given stimuli. Bishop’s (2004) definition is criticised by Brown & Ryan (2004) because of an apparent inherent contradiction. They make the point that it seems difficult to understand how one can sustain attention on a singular target object while actively inviting and being receptive to other experiences at the same time (Chiesa & Malinowski 2011).

Whilst it is apparent that the ancient spiritually based definitions of mindfulness as described in the suttas with their acknowledgement of memory, are not generally seen within the current literature there are exceptions to this found in the work of Langer
Langer (1989, 1997) offers a three-fold view encompassing the initial creation of categories, followed by a willingness to accept information and lastly an awareness of multiple perspectives. This definition allows for a broader understanding by acknowledging that a past existed and that a memory of it may help, to inform the present. Baer (2003) states when referring to Langer’s (1989, 1997) model that it usually involves the use of external material or stimuli like, for example, printed information that must be memorised and which may also involve problem solving and other cognitive activities. These approaches are not directed toward inner meditative experiences and to this extent they are not in keeping with the ancient origins. Langer (1989, 1997) is clear about this difference in her approach and cautions against making too many comparisons between her type of mindfulness engagement and the more classical. Nevertheless the emphasis placed on elements other than a focus of the present moment is enough to differentiate her methodology. Langer’s (1989) work is also differentiated in approach because she looks more at the effects of mindlessness to explore the function and benefits of its opposite. Langer’s (1989) approach to mindfulness relies on exercises like problem solving to stimulate the mind into more attuned and self-aware modes of operation (McCowen, Reibel & Micozzi 2011).

Brazier (2013a) too acknowledges foundational definitions as having their basis in the notion of memory but a more pragmatic approach is adopted. We are reminded that the notion of mindfulness has been a part of both the spiritual and the psychotherapeutic dialogue for many years and that regardless of how it is defined the ancient spiritual dimension remains important and therapeutic.

Given that mindfulness is considered to be a fundamental tenet of Buddhism (Irwin 2013) it might be surprising that an explanation of this essence is not more prominent (Brazier 2013). The classical literature consistently attests to the belief that meditation forms an inner, subjective environment within which a mindful outlook may manifest. Further to this, it suggests that if a mindful way of living is followed, then this will in itself provide insights and understandings into the fundamental philosophy of Buddhism. Meditation is offered as a personally experienced way to gain meaningful insights into the human situation (Brown & Ryan 2003; Fontana & Slack 1998;
Grossman et al. 2004; Michie 2008; Monk-Turner 2003; Ross 1960) and is defined as
the intentional self-regulation of attention from moment-to-moment (Goleman &
Schwartz 1976). The apparent lack of verifiable cause and effect of this personal quest
may be disconcerting to some as suggested by Barrett (2006), in that it is not possible
and nor is it necessary to provide such empirical evidence. The lack of quantifiable data
as to their effects of mindful practice is also acknowledged by others but is not seen as
a criticism or cause for concern but more an understanding that mindfulness is
something that is phenomenologically experienced and cannot be given, received or
measured as one might a product or service (Hanh 1999; Nyanaponika 1972; Suzuki
2011; Thera 1962). Blackmore’s (2009) study into the relationship between meditation
and mindfulness is a good example of this phenomenological experience and
acknowledges it by clearly placing any insights within the experiential tradition.
Blackmore’s (2009) research consisted of the documentation and analysis of lived
experiences as they related to her growth as a mindful practitioner. The kind of
research conducted by Blackmore (2009) uses a methodology that is entirely
qualitative and is based on the assumption that subjective empiricism is as valid a
method for data generation as is its objective counterpart (Crook 1980). This is not to
say that mindfulness and meditative techniques cannot be measured in specific ways
but only that measurement of phenomenological experiences are counter-intuitive.

As mentioned, mindful insights through the use of meditation are experienced at an
intensely personal level but the effects of a meditative practice are becoming
quantifiable to an extent as our understanding of the way that the brain functions
becomes better known (Ramachandran 2004). A large number of scientifically based
research studies have been conducted over the past twenty years to explore the
effects of meditation on the brain and on consequent behaviour patterns. Some of
these studies have looked at the physiology of the brain and the effect that meditation
can have in terms of increasing the mass of grey matter and cellular material (Britta et
al. 2011; Lazar 2014). Another example of quantitative measurement can be seen in
the work of Austen (2006) who concluded that the capacity to hold a state of non-
verbal awareness was associated with the bilateral slowing of the function of synapses
which provide the points of contact between neurones during meditation sessions as
seen in electroencephalograph (ECG) imaging. As mindful and meditative practices move from spiritual to non-spiritual locations the requirement to be able to conduct these types of measurements on the effects of practices like meditation are more imperative within the scientific positivist field. This focus on measurement and outcomes may also tend to reinforce the distancing of mindfulness from its Buddhist origins in an attempt to affirm its legitimacy within scientific, pedagogical or clinical settings (Ramachandran 2004).

Whilst physiologically-based quantitative studies exploring the association between mindful or meditative practices and brain function continue to develop, studies that specifically examine the cognitive effects of an association between spiritual practices and neuroplasticity are also prevalent (Bingaman 2013; Cahn & Polich 2009; Chiesa & Serretti 2010; Siegel 2009).

### 2.3 Mindfulness and Cognition - an Interactive Relationship

A meta-analysis conducted by Eberth and Sedlmeier (2012) attests to a broad interest within the scientific community concerning cognitive and behavioural functioning. Their analysis examined thirty-nine clinical studies that fulfilled six prescribed selection criteria. One of these criteria was that all studies needed to have a mindfulness-based meditative treatment. The meta-study found that there was a distinct difference in the effect that the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program had on clients when compared with simply the adoption of mindfulness mediation procedures alone. Eberth and Sedlmeier (2012) further reported that even though the MBSR program had meditative components, it did not provide the level of mindful awareness that the more focused mindfulness meditation program produced. One of the more interesting findings from the meta-analysis was that there seemed to be little or no correlation found between the actual amount of time meditating and the effect it had on improving cognitive outcomes. The positive effects of meditation did not differ significantly between those who meditated for a few minutes and those who practised
for longer periods within a given session or who had a well-established meditative regime. These findings were supported in other studies similar to those conducted by Vettese (2009).

A meta-analysis study conducted by Vettese (2009) examined the effect that clinical meditative sessions supported by a home-based practice may have had on cognitive outcomes. The research found that of the twenty-four studies specifically looking at the relationship between the amount of meditative practice and its effect on cognition, only thirteen suggested a partial causal relationship. This goes against the stated expectation of the study that any positive cognitive effect would be greater for those who meditated more often and/or for longer periods of time. Vettese (2009) offers an explanation for this apparent anomaly by suggesting that mindfulness research is still in its early stages of development and that differences in methodologies between studies could account for discrepancies in reliability between them. Perhaps the difficulty is in attempting to devise a reliably quantifiable measurement procedure to validate what is essentially a spiritually based intervention which is experienced at a personal level. It may also be that while there is general agreement regarding the application of sustained attention to the present moment, differences in the definition of mindfulness still exist within the secular discourse (Chiesa & Malinowski 2011). Carmody and Baer (2009) were interested in the possible effect that a reduction in time of the standard MBSR protocol which consisted of thirty-two hours of practice over an eight-week period, might have on outcomes. They examined thirty different studies that were conducted in both clinical and non-clinical settings and concluded that less class time did not significantly reduce the outcomes. Their analysis tended to reinforce the findings of others previously mentioned (Eberth & Sedlmeier 2012; Vettese et al. 2009).

In contrast to findings within the literature (Carmody & Baer 2009; Eberth & Sedlmeier 2012; Vettese et al. 2009) there is strong evidence in support of a positive and direct causal link between the effectiveness of a mindfulness program and the time spent working on it by participants and providers (Carmody & Baer 2008; Valentine & Sweet 1999). These benefits were especially obvious with regards to those who were experienced meditators compared to those who were not (Baer et al. 2006; Baer et al.
2008; Robins et al. 2012). The connection may not always be particularly strong as indicated by Brown and Ryan (2003) in their work with people inexperienced in mindful practice, but it is still apparent and they reported a beneficial effect. If Bishop (2004) was correct in suggesting that the capacity to direct and maintain receptive awareness is in itself an indicator of success in a mindfulness-based program, then such a beneficial effect should not be surprising. The evidence within the literature of a quantifiable relationship between both the amount and quality of mindful practice and of the subsequent positive outcomes is continuing to grow as studies are published (Cullen 2011; Full, Walach & Trautwein 2013; Kang & Whittingham 2010). Some research goes so far as to suggest that a state of mindfulness can only manifest within people who have experience of it through a sustained personal history of meditative practice (Mace 2006).

2.4 Mindfulness as a Curative Intervention

Brazier (2013b) states that Buddhism and mindful practice have been known to be potentially beneficial as an intervention for cognitive disorders from at least the time of James (1912) who first suggested its potential benefits within a series of lectures given on the theme of science and religion. Another, even earlier, proposition of the beneficial potential of mindfulness being used as a therapeutic agent was suggested by Freud (2004). Freud’s ideas seem similar to the current understanding of mindfulness in that he used the term ‘evenly suspended attention’ to describe the process of not fixing one’s attention on any particular thought or object. Epstein (1984) comments on Freud’s concept of non-fixation and offers the idea of ‘impartial attention’ as a way by which it might be better understood. Epstein (1984) may be alluding to the concept of being non-judgemental and accepting of whatever is happening. A number of scholars (Brown & Ryan 2003; Schachtel 1969; Schuster 1979) spoke of the similarity between Freud’s (2004) description of the attentive mind with that of ancient Buddhist understandings and philosophies, some of which have been previously cited (Bodhi 2006; Couze 1993; Das 1997). Speeth (1982) adds to the idea of a Buddhist influence on Freud’s view of impartial attention when we are reminded
that the very idea of a deliberately suspended focus of attention or of an impartial and detached observation of a thought is almost exclusively of Buddhist origin and largely unseen within other religions\textsuperscript{12}.

The literature indicates a vast amount of research being conducted on the effects of mindfulness as an intervention for cognitive disorders in clinical and non-clinical settings (Baer 2003; Brown & Ryan 2003; Kabat-Zinn 2005b). The consequence of such interventions on patients has been found to have at least some beneficial effect in virtually all cases (Keng, Smoski & Robins 2011).

When Baer (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of research studies looking at the potential for mindfulness to help patients with cognitive disorders as a clinical intervention, the emphasis was on the ways by which mindfulness could be used to reduce symptoms of depression, pain and compulsive disorders. The findings of this research indicated that the adoption of attentional control was an effective way to address invasive thoughts and emotions. The point was made that mindfulness training differs from other forms of cognitive treatment as the focus is not so much on self-evaluations or the achievement of goals. It is more about accepting that thoughts are simply thoughts and as such, they are impermanent and non-threatening. It is noted that the concept of impermanence is at the essence of Buddhist spirituality (Harvey 2013).

The findings of a research study are as valid and reliable as the methods they employ and this is dependent on a recognition of the biases inherent within the data-collecting models (Creswell 2007). The measurement of effectiveness of mindfulness programs generally take the form of a self-reporting model or questionnaire which attempts to quantify outcomes (Baer et al. 2008). The use of questionnaires as a way of quantifying a mindfulness program may be an indication of the need for researchers to validate their work within the eyes of the scientific community (Grossman & Van Dam 2011). There are many such measurement programs in use including the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan 2003), Langer’s Mindfulness Scales (LMS)

\textsuperscript{12} Speeth (1982) is discussing Buddhism here as a religion rather than a philosophy. Grouping Buddhism as a religion is a contentious issue in that it does not have a deity of any kind to speak of which would seem the main prerequisite for a religion.
(Langer 2004) and the Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) of Baer et al. (2006). These measurement scales and others are increasingly grouped together under the general heading of Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs). The extent to which a particular measurement program might be used above another depends in part on the personal understanding of mindfulness of those conducting the review. There has been considerable criticism of the use of questionnaires as a mindfulness measuring tool due to a perceived incompatibility between the positivist scientific models of enquiry with that of a more subjective phenomenological approach. According to Grossman & Van Dam (2011) there is no objective standard that can be applied to evaluate the validity of questionnaires used in mindfulness research. They also suggest that self-reporting questionnaires cannot identify personal biases on the part of those being questioned or just as importantly on the part of those conducting the research. The development of a mindful approach to one’s life does not occur quickly. It takes time to become aware of our innate mindful qualities and of their potential to be developed (Kabat-Zinn 2005a). The self-reporting validity of data collection in the form of questionnaires will naturally vary from one individual to another but perhaps be even more profound between those who have a meditative practice and those who do not. Grossman & Van Dam (2011) suggest that those with a meditative practice will identify with the word ‘mindfulness’ quite differently from others in terms of how their lived experience is internalised. Grossman & Van Dam (2011) further suggests that the methodology and conclusions from research studies provided by someone with a personal meditative practice would likely be different from one that is derived from a facilitator working from a prepared script or learning package. The point that Grossman & Van Dam (2011) make is that if the validity of questionnaires as a method for data generation on the effects of a given mindfulness-based program cannot be trusted, then the conclusions and recommendations of those conducting the research must also be questioned.

According to Hart (2013), contemporary understandings of mindfulness and its consequent acceptance as a therapeutic agent within psychological practice have developed predominately from the work of Kabat-Zinn (1994, 2009, 2013) and Langer (1989, 2005) and their respective colleagues. The literature identifies these two as the
authors of differing and distinct understandings within therapeutic mindfulness discourse (Compton & Hoffman 2012). It is now necessary to frame some of the literature using the ideas of Kabat-Zinn and Langer and their associates.

Langer (1989) assessed the outcomes of mindful practice in terms of cognitive functioning and wellbeing and saw it as embodying a heightened state of awareness. Mindfulness was explained by contrasting it to the notion of mindlessness which was defined as living life in an habitual and non-thinking manner (Hart, Ivtzan & Hart 2013). Langer suggested that a mindful attitude was one that was responsive to change and ready to receive new and different stimuli. In some ways this sounds similar to definitions of creativity which focus on the ability to adapt existing operational tools be they cognitive or practical to new and unforeseen situations (Robinson 2001). Mindfulness becomes a choice on the part of the person and it manifests itself as a cognitive state (Langer 1989, 1997). It requires people to be consciously aware of their surroundings and any external stimuli and to then interact with them in a meaningful way. Langer’s view of mindfulness and its association with creativity holds similarities with Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) notion of flow which is seen as that state in which a person is fully engaged in the moment and is often associated with them engaging in creative activity.

Langer (2006) sees mindfulness and creativity as interdependent and her associates suggest that mindful creativity may be initiated through the use of external stimuli which interrupt our habitual cognitive functioning. An external intervention is also reported as having a beneficial effect on patients in terms of their cognitive performance (Langer, Heffernan & Kiester 1988; Rodin & Langer 1977). Her views on mindfulness are considered to be Western in orientation (Weick & Putnam 2006) and this may be due to its use of external stimuli rather than seeking and experiencing mindfulness from within which is considered to be derived from a more Eastern orientation (Austin 2006; Baer 2003; Brown, Ryan & Creswell 2007) as employed by Kabat-Zinn (1994). It might be possible to broaden this notion of Eastern and Western thinking by looking at Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997, p. 93.) concept of introversion and extroversion. It is suggested here that rather than dividing the world into East and West, a division along similar lines may be made with the West itself. The view offered
here is that Western thinking conceived two ways of fulfilling human potential. These were either in the Greek notion of *vita activa* where life was lived through actions in the public arena or through the Christian notion of *vita contemplativa* with its inherent emphasis on prayer, solitude and reflective practice. Csikszentmihalyi offers the view that creative people are often neither one nor the other but a blend of both. If this is true, then Langer’s notion of mindfulness and creativity being interdependent suggests that mindfulness may be more than a solitary introspective practice. The possibility of mindfulness as being and also as a state-of-mind that needs human interaction to fully manifest will be considered later. In this sense, Langer’s (1989, 1997) concept of mindful awareness and its use of and dependence upon external stimulation is fundamentally different to that of Kabat-Zinn’s emphasis on introspection.

Kabat-Zinn (1994) established a set of techniques to assist patients in alleviating symptoms of stress using the intervention of selected mindful practices. These techniques and practices came together under the previously mentioned program that became known as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This program is most closely associated with the Buddhist origins of mindfulness (Chiesa & Malinowski 2011) and is widely used today in a variety of settings (McCown, Reibel & Micozzi 2011). Since its introduction, MBSR has become an important element within three other treatments; those being, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Kostanski & Hassed 2008). The main focus of MBSR and MBCT is the development and practice of formal mindfulness instruction which takes the form of group-based meditation techniques. The use of internalised meditative practice as one of the catalysts to obtain a state of mindfulness is in contrast to Langer’s use of external stimuli. It is stressed here that it is but one of the catalysts as Kabat-Zinn’s approach also allows for the use of external stimuli (Bishop et al. 2004). The implementation of inwardly focused attention in the form of meditation situates Kabat-Zinn’s approach as evolving more from a Buddhist tradition.

Even though the work of Kabat-Zinn (1994) and Langer (1989) present differences in emphasis regarding the use of mindfulness as a therapeutic treatment, they share a
common belief that mindful engagement can have a positive influence on patient wellbeing (Hart, Ivtzan & Hart 2013).

2.5 Mindfulness and Meditative Engagements in Educational Settings

The literature regarding the secular use of mindful practice in pedagogical settings as a positive intervention to address a range of problems in the lives of children has grown significantly over the past few years as more evidence emerges indicating the value of such intervention (Burke 2009). This significant increase is supported by Albrecht (2012) suggesting that a shift in emphasis has occurred within school systems at a global level. He indicates a swing from a largely pragmatic neoliberal mindset with its focus on job creation and competitiveness toward one which is more student centred. Recent literature reinforces this position concerning the role of schools within society and the inherent rights of children (Garrison Institute Report 2005; Tregenza 2008; Yager 2009). It is difficult to understand precisely why this is occurring given that neoliberal forces characterised by globalisation along with heightened competition and individualism are alive and well and perhaps even getting stronger (Davies & Bansel 2007; Hill & Kumar 2012) but the indication is that education systems around the world, including Australia, are seeking government help at an increased level to establish mindfulness-based programs. This is an attempt in part to help alleviate the increased incidence of students and teachers suffering from stress-related disorders (Albrecht, Albrecht & Cohen 2012).

The issue of increased stress-related psychological problems in schools for both students and teachers has seen mindfulness engagements in schools not only becoming more common but also gaining acceptance across a wide range of learning environments (Black, Milam & Sussman 2008; Greenberg & Harris 2011). The literature supports the notion that schools are becoming more stressful and the reasons often given for this rise are to do with unrealistic societal expectations placed on the
education system to fix a range of social problems along with an increase in teacher workload and accountability (McCormick & Barnett 2011; Schrami et al. 2011).

The increase of mindfulness-based interventions in schools may appear surprising given that in comparison to the research on the effects of mindfulness in adults, there have been relatively few studies conducted on its potential and actual effect on children although those conducted point to their value (Burke 2009). Whilst research investigating the benefits of meditation for school-aged children may be still a relatively new field of enquiry (Wisner 2013), this situation is changing as indicated by the growing number of research studies appearing that specifically focus on school-aged children. These recent studies covered a range of interests and employed varied methods. Some have looked at the effects that mindful meditation might have on young people with learning difficulties and anxiety (Beauchemin, Hutchens & Patterson 2008; Beigel et al. 2009) whilst other research focused more on those children that suffered from a range of behavioural disorders as in the study conducted by Singh (2007). The study by Bootzin and Stevens (2005) looked at the effect that sleep deprivation might have on the cognitive functioning of adolescents and the ways by which mindfulness therapy may help restore normal circadian patterns.

Further evidence of the positive effects on the introduction of mindfulness-based programs within schools are indicated in a review of the literature on mindfulness-based interventions in schools with adolescents by Meiklejohn et al. (2012). It was concluded that mindful meditative practices help improve emotional stability, brain functionality and reduce the incidence of behavioural problems.

2.6 A Review of Selected Mindfulness-based Research Studies

A recent study by Wisner (2013) analysed some of the perceptions that high school students had concerning mindfulness meditation. Wisner (2013) used mindfulness meditation as the intervening method within this study because she had a well-established personal meditative practice of twenty years and had also attended a number of training sessions in teaching mindfulness skills. The students in the study were enrolled in a low-income alternative high school. Wilson (2011) defines the word
‘alternative’ as that type of school which offers separate education facilities to students who are at risk of dropping out of the traditional system. This definition is in keeping with the school chosen by Wisner (2013) during her study. The study involved students participating in a half-hour guided meditation twice-a-week for eight weeks. At the conclusion of this, students were asked if they had noticed any changes as a result of meditative practice. The research design employed by Wisner (2013) consisted of generating concept maps from the ideas of participants responding to focus prompts or statements. These concept maps were interpreted through discussion with the participants. Questionnaires were also used to gather information on the extent to which participants used meditative techniques at home. The overwhelming response was a reported reduction in stress levels and the feeling of a generally positive effect on the learning climate within the school. Students also indicated that they thought that the mood of teachers toward them had also noticeably improved. This shift in the whole school culture was as a result of teachers also participating in the study. Some studies go further than this suggesting that the most benefit from any school-based intervention program is gained when teachers are not just occasional participants but when they are permanently embedded as staff members in the school and actively involved in the implementing and conducting process (Huppert 2009; Weare & Nind 2011).

Wisner (2013) suggests that mindfulness-based interventions work best when they are implemented in a holistic way rather than simply targeting a particular class or group of students. The benefits of a universal intervention is exemplified by interventions like the Mindfulness in School Program (MiSP) which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Wisner’s (2013) research was of particular interest because of her comments about the ways by which the socialisation process of youth in Western society takes place. Her study contends that young people in Western society tend to look for external references to indicate their level of success or self-worth. This view is supported by Young-Eisendrath (2008, p. 14) who suggests that children need to look for ‘a new centre’ and become less concerned with extrinsic distractions and motivators. She suggests that a process of honest introspection without the emphasis on ego is the prerequisite for the development of self-confidence and self-compassion. Further to
this, it is interesting to note that Young-Eisendrath (2008, p. 14) thinks an overemphasis on the egocentric self as a separate entity operating within the world with all of its accompanying notions of specialness, are a recipe for unhappiness. Young-Eisendrath (2008, p. 34) states:

[that] In contrast to the Western emphasis on the importance of an individual self, the long tradition of Buddhism offers a path to self-confidence that is based on a skilful engagement with our interdependence. Interdependence is the web of relationships that sustains us moment to moment in support and inspiration.

The inward introspective gaze that both Young-Eisendrath (2008) and Wisner (2013) allude to seems to be a recognition of one of the fundamental themes of Buddhism where we are told that whilst a life of peace may find expression within the temporal world, it always begins within the spiritual. Suzuki (2011) goes further in suggesting that meditation based within a Buddhist tradition can offer people the experience of looking within themselves to find a clarity of thought that might otherwise remain undiscovered.

The introduction of the Mindfulness In Schools Program (MiSP) by Kuyken (2013) provides some contrast both in approach and epistemology to that of Wisner’s (2013). Kuyken’s (2013) implementation design differed in that it was conducted on a much larger scale than Wisner’s (2013) study and used a prepackaged set of nine scripted instructional lessons which make up the program. Its epistemological approach differed in that the facilitators, whilst trained in the MiSP method of instruction, did not necessarily have a personal meditative practice which was so important for Wisner (2013) even though this is a desired prerequisite of the program’s designers. MiSP is designed to fit into a school’s existing curriculum and ultimately become part of the school’s normal operation. The success of such ongoing sustained integration would seem to depend on the continued interest and goodwill of teachers working within the

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13 Richard Burnett and Chris Cullen are co-founders of the Mindfulness in Schools Program (MiSP) which is based at The Park House Friars, Matfield, Kent, United Kingdom.
school. With such a potentially large teacher base the likelihood of non-meditative facilitators being involved seems probable. This might not appear to be of particular importance assuming that the facilitators are trained and have an understanding of the basics but criticism could possibly be directed toward the MiSP program due to a perceived lack of authenticity. In contrast to this, a number of studies support the belief that the teacher of any mindfulness-based intervention should also be practitioners themselves in the sense that they have a personal meditative routine. They assert that such a routine would provide further insights into the essential nature of mindfulness and that these insights would likely be of benefit to students (Hoy 2003; MacDonald & Shirley 2009; Ritchhart & Perkins 2000).

The scale of the Kuyken (2013) study covered 522 young people aged between 12 and 16 over twelve secondary schools. Six of these schools undertook the MiSP course with the other six schools acting as a control group. The integrity of the program was intended to be maintained through the implementation of the nine weekly mindfulness course components by specially trained teachers. This course is clearly prescribed and includes support material to be used in the classrooms. The study did not seek out identified subgroups of students or students with any particular behavioural or other cognitive problems and it did not target non-mainstream or alternative schools as was the case in Wisner’s (2013) study. The underlying assumption was that a universal interventionist approach would be of benefit to all participants regardless of their personal circumstance. This is an important distinction within this study, in that its premise does not assume that students are in need of any particular curative help. The reported success of Kuyken’s (2013) work was indicated through the use of three scale-based questionnaires14 and concluded that the MiSP program reduces low-grade depressive symptoms and introduced children to skills that could be used every day to promote their personal wellbeing and mental health.

14 1. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) 2. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) 3. The Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Scale (CES-D).
2.7 Mindfulness and Yogic Meditative Engagements in Schools

The literature examining the use of yogic practices as a mindful engagement in schools is becoming more prevalent and suggests that measurable benefits to the mental health and perception of wellness in young people may be indicated (Birdee et al. 2009; Galantino, Galbavy & Quinn 2008). This increase in recent research papers is due to the belief that the onset of mental disorders in adults begins in childhood and that early intervention at this developmental stage in the form of mind-body based programs such as yoga and meditation is necessary (Kessler & Wang 2008).

A recent study by Khalsa (2012) evaluated the potential mental health benefits of yoga in a secondary school setting. Students were randomly selected and divided into either their regular physical educational class or the yoga class. The study ran with two or three weekly yoga sessions for an eleven-week period. The evaluative method used a self-reporting system which considered the student’s own perceived stress levels and other variables. Comparisons were made between the data collected before the program commenced and at its completion. The preliminary results suggested that the implementation of a yoga program had positive effects on those participating students compared to the control group. The outcome of this study was consistent with other studies which also seemed to show a positive correlation between mental health benefits and yoga practices (Birdee et al. 2009; Galantino, Galbavy & Quinn 2008).

There may be a potential problem in the weight of conclusions in studies like those conducted by Khalsa (2012) concerning the use of self-reporting questionnaires to indicate any differences in cognitive processing resulting from the yogic intervention. The details of the way that the student self-evaluation was conducted is not given in the paper except that ‘staff administered a battery of self-report questionnaires to all classes’ (Khalsa et al. 2012, p. 83). It might be asking a lot from young people to be sufficiently mature and metacognitively capable of interpreting their personal levels of stress or anxiety. It would also seem difficult to totally trust the students’ self-evaluation of the program at its conclusion when so many other factors may have had an influence on their mental state over the intervening eleven weeks. The validity of self-evaluations increases when the use of self-reflective comments are incorporated
into other strategies. Such strategies as the encouragement of different modalities like
drawing or the verbal exchange of thoughts and feelings are identified by Turpin &
Fitzgerald (2006) as important. The importance of creating a time for the reflection and
the use of leading questions to encourage descriptive responses is also identified as
valid in many cases. Of particular interest in the Khalsa et al. (2012) study was its all
too brief mention of the secondary analysis which consisted of general observations,
anecdotes and spontaneous student comments. This data indicated a rich source of
information regarding the effect that the yoga intervention may have had on the
students. It consisted of comments made by the teachers and some quotations made
during the yoga classes by students. The yoga instructors also commented that there
were visible improvements in their postures and in their practice generally.

The research conducted by Noggle (2012) took a similar design approach to that of
Khalsa’s (2012) and was conducted only a few months later with many of the same
researchers. The essential differences between these two studies was that whilst the
Khalsa (2012) study focused on clinically relevant measures of psychological health,
the more recent Noggle (2012) study looked at the ‘psychological constructs relevant
to normative adolescent populations’ (p. 194). The other main difference between the
two studies was in the style of yoga implemented. The Khalsa (2012) study used the
Yoga Ed program which is a highly prescribed school based series of workbooks and
instructions that can be used by teachers with little or no personal background in
practice. It is designed to get yoga in to as many schools as possible. The Yoga Ed
program can be conducted in any learning space and does not require specialised
equipment. The Noggle (2012) study used Kripalu yoga as its interventionist vehicle.
Kripalu yoga has an emphasis on self-enquiry and incorporates an approach typified by
deep breathing, postures and meditative techniques. Noggle (2012) suggests that
there is a case for a standard yoga practice to be used by researchers for their work in
schools and that Kripalu yoga should be that standard but he did not discuss the
reasons for its particular selection. It would seem to be useful to use the same yogic

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15 Yoga Ed first established its curriculum package in the United States in 1999. It is now an
international organisation that accredits teachers through its training courses to implement a yoga
syllabus within schools across all year levels.

16 Kripalu Yoga is a form of Hatha Yoga, with its emphasis on postures or asanas, using inner focus,
meditation, standard yoga poses, breath work, and relaxation.
practice across a range of studies as it might tend to eliminate at least one potential variable between their stated conclusions. A standardised yogic intervention practice may also make it possible for comparisons to be made between studies. The potential benefits, however, of such a standardised approach to the implementation of a given interventionist method within schools is yet to be investigated.

The study conducted by Manjunath & Telles (2003) is of particular interest because unlike many others, it did not approach the research from the perspective of using yoga techniques as the possible cure for some perceived problem. Nor did it assume or attempt to identify a cognitive deficiency within the research subjects, which in this particular study were three groups of children aged between 11 and 16. The study looked at three separate groups of children. The groups took part in one of three different camps which were conducted over a ten-day period of eight hours per day at the same site but at different times during the summer holiday vacation. The first group undertook unspecified activities during their camp and acted as the control group. The second group undertook a fine arts-based camp and the third were involved in a yoga practice-based camp.

The study observed the possible effects that the yoga-based camp might have on students in terms of enhancing their spatial memory. A series of tests were given to all three groups at the commencement and conclusion of their respective camps. These tests included asking students to remember answers to mathematical problems studied on a screen or describing simple line drawings or geometric shapes. The study found that the groups that engaged in the intensive yoga-based camp demonstrated a greater capacity for spatial memory. The tests that were used to come to this finding seemed to require students to be able to articulate descriptions of what they saw being studied on to a screen. This method could be potentially problematic as it may be seen to be placing too much emphasis on a student’s ability for accurate verbal description.

The assumption that a student could not remember a given shape based on their inability to verbalise it accurately could be seen to be as much a test to indicate their powers of narrative description as that of their spatial awareness. The conclusion of the study suggested the increased ability of the yoga-based group for spatial memory
was due to a decrease in their anxiety levels which subsequently improved their performance. The relationship between reduced anxiety levels and the flow-on capability to function at a higher level of cognitive ability is consistent with the literature (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Plantania-Solazzo et al. 1992) and this is not being questioned. The difficulty with this study however, would seem to be in the methods used to collect the data from which the conclusions were made. The question of whether an emphasis on linguistic skills is a valid way of substantiating a person’s memory levels, spatial or otherwise, is open to debate. Another way to measure the outcomes might have been to ask the young people in the three groups to reproduce their recollection of the studied shapes as drawings.

The potential problems in interpreting findings relating to the effectiveness of mindful engagements based on problematic research designs is discussed by Greenberg & Harris (2011) who acknowledge that mindful practices have the potential to alleviate certain cognitive disorders in children and that such interventions have been shown to be effective. They also caution the researcher to look very carefully at the weight of evidence.

Greenberg & Harris (2011) point out that the main forms of mindful engagements involving children in secular settings have taken place within the context of a range of contemplative practices. These practices are described as those which attempt to focus attention on a particular state of mind or physical object. This focusing of attention may occur, for example, through the implementation of a sitting meditative practice (Black, Milam & Sussman 2008) or through other techniques including certain types of yoga practice like Astanga Vinyasa (Carroll et al. 2003; Klatt et al. 2013).

Greenberg & Harris (2011) further suggest that regardless of the type of mindful engagement that is used there has not been enough research conducted on the effects of any intervention on children at different stages of development. This concern is supported by Roeser & Peck (2009) who assert that any form of mindful engagement requires a degree of adaptation relating to the age of the child. Some forms of sitting meditation practices may be developmentally inappropriate for young children and adolescents. A child’s limited attention span or a lower capacity to engage in metacognitive thought processes may be a factor (Greenberg & Harris 2011).
Adaptations might include the framing of meditative practices within the context of an art or dance activity where the interaction between members of the group is not only likely but often encouraged. Any interaction between members of the group along with the potential influence of the presence of the teacher or facilitator is also a factor to be considered.

Even allowing for some of the inconsistencies in methods identified by Greenberg & Harris (2011), it is suggested here that yogic-related meditative techniques have clearly been shown to have substantial benefits for young people in terms of their cognitive stability and their understanding of mindfulness. It is noted that the implementation of such programs in schools is not entirely new in that varied forms of stress management or reflective spiritually-based regimes have a long history of being employed in schools over many years. These programs include religious prayer, music therapy and the integration of muscle relaxation and breathing exercises in such subject areas as drama, dance, art and physical education (Hampel, Meier & Kummel 2008).

2.8 Positive Psychology

Positive psychology programs have been adopted by an increasing number of schools at both local\textsuperscript{17} and national\textsuperscript{18} levels. Sections of the literature use the terms ‘positive psychology’ and ‘mindfulness’ as being synonymous with one another (Broderick 2005; Carson et al. 2004; Hamilton, Kitzman & Guyotte 2006; Shapiro et al. 2006) and therefore some analysis is needed to indicate their similarities and differences in approach and desired outcomes.

The term Positive Psychology as both a theory and a movement began in 1997 with the work of Martin Seligman (2007) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000) who are

\textsuperscript{17} An example being Geelong Grammar School (GGS) Victoria, Australia in 2008. GGS is a co-educational school of 1,500 students over four campuses.

\textsuperscript{18} In 2005, the UK established a pilot program in primary schools called Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). In 2007, the UK education secretary announced that ‘happiness lessons’ were to be introduced in all state secondary schools. (Kristjansson 2012).
described by Kristjansson (2012, p. 86) as ‘two psychologists discontented with the self-limiting grooves in which mainstream psychology had become stuck’. Kristjansson (2012) here is referring to a paper by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) where it was suggested by them that modern psychology had lost its way due to an overemphasis on treating mental conditions rather than attempting treatments to improve personal wellbeing.

This perceived bias on the part of traditional clinical psychology toward the more negative manifestations of human existence was further commented upon by King (2003) who went so far as to suggest that there was an underlying dislike for humanity inherent within prevailing psychological understandings. The view of people being ‘flawed and fragile, casualties of cruel environments or bad genetics’ (Peterson 2006, p. 5) was pervasive and even implicitly suggested some condescension toward those in need.

The role of positive psychology was seen to be that of redressing this imbalance or bias and promoting an ‘enhancement agenda’ (Kristjansson 2012, p. 86) where the emphasis would be placed on human happiness and the ways by which its incidence might be increased. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) asserted the case for a change in the approach of psychologists when they suggested that the disease model had not helped in the prevention of mental illness. They advocated a system focused on building strengths more appropriate in promoting cognitive wellbeing.

Kristjansson (2012) is uncertain as to the reason for the rapid rise of positive psychology and suggests that some claims of it being able to produce happy people remain largely unsubstantiated. The concept of happiness itself is problematic. Scoffham and Barnes (2011) make an attempt at defining happiness by looking through particular historical lenses. They refer to Aristotle’s notion of the fulfilled life and Hume’s emphasis on moral goodness. Scoffham and Barnes (2011) also look toward Gandhi’s and Tolstoy’s humanist approach, maintaining as it does that an individual’s happiness should never be at the expense of that of another. The definition that Scoffham and Barnes (2012) themselves use contains the idea of ‘a state of flourishing
involving an awareness of personal fulfilment within a moral environment that is consistent with that of others in society’ (p. 537).

Regardless of the actual definition of happiness used, Kristjansson (2012) claims that positive psychology has not been discussed or tested within the journals to any great extent and that consequently it should only make assertions rather than suggest evidence of its effectiveness on a given person’s disposition. Kristjansson (2012) also claims that while the current crop of positive psychologists acknowledge the work done by preceding humanists, they are critical of their lack of objective data or hard evidence of results. It is noted that the criticisms Kristjansson (2012) has of many positive psychologists regarding their lack of scientific rigour are the same as they themselves have of the generation of those who came before them.

Kristjansson (2012) is cautious throughout his article regarding its contribution to new knowledge. He suggests that it may simply be a relabelling of pre-existing psychological practices with their own proven history of effectiveness. This idea that positive psychology is derivative to some extent is also indicated by Wilkinson and Chilton (2013) where they remind us of the previous work of others (Horney 1951/1999; Maslow 1970; Rogers 1951) who emphasised a client-centred approach and a belief that people are inherently good and valuable.

Wilkinson and Chilton (2013, p. 4) go on to suggest however that whilst similar humanistic approaches in positive psychology may be apparent in the method of earlier theorists, the important difference is in the emphasis they claim that is now being placed by positive psychologists on ‘scientific investigation and institutional support’. If this distinctive emphasis on rigorous empirical proof is true, then it could justifiably be expected to be seen in the literature.

Positive psychologists assert that the pursuit of happiness is the most basic reason for any given human endeavour (Seligman 2006; 2009). Peterson (2006) refers to this as the ‘ungrounded grounder’ meaning that there is no reason deeper than a desire to be happy as an explanation for human motivation or action (p. 75). According to Seligman (2006 & 2007), happiness can be achieved if a person uses and develops his or her character traits or ‘signature strengths’ in meaningful activity. It might also be achieved
if one has an optimistic attitude toward oneself and to events generally. This is what is seen in someone described as having an extroverted personality. Regardless of the interpreted benefits that positive psychology may have on people, it is still a contentious issue within much of the literature when it comes to the question of a causal relationship or proof of such benefit.

Miller (2008) argues that any actual proof for positive psychology having an impact on a person’s level of happiness is unfounded. Further to this, it is suggested that assertions to the contrary are not supported. Miller (2008) suggests that the discussion of those supporting positive psychology is circular in its reasoning and becomes self-fulfilling. The impression that one gets from his assessment is that positive psychology is lacking depth in its scope and seeks only a narrow range of superficial indicators to satisfy itself of success. It might be suggested that Miller (2008) sees the expression of a happy life as being more complex than the obvious indicators and that the positive psychology movement lacks the imagination or maturity to understand that genuine happiness need not necessarily be externally expressed to be present. Criticisms of the concept of happiness as being a measure of our success as humans is expressed throughout the literature (Schoch 2007; Smith 2008; Suissa 2008). These criticisms focus on questioning the overemphasising of a particular type of person as being a desirable product or outcome of positive psychology. This person is often characterised as being extraverted, goal-driven and status seeking (Kristjansson 2012, p. 88). Whilst the reservations expressed by Kristjansson (2012) and others (Schoch 2007; Smith 2008) are well documented, there is an opposing view which supports positive psychology and sees it as a valid and necessary intervention which is complimentary to the aims of mindfulness practice.

Seligman (2009), in his belief that any type of wellbeing program should be evidence-based, conducted a research analysis of two different programs in schools using two different protocols. The first was the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) and the second involved the implementation of the Positive Psychology Program (PPP) curriculum. In this analysis Seligman (2009) claimed that the aim of the PRP curriculum was to prove the mechanisms for students to be able to absorb normal daily stressors typical of those experienced by adolescents. The PRP is well researched and the results of the
study seem to be encouraging. In their meta-analysis of the effects of the PRP, Brunwasser & Gillham (2008) found that symptoms of depression decreased in fifteen of the seventeen studies conducted. It was also seen to have a similar positive effect on feelings of hopelessness and indicated a possible reduction in behavioural problems.

The PPP was the first empirical study of such a curriculum for adolescents in America (Seligman et al. 2009). It was designed to encourage students to discover and use their signature character strengths. The findings of this intervention were that students expressed an increase in satisfaction and engagement in school. Seligman (2009) suggests that both of these studies indicated the benefits of a positive psychology intervention in schools. It is noted that the PRP intervention was focused on the alleviation of stress or anxiety within the student population which seemed to be at odds with their philosophy of adding value to an already positive aspect of someone’s life. Having completed targeted year-level-based studies, a whole school intervention was instigated at Geelong Grammar School in 2008. The initial findings from the intervention have been encouraging but no conclusive findings have been reported from the data as yet (Seligman et al. 2009).

Whilst there are many similarities between positive psychology and mindful engagements there are also important differences. It is certainly true that both disciplines emphasise the importance of a happy or content life and this is the primary function of positive psychology. It is not however the primary function of mindful engagements. A by-product of mindful engagement is typically a more balanced and content outlook on life but its primary function is simply to be aware of that which is. Whether that is a state of happiness being experienced or one of extreme unhappiness is largely irrelevant in terms of Buddhist ontology (Hagen 1997). The emphasis of mindful practice is to be acutely aware of whatever circumstances are occurring in the present moment whatever they may be.
2.9 Concluding Remarks

This review of literature indicates that there is a prevailing interest in seeing mindful engagements as a curative intervention for a range of social and cognitive dysfunctions. The literature also suggests that within this environment the ancient Buddhist principles of mindfulness with its emphasis on being present, being aware and maintaining memory have been lost and replaced by a desire to treat symptoms of a range of disorders and imbalances rather than the causes.

The work of Langer (1989) and Kabat-Zinn (1994) are informative of these prevailing understandings of the use and function of mindfulness as a curative intervention in clinical and educational settings. Both share a distancing from the original Buddhist understandings to varying degrees but also indicate their own differences in the ways by which mindful practices and understandings should be considered. Where Langer (1989) generally looks outward and beyond the self in search of inspiration for mindful engagements to manifest, Kabat-Zinn’s (1994) has a more inwardly focused contemplative approach. Langer (1989) emphasises the importance of external stimuli to provide the required altered state of awareness essential for introspection and focus of the task at hand. As a cognitive scientist firmly placed within the Western scientific tradition she does not associate her use of mindful practice as being essentially connected to any ancient philosophy or religion. Langer’s (1989) work is concerned with the enhancement of an individual’s development regardless of the starting point and does not approach her work from a purely curative perspective. Her work warns of the dangers associated with assuming habits of mindlessness and often provides examples of mindlessness as a way of explaining its desired opposite.

A strong case is made within Langer’s (1989) work for seeing mindfulness as congruent to creativity stressing that the ability to transcend context is the essence of both. I am interested in the connection Langer (1989) makes between mindfulness and the creative process and looking at the potential of introducing external stimuli to instigate or enhance the mindful experience. The use of external stimuli associated with rituals in social settings within religions and schools has a long history and the cognitive
effects of these rituals on people at both a subconscious and conscious level is well documented. (Deal & Peterson 1999; Fiese & Tomcho 2001; Henry 1992; Montoya 1998; Stark 2001). Further discussion of the implementation and impact of external stimuli for those art students involved as participants within the research for this thesis will be discussed in chapter five.

Kabat-Zinn (1994) engages mindfulness as a psychologist with a results-driven quantifiable approach but still expounds a contemplative attitude based on personal meditative practice with less reliance on external factors than that championed by Langer (1989). This contemplative approach can trace its history, development and beliefs back to ancient Buddhist traditions. The method used in measuring the effects of these ancient mindfulness-based intervention techniques is primarily that of using self-reporting questionnaires. Such methods of data collection using Kabat-Zinn’s materials and procedures are a key component of measuring the success of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program which he established (Kabat-Zinn 1994; Kabat-Zinn 2005b). The questionnaire method of data collection is currently attracting some criticism by Grossman & Van Dam (2011) who make a case in favour of using only genuine mindfulness practitioners in the implementation and assessment of any interventions. Grossman & Van Dam (2011) also emphasise the importance of facilitators who ‘are able to embody this experience in their teaching’ (p. 225). Kabat-Zinn also acknowledges this need for authenticity within those implementing the questionnaires to an extent but as more Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) are developed and implemented, the number of experienced facilitators available to administer the MBSR program naturally diminishes thus requiring more formulated and prescriptive teacher-proof workshop programs. The research associated with this thesis will consider those broad understandings of mindfulness offered by Langer (1989) and Kabat-Zinn (1994, 2005b) along with others and offers its own perspective when considering potential benefits.

Mindfulness is considered within this thesis in a different light from the entirely therapeutic or contemplative approach of others and suggests a way of engagement based on the notion that to adopt a mindful attitude is to engage in a fully human life.
This understanding of the potential of mindful engagement to be engaged in a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997) will be looked at in chapter six within a school setting. The effects of mindful engagements on students working within visual arts classrooms is not apparent in the literature and is identified as an area of research requiring attention (Grossman & Van Dam 2011). Pedagogical engagement with mindfulness offers new understandings and insights into ways by which the lived art classroom experience may be enhanced.

The next chapter will consider how ontological and epistemological understandings informed the research question. In addition to this, a discussion of the research question is offered which acknowledges the influence of Deleuzian theory in its formation.
Chapter 3: Establishing Principle Shapes and Tones

Figure 3: Author’s Original Artwork 3

This stage of the painting builds on the laying down of tonal washes which occurred at the beginning of the last chapter. Some more detail is provided here in the form of the large land mass forming the headland and the water. Every painting asks questions of the artist and the process of painting is one of answering those questions. This stage of the painting asked me to consider the depth of hue of the headlands compared to that of the clouds. A balance also needed to be maintained in terms of the value of these larger masses. I became conscious of the feeling of the wind on my skin and the smell of the water as I sat and watched. I considered how these personal feelings and thoughts might translate into the work. I began to wonder how much of the painting was what I saw and how much of it was an expression of self. Is every painting and every thesis to some extent a self-portrait?
Introduction to Research Design

This chapter describes and examines the research design that underpins the thesis and informs the research question. It is divided into three sections and is followed by concluding remarks.

Section 3.1 analyses the research question and in particularly looks at the possible subtexts that might be implied through its wording. This section also discusses the hermeneutic approach to analysis to which the research question alludes. The concluding comments suggest that the manner in which the research question is expressed enables a poststructuralist narrative emphasising a Deleuzian model of inquiry and discovery. Ontological assumptions and beliefs are expressed and examined in section 3.2, as are the inherent influences that such beliefs had on the writing of this thesis, framed as it is within a qualitative research paradigm. It is also proposed that the historical disconnection between positivist and constructivist ideologies is unhelpful in terms of driving the discussion forward and that an integration of these two viewpoints is not a compromise; positivist and interpretivist ontologies are integrated and subsumed within the larger Buddhist notion of nothingness. In closing this chapter, section 3.3 is concerned with the way that knowledge is generated; epistemological assumptions related to ontological beliefs are questioned and examined, and in keeping with the previously expressed constructivist view, this section concludes with a statement about the epistemological paradigm within which this thesis is placed.

This chapter discusses the research design as informed and driven by theoretical perspectives that form the foundation of the ontological and epistemological understandings assumed within the research question. In other words, the process of selecting a theoretical approach for the research stemmed from consciously and unconsciously held assumptions about the nature of existence and the ways by which knowledge is generated (Flood.R 1990).
3.1 The Research Question – Revisited

The procedure of refining the question demanded an examination of pre-existing assumptions concerning ontological and epistemological beliefs which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Research Question:

‘How might mindful engagements enable becoming within the visual arts classroom?’

This question contains within its first two words the expectation of enquiry. An indistinct voice is heard that projects itself in a number of ways and portends to something becoming clearer and more certain as it quietens. This question invites the listener to become still in order to hear this voice even to the point where there is no listener and no voice. An adopted listener stance such as this is approaching a state of unencumbered consciousness referred to in the Buddhist tradition as a state of ‘suchness’\(^{19}\). Buddhism teaches that all sufferings of life originate in misconception, intellectually described as the ignorance of the deep and profound emptiness within all things and events, that is, a state of suchness (Daiei 1965). To see the world from a state of suchness is to be subject to the illumination of pure phenomena. This occurs when looking at an object or event without subjective attachment and simply experiencing phenomena as a series of unfolding happenings. There is no preoccupation with labelling or conceptualising these happenings. Pure cognition is just the experience of the phenomenon itself. To be in this state is to see things as they are, usually without any verbal or conceptual accompaniment. This thesis asserts that the Buddhist concept of suchness is at the heart of phenomenological methodology and is suggested within the writing of Merleau-Ponty (2012):

And yet there is consciousness of something, something appears, there is a phenomenon – such is the true cogito. Consciousness is neither the thematization of self, nor the ignorance of self, it is not hidden from itself, and that is, there is nothing in it that is not in some way announced to it, even though it has no need of knowing

\(^{19}\) Suchness is the adoption of a state of unencumbered consciousness.
it explicitly. In consciousness, appearance is not being, but phenomenon. This new cogito, because it is prior to revealed truth and error, makes them both possible. The lived is, of course, lived by me. I am not unaware of the feelings that I repress and in this sense there is no unconsciousness (p. 310).

The assumption of self as observer within the research question may seem inherently fixed regarding the methodology but the notion of self as interpreted within this thesis needs to be clarified. A sense of self is taken to be the product of the brain realising its own acts of representation; ‘it’s seeing of the world begets an image of a one who sees’ (Harris 2006, p. 212). This phenomenologically-based study adopts an awareness that observation from a position of self only, in contrast to that of being both subject and object, is problematic within a poststructural framework and this is addressed in chapter four.

Deleuze and Guattari (2013) suggest that the idea of a personal subject is nothing more than a ‘habit’ and that we should try ‘to reach the point where one no longer says “I”, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says “I”’ (p. 2). Following on from this, the research question will be used as a way of exploring this idea of interconnectedness to the point of non-distinction between the observers and the observed within the art-making process.

A de-emphasis on the privilege usually afforded to the notion of ego as proffered by Deleuze & Guattari (2013) is echoed within Buddhist philosophical writings as the concept of no-self. The research question asks for a discussion of this concept in the light of it being a potentially empowering and expansive state of mind employable by an artist within a classroom. The de-emphasis of self also finds expression within poststructural insights which stress the decentring of the subject and its propensity toward favouring ‘non-identity or dispersal of identity over any stable self-conception’ (Dilthey 1997, p. 41).
The concept of something *becoming* as introduced within the question suggests an apparent lack of certainty, a vague sense only of a final destination. This is used intentionally; the word ‘becoming’ reflects the poststructuralist theoretical perspective that this study uses to inform the methodology. It places an emphasis on continuously travelling and never arriving. In a Deleuzian sense, becoming indicates that the world is not a stable and fixed place but that it is a state of constant flux and that any notions of stability do not reflect reality but are merely relative and illusionary. 

Heidegger (1962) sees human beings (Dasein) as having an infinite number of ways to be or exist. Daseins have the potential to create possibilities that other beings do not. This ability to be self-volitional (at least to the extent that our genetic makeup and cultural influences allow) indicates that we are continually in a state of becoming (no-self) where concepts of free-will and volitional existence are questioned. Harris (2012, p. 37) states that, ‘You are not in control of your mind because you, as a conscious agent, are only part of your mind, living at the mercy of other parts’. This is a fundamental challenge to notions of the fixed and stable self. Our sense of an immediate present is dependent on an immediate past which orients us toward an ultimately unknowable future.

To ‘enable becoming’ suggests that pedagogies have the capacity to adapt and transform habitual ways of operating within learning spaces, in turn enabling new epistemologies to take precedence and new practices to develop. This is seen as advocating a Darwinian view of pedagogical development where a constant state of adaption and non-random selection is experienced. In the same way that Foucault (1972) was attentive to ‘chance, discontinuity and materiality’ (p. 231) within his historical writings, an approach to pedagogy such as this looks to the ‘seemingly insignificant and random material and discursive irruptions that, over time, may enable differing ways of looking at the world’ (St. Pierre 2013, p. 646). The research question advocates a poststructuralist theoretical pathway for this thesis to explore the extent to which the influence of mindful engagements might precipitate such adaption.

Kruger (1994) proposes that if a world view is only seen through the filters of unyielding structures and binary oppositions then ideas and dreams will not flourish. The art-making process is by its nature an open-ended and unstable activity; it resists notions
of closed systems and clearly stated beginnings and endings. In this, the research question presents a challenge to the notion that knowledge can only be generated and determined through the use of assumed underlying assemblies or structures.

The next section will look at the ontological base from which certain epistemological understandings emerge. The transpiring ontological views are seen to inform the theoretical framework and methodology that drives this thesis.

3.2 Ontological Considerations

The representation of an ontological belief system requires reflection, metacognition, introspection and a mindful approach. This section discusses criticisms of both positivist and interpretivist ontologies and offers a non-dualistic understanding of those belief systems that inform the ontology of this thesis.

Statements concerning any given ontological position often borrow the metaphor of a lens through which the world is viewed and usually make a case for a particular ontological view to be inherently linked to epistemology. Usher (1996, p. 13) asserts that, ‘methods are embedded in commitments to a particular version of the world; an ontology, and ways of knowing that world; an epistemology’. In this, Usher (1996) suggests that epistemological and ontological questions are related to claims about what exists in the world and about how what exists may be known. This interrelationship between ontology and epistemology is echoed by Crotty (1998, p. 10):

[W]ere we to introduce it (ontology) into our framework, it would sit alongside epistemology informing the theoretical perspective, for each theoretical perspective embodies a certain way of what is (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding what it means (epistemology).
This inherent connectedness between ontology and epistemology is generally uncontested to the point where they seem to merge as one. The ratio of the parts, however, are often disproportionately represented where the epistemological position dominates the ontological (Crotty 1998).

Bhaskar (1975) identifies this privileging of epistemology over ontology by what he calls the ‘epistemic fallacy’ (p.118). Accordingly, he sees this fallacy manifest itself when questions about being are transposed into questions about our knowledge of being. This situation is difficult to defend if it is assumed that any epistemological view presupposes something about what the world is like. A world must implicitly exist in a particular way for a theory of knowledge about it to be made possible. There is no escaping having a theory of ontology; it is only a question of whether or not it is consciously acknowledged and studied or whether it is left as an implicit presupposition of one’s epistemology. This thesis acknowledges the distinctions between ontology and epistemology and concurrently recognises their interdependence.

Ontology is concerned with how the world is constructed and asks ‘is there a real world out there that is independent of our knowledge of it?’ (Marsh & Furlong 2002, p. 18). Before an ontological inquiry can take place, two possible outlooks present themselves: first, that our world exists independently of our knowledge; the positivist (quantitative) view; or second, that the world is socially and discursively constructed and hence dependent on a particular time or culture; the constructivist (qualitative) view. Ontological and epistemological differences between these two viewpoints influence the research design and are seen in the assumptions underlying the manner in which the research question is framed.

The division between research ontologies into positivist or constructivist is not without criticism and may be historically traced back to the very beginnings of philosophical discussion and thought (Denzen 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005). The tradition of natural science from which positivism is derived, acknowledges an observable and unmediated world where the careful objective application of the scientific method involving hypothesis, testing, evaluation and prediction prevails. The constructivist
approach to research however, contends that the observation of social phenomena is not an accurate way of conducting research due to the belief that social phenomena do not exist independently of our interpretation and that every interpretation effects what is being observed. Interpretivists claim that it is not possible to make objective statements about the real world as it is socially constructed. Where positivists look to explain social phenomena by focusing on meaning, constructivists are concerned more with gaining an understanding of given situations and phenomena (Kemper 1981; Tuli 2010).

Quantitative methodologies are criticised by those who maintain that objective observation is not possible due to the assertion that we cannot help but use concepts to describe that which is given, making it impossible for the senses to offer an unbiased view (Hollis & Smith 1991). A further criticism of quantitative methodology concerns the use of theory. When a theory is tested, the theory itself affects the outcome of the observation because it shapes the way that observations and interpretations are perceived. Concerns about the degree to which the scientific method, derived as it is from the natural sciences, is even applicable to a social science paradigm become prominent due to the metaphysical differences between these two sciences. Where natural science is focused on the independent world as perceived through the senses, the social sciences focus on social structures that do not exist independently but are an interaction. These interactions always change and as such, so do their structures over time. There is no fixed point of reference from which the observation might take place and so the capacity of a positivist scientific method to draw conclusions from sensory observations is questioned.

Criticisms of qualitative methodologies centre on the problem of validity and subjectivity (Tooley 1998). Harris (1992) makes the case that the constructivist tradition offers unfounded opinions and subjective judgements about the world. He further contends that given the subjective nature of this tradition, it is not possible to take it seriously in that one person’s opinions are as good as another’s. The possible worth of ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz 1994) generated by qualitative research is not disputed but the matter of validity remains. Gavin (1998, p. 172) states that, ‘the issue of generalization is still outstanding’. Problems associated with relativist ontologies are
founded on the belief that they do not serve evidence-based practice well (Biesta 2007; Hammersley 2002) and ‘that there is no clearly defined set of quality criteria available for judging it, so that it is of uncertain quality’ (Hammersley 2007, p. 287).

Constructivist beliefs that phenomena do not exist independently of our interpretation of them are challenged by Beach (1990, p. 217) who suggests that even though individuals and groups may construct interpretations of observed phenomena, these phenomena do not rely on the observer for existence. If these assertions by Beach (1990) are accepted then both positivist and constructivist researchers are embedded or engaged in the research process. They shape their environment and are shaped by phenomena within it. These ontological divisions between positivist and constructivist ontologies are well known, but perhaps less apparent are the differences within constructivist ontology itself.

Ethnomethodology (Turowetz, Hollander & Maynard 2016) is a mode of research which asserts that social phenomena can be interpreted ‘in a manner that does not involve any cultural interpretation or inference on the part of the researcher’ (Hammersley 2007, p. 298) requiring only an elucidated description. A different approach to ethnomethodology is to see the researcher as engaged in the construction of the social world through the writing and observation process rather than solely relying on bracketed descriptions of the social actors. Whilst this latter use of constructivist methodology is seen to risk becoming little more than a literary work of fiction (Ashmore 1989) it is the preferred way of generating knowledge for this thesis (see chapter six) and is in keeping with a hermeneutic approach.

The assumption here that positivist approaches guarantee a quality of outcomes not otherwise possible using interpretively-based approaches but these assumptions too are not without criticism (Bachen 1952). A challenge to the positivist notion of an observable world being separated from the observer comes from science through the field of quantum theory. Capra (1982) discusses Heisenberg’s\(^{20}\) principle that phenomena are transformed in the act of measurement and that the positivist

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\(^{20}\) Werner Karl Heisenberg (5 December 1901 – 1 February 1976) was a German theoretical physicist and one of the key creators of quantum mechanics.
observer is never really independent of the phenomenon under investigation. The positivist relationship between the observer and the observed is further raised by d'Espagnat (1979):

The doctrine that the world is made up of objects whose existence is independent of human consciousness turns out to be in conflict with quantum mechanics and with facts established by experiment.

His experiments into quantum mechanics twenty-five years later, led him to a similar conclusion:

What quantum mechanics tells us, I believe, is surprising to say the least. It tells us that the basic components of objects – the particles, electrons, quarks etc. – cannot be thought of as "self-existent" (d'Espagnat 2006).

D'Espagnat's (2006) research into quantum physics led him to conclude that an ultimate reality exists, which is not embedded in space or time. Hence, to talk in purely positivist or interpretivist tones is futile.

Bachem (1952) casts doubt over positivism’s confidence in a purely observable world when discussing the principle of indeterminacy. Heisenberg’s indeterminacy principle (Capra 1982) holds that events in the real world are in flux and undecided and hence cannot account for variations within a given period, be it physical or social. Cupchik (2001, p. no pagination) states that positivists are ‘well aware of the fact that they are not independent of a world that cannot be fully predicated’.

The possibility of positivist and interpretivist views being able to inform each other is dismissed by Lincoln and Guba (2000) who argue that the two concepts are fundamentally incommensurable. This view is supported by Smith and Heshusius
(1986, p. 4) stating that, ‘the claim of compatibility, let alone one of synthesis, cannot be sustained’. Such reinforcement of the perceived incompatible differences in approach between these views were referred to as the ‘paradigm wars’ (Gage 1989; Hammersley 1992).

This thesis is reticent to choose ontological sides and sees the divide between positivist and constructivist ideologies as unhelpful. In keeping with a poststructuralist ideology which informs this work, the adoption of one or the other of these grand narratives seems counterproductive and contradictory. Cupchik (2001, p. no pagination) states that, ‘To build bridges between different social ontologies we must engage in a transcendental act of reflection and look for similarities in the midst of supposed differences.’

A middle way approach looks for similarities within both paradigms and offers the prospect of an ontology that reflects a suspicion of binary oppositions. It seeks instead to adopt Buddhist teachings which observe that all things arise in dependence upon multiple causes and conditions, that is, that they are of dependent origin. The middle way is explored by challenging the core beliefs of the positivist/constructivist divide and through that, considers commonalities and new approaches to research.

An ontological position representing a middle way is offered through an interpretation of the Deleuzian concept of difference (Deleuze 1994) alluded to by d'Espagnat (2006) where the concept of space and time is not that which is imposed by the subject but something intangible. Pure difference according to Deleuze is non-spatio-temporal existing only as an impression. If Deleuzian theory is applied to the binary of positivism and constructivism, it can be taken that they are differentiated by that which they are not. They exist as interdependent concepts each requiring the other to define themselves and claim legitimacy. In other words, their existence as identities is an effect of difference. To understand reality is not to adhere to any particular grand narrative; it is to understand that that which makes an entity or phenomenon different from all others is its inherent true essence. In Deleuzian terms, difference is being and as a ‘philosopher of difference’ he wants to provide a ‘philosophical (that is, conceptual) account of the physical world’ (Linck 2008, p. 517). Deleuze maintains that
difference is not indicating a relationship between things but is the ‘very source of thingliness itself’ (Linck 2008, p. 523). Deleuze’s affirmation of a physical world coupled with his desire to understand this world conceptually represents a type of conduit between positivist and constructivist ontologies or a middle way. The ontology expressed within this thesis is driven by a curiosity of how it is to experience existence. Heidegger (1962) suggests that our ontology of being in the world presents us with a fundamentally ‘hermeneutical situation’ (p. 275). This situation compels us to ask questions about ourselves and of others and is addressed further in chapter five.

The ontological position expressed in this thesis understands being or existence as a system connected by differential relations that are continually becoming. These relations are in constant play and form new expressions of differentiation and association.

Ontological reflection asks that we look carefully at those assumptions about life which are taken for granted. This of course is very difficult because those things which are taken for granted are difficult to recognise. Heidegger (1998/1967) refers to this reflexive process as a type of transformation of self in this description:

Turning around the whole human being. It means removing human beings from the region where they first encounter things and transferring and accustoming them to another realm where being appear (p. 167).

As the familiar is seen from a different perspective, the possibility of constructing new and creative insights into the nature of being become possible. A new way of being presents itself. The idea of requiring detachment from the self in order to reflect metacognitively, alludes to Buddhist teachings of no-self in that a Buddhist would say there is no separated person to see. No-self is often mistaken as a negative construct but this is not the case. The Buddhist notion of nothingness (which is synonymous with that of no-self and emptiness) is the foundation of a particular ontology that challenges the concept of a separate ego operating and interacting with the world. An
understanding of and insights into nothingness develop as a function of personal meditative practice and this is especially true within the Zen meditative practice of zazen\textsuperscript{21}. Through practice, nothingness becomes a revealed ontology that evolves over time (Olendzki 2009).

Nothingness is the idea that the mind has neither an essence nor a sense of itself. It is seen as being composed of functions that are integrated into an operational whole. The mind is thus an activity and a process but not an entity. Yen (2008, p. 22) explains that emptiness or no-self is ‘not a mere void but the absence of self-nature’. A state of no-self enables the mind to engage in the world as an activity of the world and not something that is detached from it.

The potential for a human to have the ability to become invisibly absorbed into everything else may begin to sound like the existentialist premise of \textit{negation} which was offered by Sartre (Franklin 2012) and may also have resonance in the work on that state of mind associated with Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) notion of flow. According to Sartre (1956), we are defined by the ability to negate our situation and to create a \textit{nothingness within} through our actions and thoughts. It is through the act of becoming nothing that he believes we can look for alternatives to our present condition. In this sense, an existentialist stance contends that it is only when we negate our human condition that true freedom is possible. Sartre (1956) proposes that the power that humans have to create this freedom brings with it profound anxiety and that this anxiety is necessary for humans to become conscious of the possibility of freedom. The notion of freedom expressed is not the same as the idea of flow expressed by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) but they share an understanding in that both freedom and flow have a transcendental nature to them which is difficult to express in words.

Hayman (1997) recognises this connection between the Buddhist concept of no-self and existentialism and asserts that Buddhism and Sartre have ‘comparable theories of consciousness’ (p.143) in that Buddhism’s rejection of self (anatta) is similar to Sartre’s rejection of ego. Whilst it is possible to draw on similarities between existentialist theory and Buddhist philosophy in this regard, the fundamental difference between

\textsuperscript{21} Sitting meditation.
them is in the way they approach the notion of suffering. Where Sartre (1956) states that, ‘human reality therefore is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state’ (p. 40), Buddhist practice offers a solution to suffering through the implementation of the Eightfold Noble Path which contains within it the doctrine of ‘Right Mindfulness’ (Bodhi 2006).

Being in a state of mindfulness is a way of exploring the concept of nothingness. A mindful state means that an awareness of reality is perceived, contrary to seeing it simply in the form of images. In this state, it is understood that all phenomenon are totally interdependent and endlessly interwoven. This is what Buddhists call ‘interbeing’. If we assume the interdependence of all things, then the idea of a separate object or person is not possible. Heidegger (1962) uses the terms ‘Dasein’ and ‘being’ as constituting each other in the sense that we experience life as interconnected conscious beings within a universal presence and so lose the notion of an identity existing as separate from its environment. In the same way, the world is not made up of discreet things but instead is made up of relationships between things. We are aware of relationships between things through the use of our senses and thoughts. Heidegger (1962) did not make a distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal and in keeping with poststructuralist theory did not adhere to the concept of a detached self. He suggested that the pursuit of nothingness was the purist form of research and regarded it as a meaningful enquiry:

Where shall we seek nothing? Where will we find the nothing? In order to find something must we not already know in general that it is there? Indeed! At first and for the most part man can seek only when he has anticipated the being at hand of what he is looking for. Now the nothing is what we are seeking. Is there ultimately such a thing as a search without that anticipation, a search to which pure discovery belongs? (Krell 2008)

Heidegger (1962) maintained that the concepts of ‘Being’ and ‘being’ have an interdependence and this is in keeping with Buddhist notions of no-self or nothingness.
This understanding and insight may have been informed through his interaction with Japanese intellectuals and theorists (Heidegger 1971a). Interdependence is described by Suzuki (2011, p. 67) as ‘when you become you, Zen becomes Zen. When you are you, you see things as they are. And you become one with your surroundings’. This is taken to mean that a Buddhist ontology is a situated ontology in which a person is part of a greater whole. It also suggests that what we call ‘out there’ is already inside us and that we have no further to look than to see our true self (Chernus 2004).

The word ‘Buddha’ means to ‘be awakened’. Awakening is to become aware of what is already apparent, to understand that which is before us and within our innermost nature. We are not awakened to something external from ourselves that exits ‘out there’ but awaken to what is already our condition. This is more clearly stated by Kung (2002, p. 41) when he says that an awakened person will ‘naturally have a pure non-discriminating mind’ and further states that in Buddhist practice it is expressed as ‘obtaining clarity of mind and seeing into one’s true nature’. The orientation therefore, is not to try to create a self, but to realise what one’s self is, as already apparent.

The ontological stance for this thesis then is derived from the Buddhist notion of nothingness more than any established binaries. The next section will look at how this ontological view informs epistemology.

3.3 Epistemological Considerations

One view contends that knowledge is acquired without any mediating properties or filters. It is thought to be acquired in an objective way and that this process of data or sensory input is the same for everyone: the foundationalist stance. An opposing view of epistemology is that there is no such thing as objectivity. Knowledge is constructed as a process of social construction and interaction: the anti-foundationalist viewpoint (Frisch 2015). Any meaning received is a construct and does not come inherently from the noumenal world but from an interpretation of the world. This constructivist
Epistemological view presents difficulties for researchers in the social sciences because of the problematic double hermeneutic in which an interpretation of the world by people is then further interpreted by an observer. This second interpretation being once removed makes an objective interpretation even less likely (Giddens 1991).

Epistemological understandings within this study are influenced by a contention that meaning is constructed by human beings, as part of the world, engaging and interpreting phenomena as integrated beings. These interpretations operate within a transcendental and non-hierarchical world of nothingness. The validity of empirical knowledge is accepted only to the extent that we make up part of a sensory world in which the human mind has some choice over how this knowledge may be experienced. This contention is framed within Deleuzian epistemology assuming that knowledge does not depend on a faithful reflection of a static world but is manifest in resonance with a world that is continually becoming. Deleuzian epistemology is as interested in the formation of new concepts as it is with assumptions of knowledge (Deleuze 1997).

Knowing is a creative activity and involves immersion and interpretation. Pure objectivity is indeed an illusion; knowledge and meaning are synthesised by people. An epistemological position is concerned with what knowledge is taken to mean and how it might be realised. Further to this, it is important to ask questions about how the legitimacy of knowledge is decided upon and in terms of this study, what knowledge is ‘relevant to the practice of education’ (Kelly 2006, p. 51), inasmuch as epistemology views knowledge and meaning as states which are ‘not discovered but constructed’ (Crotty 1998, p. 42).

The fundamental issue to address is whether knowledge originates within, and is therefore dependent upon the data we perceive through our senses or whether the only true certainties are those that come from our own minds, that is, from the principles of reason and logic. Bredo (2006, p. 27) suggests that while it is common to feel that a choice must be made between these two views, ‘it is not necessary’. He sees these differing understandings of the world as needing to work with one another rather than adopting an oppositional approach. This notion of blending the supposed differences between these views into a more transcendental view was addressed in
the previous chapter on ontological positioning. Notwithstanding this, knowledge is taken to be constructed both within and through an interaction with the physical and noumenal world. It is this understanding that informs the epistemological framework of the thesis.
Chapter 4: Detail and Shapes

More work was required on the headland. It was important to make sure that this large tonal mass was not seen as floating above the water but was firmly established as part of a larger unseen shape that continued beneath. Some shadow was suggested on parts of the headland and a broken line was established along the top of the mountain to indicate trees or other vegetation.

This seascape did not suddenly appear but was the result of natural forces that occurred over millions of years and continue to occur. These changes are often so small that they remain largely unnoticed. At other times the changes are sudden and dramatic. In either case I am reminded that what I see as apparently solid is unfixed and always changing. It is a constant state of becoming something else. The elements within this changing seascape are painted separately just as the headland was painted after the water. These separate elements are made to react to other elements and become a cohesive interconnected whole. By now each part of the painting should begin to relate
In some way to every other part and the process of establishing connections continues until the painting process finds pause.

Introduction to Theory

The theoretical framework of this thesis is influenced by poststructuralist perspectives. Such perspectives acknowledge the ‘instability of meaning, and breaks with conventional representational schemes of meaning’ (Best & Kellner 1991, p. 21). This chapter describes the assumptions upon which the above-mentioned framework is based and justifies the selection and application of Deleuzian theory. It is divided into four sections, as follows:

Section 4.1 argues the rationale for the thesis to be considered as an amalgam of classical Buddhist ontology with poststructuralist ideologies in regards to its placement of the subject or self as under erasure. It also suggests similarities in the way that Buddhist ontologies and poststructuralist ideologies share a common distrust for grand narratives and unquestioned belief systems. Deleuzian notions of haecceity are considered in terms of seeing this element as being sympathetic with ancient Buddhist teachings of no-self [nothingness]. Section 4.2 introduces the specific contributions made by Gilles Deleuze to the idea of becoming and discusses how Deleuzian theory offers a unique perspective on engaging with matters of mindfulness and broader Buddhist philosophical sensitivities. This section also acknowledges the challenges that are apparent when poststructuralist influences are incorporated into a phenomenologically-based research methodology and suggests that the Buddhist concept of no-self shares similarities with non-fixed identities, and locations. In espousing these concepts, Buddhism pre-empts poststructuralist understandings of the de-emphasised self, the constant lived state of ambiguity and a suspicion of grand narratives (Jackson 2003). This is not to say that Buddhist philosophy and poststructural assumptions are the same but ontological similarities are clearly apparent. These similarities will be further addressed in the section 4.2.
The concept of the rhizome is introduced in section 4.3 as a lens through which the engagement of mindfulness practices within a visual arts classroom setting are interpreted. This rhizomatic view of phenomena forms an essential element of the way the data is generated and seen. This will be discussed further in chapter six. Section 4.4 looks at the Deleuzian notion of becoming which is taken to be that which identifies a process of flux or constant change as may occur within the assemblage that in this thesis is taken to be the classroom learning space. This section challenges the idea of ‘the moment’ as understood in dominant definitions of mindfulness. The intention of this section is to elaborate on the theoretical perceptions that inform the decision-making process and influence the research design employed in writing this thesis (Sharrock & Anderson 1986; Shipman 1981). Poststructuralist perspectives enable a discussion and interpretation of human subjectivity within a range of settings including those of the individual and of collectives (Love 2001). These perspectives were used to provide ways by which to analyse and interpret the physical properties of objects which in this case were watercolour paintings, drawings, student diaries and transcripts of conversations.

Poststructuralist approaches to the interpretation of visual material within research studies are gaining traction and this is especially true of visually-based ethnographic research where there is a call to develop ‘alternative objectives and methodologies that will benefit anthropology as a whole’ (MacDougal 1997, pp. 292-3). In her ethnographic study of the behaviour of year 8 boys in a co-educational classroom, Moss (2008) used visual technologies in the form of still and moving images as primary data for analysis. This research acknowledges the poststructuralist methodologies employed by Moss (2008) asserting as she does that, ‘the interplay between poststructural philosophy and visual media offers scope for a wider analysis and presentation of information about learning’ (p. 53). The subsequent interpretation of the visual data generated within Moss’s (2008) study was that of an observer and to this extent, phenomenological in its approach. Poststructuralist theory is used to enhance the phenomenological experience employed in this thesis too but the notion of the possibility of a fixed self doing the observing is questioned throughout the chapter.
4.1 The Poststructural Buddhist

It seems appropriate to place some key philosophical movements into perspective before presenting a discussion on Buddhism’s possible influence on postmodern ontologies and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Modernity’s theoretical framework promoted reason as the source of empowerment in human knowledge and endeavour. From its beginnings as a movement toward the end of the Middle Ages modernity represented a system of thought that rejected feudalism and promoted innovation and dynamism (Berman 1983). It was a period that advocated a more egalitarian society embodying reason and order (Toulmin 1990, pp. 3-5). Heidegger (1938) suggested that modernity be considered as a non-traditional, postmedieval period. This new period was thought of as the beginning of a secularised world where the pursuit of truth was now in the hands of men and women and not the church. The scientific and industrial ages that followed reinforced the belief that anything was possible with the only limiting factor being the power of human imagination and inventiveness. Modernity moves away from localised markets of production and consumption toward a more global economy. It also tends toward a globalised population with diminished national boundaries where a standardised populace are free to move between societies and economic strata. Modernity has a liberality of determination, and confidence in the power of science and logic and is ‘marked and defined by an obsession with evidence’ (Leppert 2004). In contrast to this, poststructuralism is suspicious of evidence that claims to be factual and dismisses the concept of absolute truth which is considered to be bound by time and culture.

Poststructuralism resists a general definition. Attempts to group together the work associated with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard and others under a single metanarrative is in fact a very anti-poststructuralist proposition. Butler (1992) makes this enquiry:

Do all these theories have the structure (a comforting notion to the critic who would dispense with them all at once)? Is the effort to colonize and domesticate these
theories under the sign of the same, to group them synthetically and masterfully under as single rubric, a simple refusal to grant the specificity of these positions, an excuse not to read and not to read closely? (p. 5)

When Lyotard (1984) described the world as ‘discontinuous, catastrophic, nonrectifiable and paradoxical’ (p. 60), he was proposing that a new paradigm be created to cater for a new era that was neither observable nor representational. The privilege of language being the tool by which we had always described the world was challenged by the ‘post’ scholars (St. Pierre 2013) who began to question the actual function of language. Foucault (1970) recognised the problem of trying to use language to interpret itself and the dualist bind between language and the actual world as being fixed within us. For Foucault (1970) language was the ‘very field upon which the human sciences occur, and to their fullest extent; it is the very pedestal of the form of knowledge that makes it possible’ (p.363). The problem of using language to examine itself is also addressed by Heidegger (1971b) when he suggests that we do more than just speak about language, we also speak by way of language. The processes of speaking and language are intertwined. Heidegger (1971b) states that, ‘the way to speaking is present in the language itself’ (p. 126) and that if we are to realise the nature of Being we must first master our understanding of the function of language in terms of its essence and origin.

Buddhist philosophy, along with poststructuralism, shares a similar distrust of language. Buddhism sees language as having no intrinsic worth and existing as merely a convention where no specific word corresponds to an actual reality. If language refers to perishable thoughts that can never directly represent reality (Bradley 2016) then Derrida (1978) took this idea further by proposing that the inability of language and the written word to secure meaning prevents it from representing a stable presence in the world. Derrida’s theory of deconstruction rejects the idea of a stable presence or centre whether that be a god, a metanarrative or some other fixed referential concept. The establishment of a centre is an act of exclusion that creates binary opposites where
one member of the pair is privileged over the other. The act of deconstruction is subversive and destabilising from a structuralist perspective in its attempt to decentralise the text and dissolve the binary.

Deleuze (1995, p. 141) uses the term haecceity to mean the essence of a thing suggesting a state where the separation of the privileged and the other no longer exists. Haecceity is taken to be the immanence of being. In a Deleuzian sense, it is describing the immersion of the separated self into the essence of existence. In a Buddhist sense, it resonates with the concept of no-self or nothingness. Haecceity carries with it the notion of connectedness in the present moment. It is a moment where the self is non-existent and binaries disappear into a state of suchness as previously discussed in section 3.1.

Davies (2011) suggests that the English language makes this state of haecceity a difficult concept to understand because the self is constructed as a noun rather than a verb. These differences between things and actions in Western linguistics are well defined but Watts (1957) proposes that with the Chinese language such conventional distinctions are not as obvious. He uses the image of a fist to illustrate this point:

> What happens to my fist (noun-object) when I open my hand? The object miraculously vanishes because one action was disguised by a part of speech usually assigned to a thing! In English the differences between things and actions are clearly, if not always logically, distinguished, but a great number of Chinese words do duty to both nouns and verbs – so that one who thinks in Chinese has little difficulty in seeing that objects are also events, that our world is a collection of processes rather than entities (Watts 1957, p. 5).

Similarly to Derrida (1978), Deleuze too saw this process of thinking about a language without the binds of grammatical convention as a liberating experience, challenging us to think in different ways. A poststructuralist perspective enables one to ‘break out of
language itself, and to see and think about what was lying in the shadow around the words, things we were hardly aware existed’ (Deleuze 1995, p. 141).

This thesis chose to be influenced by poststructuralist assumptions because they challenge habitual ways of thinking about associations between cognitive processes and those pertaining to the creation of visual art. These customary ways of experiencing the world are seen within the privilege usually afforded to words and language as preconditions of thought and cognition, and the assumption that it is only through language that linear modes of thought exist making it possible for ideas to be explored. Non-linear methods of exploration are, however, also possible and are symbolised in part by the Deleuzian concept of the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 2013). Such a metaphor carries with it a belief in the interconnectedness and interdependence between all things and abhors any trust in structuralist notions of hierarchical progression.

When language is de-emphasised as it is within a meditative state, the possibility of an opportunity arises for connectivity or lines of flight to manifest as a constant emergence of ‘creative mutations’ (Lorraine 2005, p. 144). Deleuze and Guattari (2013) explain that these lines give the rhizoid meaning, stating that, ‘the rhizome is made only with lines. . .but not to be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localised linkages between points and position’ (p. 21). If lines of flight operate to create a rhizoid within an assemblage, the adoption of a nomadic approach in moving along (between) these lines is appropriate (Massumi 2013). Such an approach means that a heightened sense of attunement to unexpected happenings is marked and those lines of flight between phenomena that may otherwise be unnoticed or hidden in plain sight become valued. In this, the emphasis is on movement and on being willing to lay aside notions of linearity, logical progression and the binary opposition of student and teacher. St. Pierre (2000, p. 258) refers to this as ‘travelling in the thinking that writing provides’ where the comfort associated with start and finish points are absorbed in a constant state of becoming. The attention becomes an interest in what new thoughts become possible to think (Massumi 1992). Adopting a poststructuralist theoretical framework opens the space for a multidimensional reading of texts which looks beyond the immediately apparent
dialectical principles that underpin the relations of form/content, subject/object or activity/passivity (Jagodzinski 2009). This is the space that Deleuze (1992) refers to as a fold. It is a space where the subject and the object meet at an in-between moment where subjectification transpires and change follows. It becomes a continuous process acknowledging the interconnectedness between researcher, topic and text (Richardson 2000).

If a structuralist ontology is characterised as fixed and unchanging, operating within a ‘separated inside and outside’ (Sellers 2013, p. 16), then poststructuralism offers a point of difference and challenge to this view. This difference is characterised by poststructuralist notions of uncertainty and curiosity. This is not to say that poststructuralism is completely different to modernism. Lyotard (1991) suggests that the term postmodern (poststructural) is implied in the term ‘modern’ ‘because of the fact that modernity, modern temporality, has by default an impulsion to exceed beyond itself, into a state other than itself’ (p. 24). This thesis uses the term poststructuralism within its contemporary understanding which is that we are entering a new stage in our history. In this sense, poststructuralism is taken as a theory that ‘provides a critique of representation and the modern belief that theory mirrors reality, taking instead ‘perspectivist’ and ‘relativist’ positions that theories at best provide partial perspectives of their objects and that all cognitive representations of the world are historically and linguistically mediated’ (Best & Kellner 1991, p. 4).

The next section will discuss the reasons underlying the decision to frame the theoretical perspective of this thesis within the poststructuralist discourse of Gilles Deleuze and broader Buddhist perspectives. The question of incorporating a phenomenologically-based methodology within a Deleuzian poststructuralist framework is also addressed. The question asked is ‘what does a hermeneutically phenomenological approach enable within such a framework that a Deleuzian reading alone would not’?
4.2 Deleuzian Buddhism

Davies (2011) suggests that both Deleuzian and Buddhist philosophies require a ‘very particular kind of open listening, to oneself and the other’ (p. 29). The relationship between these two philosophies is revealed in their capacity to look beyond common epistemologies and provide a perspective by which each becomes clearer and more defined through their association. This aspiration to look beyond the habitual mind suggests that we are not individuated but connected within a network of forces; a network where the self disappears and only exists as an element of the entirety. Williams (2003, p. 23) describes this network as a place where ‘each living thing – each individual – is a contraction of the world, a connection with all of the world’. The notion of a no-self living force engaging as one with the world is a tenet of Buddhism (Eberth & Sedlmeier 2012; Franklin 2012; Gethin 2001) and finds resonance within poststructuralist thought, specifically within the work of Deleuze as described in the concept of haecceity (Halsey 2007).

Deleuze was not the first Western philosopher to see that habituated thought was detrimental to broadening the mind. Dewey (1930) suggested that the problem with habits is that they have the capacity to either liberate or restrict; limiting us when we encounter situations where our habitual ways of acting are ill-suited, for example, when we are faced with the unexpected; or liberating us when they free our mind from attending to certain details of our conduct so that we can focus on other challenges or features within our environment. Dewey (1930) also hoped to cultivate a habit of reflection and thereby avoid the problems created by blind habitual responses. The practice of mindfulness as expressed within this thesis is seen as a practical device to disrupt those unquestioned conventional habits of visual engagement.

Deleuzian theory emerged in post-war France which was at the time dominated by Marxism and Existentialism (Eyers 2013). The 1960s saw these two movements challenged by both the linguistically oriented stance of poststructuralism and the experience-based turn offered by phenomenology (Colebrook 2002).
Structuralism maintained that language and objects had no inherent meaning outside of the structures within which they were placed; an example of this theory being the idea of a singular word only having meaning within the structure provided by those words surrounding it (Frank 1989). Structuralist theories beginning with De Saussure (2006) were at odds with phenomenologically-based research arguing that knowledge was not to be gained from experience but from our oppositional relationship with such structures as language. It was thought that these structures then made the experience possible by defining notions of other and sameness. The shared distrust that structuralism and subsequent poststructuralist theory directed toward the notion of a subject being at the centre of experience originally came from the work of psychoanalysts like Freud (Lear 2005). Freud proposed that the conscious ego or self is actually not in control but subject to a much more influential and largely invisible subconscious. Freud referred to the subconscious as the major influence on those ways by which an individual experiences the world. It is understandable that an acknowledgement of the influence of a subconscious casts doubt over the emphasis and trust that is usually applied to notions of a volitional self operating with purpose and equipped with free-will. It may be that a de-emphasis on the importance of free-will is justified if agency is considered less a product of an individual’s will than that of being charged by those conditions of possibility that enable new ideas to generate.

An incongruity seems to exist in attaching so much emphasis on the notion of a decentred self and the subsequent distrust that poststructuralism has toward phenomenology. The problem is that such thinking seems to be based on the assumption that individuals are incapable of being aware of those personal biases which may be thought to distort an observation. The Husserlian notion of bracketing (Parker 2013) presupposes that not only are these attitudes and values known but that they are also capable of being and should be supressed for the purposes of research. If bracketing was possible to the extent that the self became invisible then criticisms of phenomenology as a methodology may have been unnecessary. Comparatively, in the case of a hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, these inner influences are not suppressed but are acknowledged to the extent that they can be known and are assumed to be influential in the observation and analysis (Henricksson 2012; Kinsella
2006). Whilst Freud (1997) cast doubt over the supremacy of the ego, he seemed focused and very present at a conscious level in the way by which he arrived at these conclusions. The following extract from Freud’s observational notes on one of his patients is interesting in gaining some insight into his methodology. Freud (1997, p. 69) states:

[that] [w]hen I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by the compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which it is quite possible to accomplish.

Even though those poststructuralists that followed on from Freud maintained a distrust for phenomenologically-based research, the methodology used by Freud himself as described above provides an excellent example of hermeneutic phenomenology in practice. This seems to be inconsistent with the way that poststructuralist theory sits in terms of the acknowledgement of self and suggests the possibility of a more constructive dialogue between poststructuralists and phenomenologists than might usually be thought possible (Davidson 2014). Such a dialogue will be further expressed toward the end of this chapter’s section.

Husserlian phenomenology, being based on the notion of the supremacy of the actual experience itself, rejects any presuppositions as to ‘who or what was doing the experiencing’ (Colebrook 2002, p. 2). This experience-based epistemology offered by phenomenology is rejected by Deleuze (Deleuze 1994; Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 2013) and other poststructuralists as it is assumes that a comparison or observation is made from a particular human perspective grounded on an assumption of normality. This comparison is seen to be too narrow for Deleuze in that it is construed
without regard for other types of experiences like, for example, non-human experiences (Colebrook 2002).

In the case of Deleuze, this rejection of a subjective human perspective as the vantage point for experiences was liberating. The realisation of the uncertainty and indefinableness of lived experience gave poststructuralism the freedom to explore other possibilities and engage in experiments of thought (Colebrook 2002). The historical structuralist view that maintained a self and identity operating within a linguistic paradigm was replaced within the poststructuralist discourses on difference and becoming. The previously held assumptions of a human knower being at the centre or occupying a state of privilege was now undermined. Poststructuralists like Michel Foucault also considered phenomenology’s individualised self as a hindrance to thought and agency. Foucault wanted to ‘wrench the subject from itself’ and to explore ways to render the subject ‘no longer itself’ (2000, p. 241). For Foucault the act of thinking was not undertaken in order to gain knowledge and remain untouched:

[I]n order to know differently, and, in the process, be modified through what he came to know (‘savior’). His critical analysis worked toward thought that made habituated ways of being and thinking more and more difficult (Davies 2010, p. 58).

The cognitive shift from a centred individualised self to a self that is receptive to unknown possibilities of engagement with the world is challenging. It is ‘won only with the greatest difficulty against oneself, of being constrained to the world’s play’ (Badiou 2000, p. 11). This struggle between the ever-present self and Foucault’s (1970) wish to reject the self is the struggle between the supremacy of the ego and the desire for the Buddhist idea of no-self as has been previously discussed. The similarities between the poststructuralist emphasis on the necessity to deny oneself in order to experience the world in a non-habitual way with Buddhist traditions of nothingness are important within the context of this thesis and the phenomenological methodology used. The difficulty in losing the self is expressed in the Buddhist concept of anatta and in the Deleuzian concept of the ‘schizo’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2013).
Colebrook (2002) states that the concept of schizo ‘is not a psychological type (not a schizophrenic), but a way of thinking of a life not governed by any fixed norm or image of self. It is a self in flux and becoming, rather than a self that has submitted to law. The schizo is a challenge to the way we think and write’ (p.5).

Deleuzian theory is described as being attentive to the concept of the outside where lived experience is seen as a constant state of relational entities or multiplicities (Colebrook 2002). A study of these relations creates the environment where new ideas develop and imaginations are engaged. ‘The realm of as yet unthinkable is what constitutes the outside’ (Semetsky 2004, p. 325). As the limits of spatio-temporal boundaries are broken, deterritorialisations occur and the individuation that follows becomes a state of creative and artistic possibilities. It is an out-of-body experience similar to that described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) in his descriptions of flow where a balance is created between the skills required to undertake a task and the value one places on the completion of the task; the balance between the two establishing a motivated state. Flow becomes a place of altered consciousness in the sense that normal experiences of time and space are altered. In Deleuzian terminology Csikszentmihalyi’s flow is a state of individuation. This out-of-body experience or individuation is to become as one with everything and reminds us of the Buddhist concepts of no-self or ‘death of the subject’ (Semetsky 2004, p. 325) and also with the Deleuzian notion of haecceity. This experience is described by Deleuze (1988) as that which occurs when the rational thought and non-thought merge becoming ‘the other in me’ (Deleuze, p. 98). The state of flow, no-self or death of the subject opens up the potential for spontaneous thoughts and creative insights. Deleuze shares the idea of living within and beyond the identified self with other poststructuralists as expressed by Foucault (1995):

As long as one steps outside what’s been thought before, once one ventures outside what’s familiar and reassuring, once one has to invent new concepts for unknown lands, then methods and moral systems break down and thinking becomes a perilous act, a violence, whose first victim is oneself. Thinking is always experiencing, experimenting and what we experience,
experiment with, is what’s coming into being, what’s new, what’s taking shape’ (Foucault, p. 103).

Deleuzian individuation may be taken as a state of pure cognition. Sekida (2005) suggests that cognition is accomplished through two distinct processes: the first is ‘pure cognition’, the second is the ‘recognition of pure cognition’. In pure cognition, the binary notion of subjectivity and objectivity is non-existent. When, for example, a physical object is touched the sense of touch and the feel of the object is all there is, at least for a brief moment. This is pure cognition. An instant later, pure cognition is interpreted by reflective consciousness and the object is recognised and identified. In this recognition, objectivity and subjectivity are established. In pure cognition there is no subject or object as it occurs before conscious thinking takes place. This precognitive state is sometimes referred to as ‘transcendental cognition’ (Sekida 2005, p. 176) but should not be associated with the Kantian concept of transcendental cognition which is taken to mean a ‘priori’ knowledge and described by Kitcher (2011) as elements coming ‘not from objects, but from activities of the mind’ (p. 57).

Deleuzian theory is in keeping with Sedika’s (2005) notion of pure cognition in the sense that where Sedika (2005) alludes to a state of mind unencumbered by preconditioned habitual thought or experience, Deleuze (1994) asks us to consider the world as endlessly becoming, of imagined and/or actualised phenomena. Both of these ideas distrust the supremacy of the Descartian subject from which the objective world is seen as something to be experienced by a separated self. Deleuze (1994) dismisses the idea of a stable permanent subject and instead understands the concept of subject as just one more form of transcendence. Deleuze asserts that those things which in the past were taken by people as foundational or given, for example, god or truth, have been replaced by ‘an image of thought’ (Deleuze 1994, p. 133) which seems foundational but is in fact a delusion. Colebrook (2002, p. 73) suggests that art is important to consider in the light of this Deleuzian idea in that it invites us to invent forms of experience that are not those of a ‘universally recognised subject’ and also ‘destroy[s] the harmony of any single subject such that thinking is
shattered into affects, concepts and observations’. The act of looking at art may be a participatory experience predicated on a willingness to be disoriented and to embrace an unfamiliar landscape in much the same way as that of an explorer or nomad who finds himself or herself lost but continues on in unfamiliar surroundings and in a familiar state of deterritorialisation.

Meditative techniques associated with Zen Buddhism have the capacity to solicit a state of mind that resonates with the Deleuzian concept of deterritorialisation (Olson 2000), being that state which is offered through considering meditation as the Deleuzian ‘machine’ (Colebrook 2002, p. 55). This meditative machine has no function or purpose in itself but remains in a state of deterritorialisation. There is no existence and it becomes, only through its interaction with a being’s willingness to experience it. This is especially true of that form of meditation known as zazen which looks at decentering the idea of a subjective self in favour of becoming something/one else; that is, becoming no-self. When subjectivity is understood as a process of becoming, the stable fixed self manifests as nowhere and everywhere. Deleuze and Guattari (2013) state that becoming anything is ‘without doubt toward becoming imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula’ (p.325). Meditation is that process of becoming other; becoming imperceptible and enabling someone to both be affected and to affect. It is not a passive activity but one which is both active and passive allowing insights into ‘assemblages and experiences’ (Semetsky 2004, p. 326). The constant strain between habituated practices and unplanned happenings or experiences is a theme shared by both Deleuzian thought and Buddhism. The construction of the separated self diminishes the capacity to experience the world from both the perspectives of self and other. Fixed realities are taken as imagined rather than real and only serve to restrict the lines of force into one-dimensional and predictable trajectories. Davies (2011, p. 33) adds that the individualised ego is constructed ‘through judgement, through comparison, through categorization and through the fear of being found lacking’. In this, the ego is seen to thrive in an atmosphere where the negative is suppressed and where consequently, true personal freedom based on honesty and acceptance is impossible.
The Buddhist practice of denying ego and the challenged assumption of universals is the way by which binary oppositions vanish and become instead interdependent. Watts (1957, p. 53) explains this interdependence:

[T]he separation of the thinker from the thought, the knower from the known, the subject from the object, is purely abstract. There is not the mind on the one hand and its experiences on the other; there is just a process of experiencing in which there is nothing to be grasped as object, and no one, as a subject, to grasp it. Seen thus, the process of experiencing ceases to clutch at itself. Thought follows thought without interruption, that is, without any need to divide itself from itself, so as to become its own object.

Deleuzian theory reveals the habitual emphasis on self and the restrictions and limitations that such an emphasis can place on the phenomenological experience. The multiplicity of self that occurs when the ego is decentralised provides the basis for coming into contact with other dimensions within us. It is through an acknowledgement of these dimensions that the world is (re)interpreted. Deleuze’s haecceity refers to a ‘mode of individuation’, ‘a life’ and does not differ in nature from that of ‘a climate’, ‘a wind’, ‘a fog’, or ‘an hour of the day’ (Deleuze 1997, p. xxxiv). It becomes an assemblage of dispossessed or non-subjectified affects and percepts forming a rhizoidal amalgam in which we are not in the world but become one with the world as an arbitrary collection of atoms among countless others. This Deleuzian atomistic perspective is based on the work of Nietzsche (Small 2006), where the parts are seen to be more real than the whole. It is one of the key distinctions of the organic structuralist view that sees reality as a totality: an organism where the parts are real only insofar as they are related to each other. In this sense an atomistic Deleuzian view of existence as deterritorialised is essentially the same as the Buddhist concept of nature and of one’s relationship within nature. Suzuki (2006, pp. 282-3) explains:

Nature is sometimes treated by Western people as something already ‘there’ into which Man comes, and which he finds himself
confronting, with hostility, because he feels he does not belong in it. He is conscious of a situation in which he is surrounded by all kinds of inert matter and brute fact. He does not know why he is there, nor does he realise what is coming to him. Endowed with consciousness, however, he thinks he can decide his future course, and feels entirely responsible for his decision. He is lonely and helpless. . . There is, however another way of considering Nature and Man. Inasmuch as Nature stands before Man as an unknown quantity and Man comes to it with his consciousness from somewhere else than Nature, Nature and Man cannot be friendly and sociable for they have no way to communicate. They are strangers. But the very fact that Man finds himself encountering Nature demonstrates that the two are not unknown to each other. To this extent then, Nature is already telling Man something of itself and Man is to that extent understanding Nature. Then Man cannot be said to be entirely an outsider but somehow stands in relation to Nature; perhaps comes out of Nature itself. Man must be after all an inside.

The moment of realisation when we know that we do not stand apart from nature, experiencing it as ‘out there’ but instead see ourselves as just another element of nature itself is a profound ontological shift. It is the moment when the sense of self vanishes and becomes intermingled with all other things. This is the essence of what is meant by the Deleuzian notion of haecceity (Holland 2013) and the Buddhist notion of no-self (Barrett 1996) where we become both absorbed and formless within the rhizoid.

This thesis uses Deleuzian poststructuralist notions of haecceity and Buddhist understandings of no-self within the phenomenological hermeneutic (Barrett 1996; Braidotti 2011; Henricksson 2012; Holland 2013; Kinsella 2006). Ontological orientations of poststructuralism and Buddhism are adopted with the same intentions;
both search to find ways by which the self might be decentred and become more attuned to that which is actually there; to be more aware of the lived experience or the suchness of being unhampered by habitual thinking or non-thinking (mindlessness). The process of decentring may be practiced and experienced at varying degrees through applied meditative techniques (Black, Milam & Sussman 2008; Zeidan et al. 2010) as were utilised within the research space (the classroom).

The denial of self associated with poststructuralist and Buddhist ontologies presents an obvious difficulty when combining a phenomenologically-based methodology within a poststructuralist theoretical framework. Where phenomenological thought champions the self as the fixed observer, poststructuralism is fundamentally antagonistic toward this status afforded the individualised self. Davies (2010, p. 55) sees this as ‘... a problem for those psychologists and social scientists interested in poststructuralist theory and in qualitative research in particular’. This thesis re-imagines the phenomenological notion of self - accepting as it does a separate entity engaging within the world and accomplished through choice. It challenges the assumption that ‘we are who we are’ as an act of will (Davies 2010, p. 55) and looks for a ‘redefinition of subjectivity’ (Braidotti 2011, p. 30). The sense of self we have seems unchanging and becomes a solid base from which to both interact with and interpret the world. Davies (2010 p. 55) asks, ‘how can one set of possibilities become normalised such that the subject cannot imagine itself otherwise?’ The answer, as suggested throughout this thesis, may be in acknowledging the influence that habitual thought and patterns of behaviour have in dulling the potential of experiencing new ideas or modes of creativity. Davies (2010 p. 55) states that, ‘The creative evolution of life depends not on the accomplishment of that idealized image of the subject-of-will, but on openness to the other and not-yet-known’.

The subject-of-will referred to in the above quotation is the individualised subject of phenomenology. Poststructuralism suggests that the notion of a volitional engagement or agency is not so much dependent on individual endeavour but more on those conditions of possibility that inspire new thought. This thesis takes the notion of possibility as being an actively lived dimension that creates a non-fixed state. It enables an unpredictable future to be normalised and warrants a creative engagement
with this future. The phenomenological self is seen within this thesis to be in a state of flux and movement and never arriving. In this light, the phenomenological self is taken to be at once present in the observation but also transient and becoming which ‘has to do with emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounter with the outside’ (Braidotti 2011, p. 152). This transitional non-fixed phenomenological self is the no-self which finds meaning in the Deleuzian notion of self-under-erasure ‘where thought and being are not separate, and where being is located in multiple subjects’ (Davies 2010 p.56). The lines drawn between phenomenological and poststructural understandings and assumptions are shifting. Reynolds and Roffe (2014, p. 229) offer a deleuzian reading of the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and state that ‘It is our argument that through properly understanding both positions, a rapprochement, or at least the foundation for one, can be established between these two important thinkers’. The interpretation of phenomena through a poststructuralist lens is seen to be becoming more prevalent (Berggren 2014; Reynolds 2010; Sass 2014) and may have already reached the point suggested by Stoller (2009) where ‘post-structuralism and phenomenology have more in common as regards the concepts of experience than is usually admitted’ (p. 707).

Phenomenology may now be entering the state of postphenomenology which Ihde (2003) contends, ‘explicitly and dare I say ‘consciously’ takes multidimensionality, multistability and the multiple “voices” of things into account – to that degree it bears a family resemblance to the postmodern’ (Ihde, p. 26). This thesis acknowledges the uncertainty and ambiguousness associated with positionings of the self and looks to ‘enter and speak from the realm that opens where all distinctions break down’ (Gendlin 1997, p. 269) and where we might go beyond both hermeneutic phenomenology and poststructuralism, embracing both and yet neither (Finlay 2012).
4.3 Rhizomes

The metaphor of the rhizome is a central tenet of Deleuzian theory (Colebrook 2002) and it is appropriate here to mention something of the role that metaphor has in its capability to enable us to think in different ways about the world. When Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose that our everyday conceptual system is essentially metaphorical, they are suggesting that it is through conceptual thought that our world view is principally structured, as they contend:

> If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 3).

The image of thought offered by the metaphor of the rhizome enables an engagement with the world rather than in or about the world. The concept of rhizome opposes binary assumptions of representation and signification which is hierarchical or more tree-like in structure (Holland 2013). This arborescent or tree-like structure may offer the potential for free divergent thinking to occur but such thinking is bound by its structure. The tree is linear and sequential in the sense that varied branches of thought are derived from a shared source or larger branch within the structure, repeating this pattern to the roots. To think in this arborescent way is to think ‘through a logic of tracing and reproduction’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, p. 11) which ensures that expected outcomes and conclusions are reached.

The Deleuzian concept of rhizome is distinguished by its infinite ability to interconnect within and between the interplay of thoughts and actions. Any element of the rhizome has the potential to connect with any other. Rhizomes are also essentially heterogeneous and ‘ceaselessly establish connections among semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, p. 6). Rhizomatic elements co-exist without supporting structures or predetermined positions in a state of randomness. Rhizomatic
philosophy is defined by those ‘lines of flight’ (2013. p. 8) that connect them and transform them.

The research space (the classroom) is seen within this thesis as being non-linear and as offering possibilities of thought and interpretation based on this understanding of the rhizome. Sellers (2013) considers the rhizome from the perspective of a classroom practitioner where it becomes a cognitive practice destabilising linearity and binary logic. Rhizo-cognitive approaches to analysis embrace a non-structured chaotic mode of working where the stability of thoughts and practices are displaced. A thought or activity is no longer distinctive in isolation but is understood and acted upon relative to its potentialities within the assemblage, that is, any contextual space wherein a multitude of thoughts, actions or effects may take place. Like the rhizome, the assemblage too lacks a specified structure and consequently can self-subsume any number of disparate elements or other assemblages. Rhizomatic thought evokes a stream of consciousness that is always becoming but never arriving. It is this notion of becoming that is alluded to in the research question. It ‘has no beginning or end, it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, p. 26). The discipline of thinking rhizomatically demands that habitual modalities are abandoned. Rhizomes do not just happen but are constructed in such a way as to be open to modification and contain their own unpredictable lines of flight with multiple entry and exit points. Thinking becomes an open and freely associated activity that is neither goal driven nor expectant of a resolution. The rhizomatic relationships that appear and disappear within the research space are noticed and reflected upon from the viewpoint of a disembodied self, that is, a self that is conscious of being of the classroom more than in the classroom. It is a self that is becoming pure cognition where distinctions between the observer and the observed become irrelevant.
4.4 Becomings

To become is to experience a process of change within an assemblage and does not in itself have the intention of actually becoming anything. It is seen more as the essence of rhizomatic entropy providing a description of the relationship between elements within an assemblage. It is that constant state where a discreet element is changed through its relationship with other elements. The relationship is dynamic and ‘situated between heterogeneous terms and tendencies toward no particular goal or end state’ (Stagoll 2005). New elements are formed as a result of this relationship and move toward becoming something else. To become is not to copy or imitate but is more the process of removing the element from its original functions and bringing about new ones. Colebrook (2002, p. 125) suggests that becoming overturns the Platonist notion of ideal forms. In a world of becoming there are no fixed ideals from which our sensory world is derived. Deleuze maintains that there is only an unceasing state of becoming and any illusions of stability are relative and based on humanistic and subjective tendencies. A Deleuzian understanding of becoming is seen here to challenge Buddhist theory in regard to its assumption of the concept of the moment. Deleuze rejects the notion of the moment as a discrete entity with a separate existence from both the preceding moment and the one that follows. The moment is understood more as a continuous transitionary phase between the past and the future. It is never in a fixed state but is an elusive and mysterious concept as expressed by Heisenberg in describing the physical properties of the electron (Capra 1982) or by Hawking (1988) and his considerations of space and time:

A line of becoming is not defined by points that it connects or by points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle. . .a line of becoming has neither beginning or end, departure nor arrival, origin or destination. . .a line of becoming has only a middle. The middle is not an average; it is fast motion, it is absolute speed of movement. A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get to it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor
the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight. . . (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, pp. 341-2).

Turner (1967, p. 4) adds to this notion of becoming when considering liminality as a ‘Rite of Passage’ and this is a useful phrase as it suggests a transition from one place to another; from one state of mind to another. The ‘liminal space’ to which Turner (1967) refers has distinct similarities to the ‘flimsiest of screens’ as James (1971) describes it:

Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there are potential forms of consciousness entirely different (p. 374).

This thesis concerns itself with the act of perception. If perception requires a heightened sense of attention or awareness, a different form of consciousness, then it is contended that this sense of being is something that can be experienced and then subjugated through meditation in order to engage with the art-making process from a position of becoming no-self. It is seen within the research (as explained in chapter six), that a state of becoming no-self can be practiced and is an appropriate precondition for teachers and students working within the visual arts. Perception, however, is not entirely achieved by an act of vision. Nagarjuna\(^\text{22}\) (1995) states:

Seeing itself does not see
Nonseeing itself does not see
Through seeing itself
The clear analysis of the seer is understood (p. 139).

\(^{22}\)Nagarjuna 2nd CE was a Buddhist saint and Mahayana Buddhist philosopher.
This passage suggests that in order to know what the subject of vision actually is, it is important to undertake a careful analysis of the perceptual process and to not simply be content with the purely sensual. It also suggests that the act of seeing an object may enable the observer to look within and dispense with the illusion of the observer/observed binary. Yanagi (1972, p. 112) reinforces this point when giving advice on the cultivation of artistic perception:

First put aside the desire to judge immediately; acquire the habit of just looking. Second, do not treat the object as an object for the intellect. Third, just be ready to receive, passively, without interposing yourself.

Yanagi’s discussions of self-awareness highlight the importance of reflexivity. Stalker and Pridemore (2009) suggest that ‘reflexivity serves to ground our own and our students’ concepts of self-agency and self-motivation’ (p. 36). By cultivating a reflexive attitude, we are reminded of the need to regularly ‘observe the hues’ of ourselves in order to be able to recognise change. This act of self-reflection is Deleuzian in essence. A becoming world has no stable reference points or foundations. All beings are seen as ‘just relatively stable moments in a flow of becoming life’ (Colebrook 2002, p. 125). In becoming it is possible to achieve an existential level of awareness where existence becomes simply immanent and open to new relations and lines of flight. This thesis sees becoming as entering into a state of ‘emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the outside’ (Braidotti 2011, p. 235).
Chapter 5: An Impression

Figure 5: Author’s Original Artwork 5

Impressionist paintings take their name from a style of work that sets out to paint more than that which was visible. Impressionists wanted to paint the feeling of a work and not simply copy that which was before them. It was no coincidence that the establishment of the impressionistic movement coincided with the rise and popularity of the photograph as the supreme method to document reality and thus freeing the artist to observe in other ways.

‘When facing a tree, if you look at a single one of its red leaves, you will not see all the others. When the eye is not set on one leaf and you face the tree with nothing at all in mind, any number of leaves is visible to the eye without limit. But if a single leaf holds the eye, it will be as if the remaining leaves were not there.’ (Soho 2012, p. 10)
The way that paint is applied here informs and reinforces the impressionistic style. The paint is used to reflect an intention and to convey something more than reality. It is the style of the painting that asks the paint to be used in a way that de-emphasises hard edges and well-defined shapes. There is an ambiguity in the way that elements are rendered and this allows the viewer some freedom to interpret the work and in this way become a contributor to its meaning. Impressionism is an attitude to the work that asks the artist to reinterpret that which is apparent.

When I sat and looked at this seascape I wanted to see the world before me as an artist unencumbered by language and habitual ways of identification. I wanted to see and express shapes, tones and colour and not use the convenience of words (labels) like water, sky and headland. It may seem unimportant to want to see a shape more than a word that signifies that shape but impressionists thought of this distinction as being critical to the way they approached a subject. It became their methodology in that the tools and information at hand were applied in a particular way and with particular purpose in order to allow for meanings and ideas to develop.

It is this application of paint on paper in an impressionistic manner that offers an interpretative opening of ways of thinking and consequently ways of rendering the various elements contained within the work.

The use of space within the painting is as important as the painted areas and one defines the other. The areas of unpainted paper where the headland meets to water create their own interesting shapes which act as points of separation between the two creating emphasis for both. Untouched paper is also used to suggest breaking waves and large expanses of open sky. These areas are not painted. They can only exist as elements within the work because of the paint that surrounds them. They are negative shapes which in one way contain absolutely nothing but it would be a mistake to consider them empty.
Introduction to Methodology

This chapter describes the theoretical assumptions upon which the research methodology in this thesis is based and justifies the subsequent method of data generation. It is divided into five sections followed by some concluding remarks.

Section 5.1 argues the rationale for the work and discusses the considerations underpinning the selection of hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology used for the generation of data. This methodology is seen to be framed within broader constructivist ontologies, Buddhist ideologies and poststructuralist theory. Section 5.2 discusses the ways by which hermeneutic phenomenology is interpreted within this thesis and discusses its strengths as a working methodology. In section 5.3, the concept of mindful hermeneutics is introduced where insights found through the intervention of mindful practice, predominately in the form of classroom meditation, are discussed. Section 5.4 introduces the concept of latent space as a method for considering the influence that meditative practices and subsequent shifts in perspective affect the way that students engage with and interpret their surroundings. An explanation of the techniques used to explore data through the use of a multiple methods approach to data generation is offered in section 5.5 in three parts: part (a) outlines the setting within which the study was situated; part (b) looks at the processes by which data was generated and the underlying epistemological assumptions which informed the processes; and part (c) details the ways by which data was analysed within the study. Ethical standards and procedures are explained in section 5.6 including the notion of informed consent, confidentiality and protection from harm.

5.1 Qualitative Methodology Informed by Hermeneutic Phenomenology

A mindful approach to phenomenological methodology supports the idea of suchness (as described in 3.1). This word is used to emphasise the value placed on authenticity and engagement within the lived experience. In a state of suchness, the mind attends
to its object without valuing or judging and through attention receives the object as it is. This is a continual practice of letting go of the conceptual mind understood here as the self and becomes a prereflective way of engaging. The particular Zen concept of suchness has resonance with Husserl’s notion of ‘to the things themselves’ (Spiegelberg 1982, p. 680). It also speaks of the relationship between mindfulness and the practice of hermeneutic phenomenology in that it is a concept that speaks to the idea of an unencumbered view of existence. Such a view sees the world as it is without labels or biases as mentioned in the discussion of the painting that begins this chapter. It is a view that acknowledges the connections between all things. Ashvaghosha in Richard and Walton (2005, p. 55) states that, ‘What is meant by suchness, is the oneness of the totality of all things, the great all including whole’. Ontological predispositions toward mindful practice find expression methodologically through the implementation of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, the basis of which is interconnectedness between all phenomena.

The concept of suchness also has implications for artists; Suzuki (1959, p. 17) states:

[that] the artist’s world is one of free creation, and this can come only from intuitions directly and immediately rising from the isness of things, unhampered by senses or intellect. He [sic] creates forms out of formlessness and soundlessness. To this extent, the artist’s world coincides with that of Zen.
happens to us more than as the ‘accumulated evidence or knowledge as something we undergo’ (Henricksson & Friesen 2012, p. 1). To look into this background and to question assumptions about reality and ourselves, allows us to encounter directly the immense mystery of the arising of our consciousness and of the world (Almaas 2001).

Suchness reverberates in the assemblage of the art room as a reminder to accept that which is perceived. It speaks of maintaining an honesty within the work and of a willingness to engage with it on a non-habitual level. Qualitative methodological assumptions are reflected along with an interpretivist epistemological stance concerning the relationship between the generation of data and the construction of knowledge. The methodology is not only informed and directed by these ontological and epistemological assumptions but also by the research question as it pertains to an understanding of becoming. The encouragement of a sense of becoming within the classroom introduces ‘a swerve or deviation in the plane of taken-for-granted assumptions by means of which a new experiment of thought could be inserted in the interstices that might help teachers get an insight into the generative possibilities of the situation’ (Roy 2003, p. 2). A constructivist approach to the work reflects the stance that deep knowledge is predominantly generated through the interaction of humans with each other and their environment, namely that meaning is neither purely objective nor subjective but contextual.

La Pierre (1997) proposes that research methods cannot be separated from the content being studied. The assumption of interdependence between methods and content was assumed within this study. It is accepted that an understanding of the art-making process and those characteristics that comprise artistic expression is required to observe and interpret phenomena with discernment and insight. In this sense, the methodology used is seen in part as an art-informed enquiry but it is also more than this. Diamond and Mullen (1999) describe art-based methodologies as enabling the location of ‘new epiphanies within texts and people’s lives’ (p. 22). Phenomenology asks us to be open to those experiences that present themselves. The question presented is in how these experiences might be used or interpreted in a way that reflects the inherent qualities of an artwork and, just as importantly, the relationships and rhizoidal connections between artist, artwork, physical environment and other
observers. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach is the observation of the experience together with an interpretation of its possible meaning (Henricksson & Friesen 2012). Such an approach is adopted in order to bring those phenomena to prominence and in doing so, highlight the background and often hidden information. An explanation of what this thesis understands to be hermeneutic phenomenology follows.

5.2 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The nature of phenomenology is expressed by Moran (2000 p. 229):

[S]eeking after a meaning which is perhaps hidden by the entity’s mode of appearing. In that case the proper model for seeking meaning is the interpretation of a text and for this reason Heidegger links phenomenology with hermeneutics. How things appear or are covered up must be explicitly studied. The things themselves always present themselves in a manner which is at the same time self-concealing.

The influence of Heidegger (1962) within the methodology is seen in the emphasis placed on the interaction between an acknowledged fore-structure, as described in section 1.1, and the readings of phenomena as they occur. Whilst priority is given to the phenomenon with due acknowledgement of personal prehistory, it is noted that a reversal of flow is also experienced. A re-evaluation of one’s fore-structure is a valid consequence of the interpretation of phenomena. In this, the conversation between those involved moves toward a state of suchness which de-emphasises the self and enables a purely cognitive state of engagement (Sedika 2005). The importance placed on the potential for a hermeneutic interpretation to enable a pathway for the re-evaluation of fore-structure is expressed by Gadamer (2013):
A person trying to understand something will not resign himself from the start to relying on his own accidental fore-bearings, ignoring as consistently and stubbornly as possible the actual meaning of the text until the latter becomes so persistently audible that it breaks through what the interpreter imagines it to be. Rather a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something (pp. 281–2).

Gadamer (2013) suggests here that the hermeneutic process of discovery is not without an emotional dimension. The inherent nature of hermeneutic phenomenology assumes a willingness to be open or exposed to sometimes unwanted feelings or anxieties. This element of hermeneutic engagement is demonstrated in the range of ways and levels by which data is engaged as discussed in chapter six.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) assert that hermeneutic phenomenology and qualitative research methodologies more generally are ‘defined by a series of tensions, contradictions and hesitations’ oscillating between ‘the broad, doubting post-modern sensibility and the more certain, more traditional positivist, post positivist and naturalistic conceptions of a study’ (p. 15). The contradictions inherent in this thesis are amplified when phenomenology is used to enable the multilayered interpretation of data within a poststructuralist setting.

Observations of phenomena taking place within the classroom provide the potential for a stream of thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) with the intention of offering insights into those events that may be unnoticed (Husserl 1970). Such a purely descriptive approach provides a platform where the lived experience is studied and offers a framework where complexities that the human condition may express are revealed and examined (van Manen 1997). The assumption that phenomena are experienced as being interconnected and interdependent is in keeping with Buddhist notions of oneness where the universe is seen as a single living organism rather than a collection of disparate parts (Murti 2013). The phenomenological approach adopted for investigation comes with an understanding that reality is not something to be
experienced as separate from the self but rather that the self and reality are inseparable. Cartesian notions of a separate being living in a separate world are challenged and pictured instead as involving an actor engaged both with and within the world interdependently (Jones 1975). Merleau-Ponty (2012) expresses the idea that living entities are both open to the world and embedded in it stating that, ‘To see is to see from somewhere with our awareness reaching out into things beyond ourselves’ (Forward xi).

Phenomena are experienced in states of consciousness through the senses to form a conversation between a life and their environment. Husserl (1970) proposes that in order to fully experience this interaction, it is necessary to bracket out individual biases toward the phenomena in order to see it clearly and thus enabling an authentic understanding (Husserl 1970). The structuralist assumption that culture can be studied as a science with an aim to set the ‘standard modern goals of foundation, truth, objectivity, certainty and system’ (Best & Kellner 1991, p. 20) is rejected by poststructuralists who contend that an objective analysis of structure (or anything for that matter) assumes that it is possible to be insulated from its influences. The disconnection between the poststructuralist understanding of the improbability of unbiased observation is seen in the way that early phenomenologists adhered to the concept of bracketing. The process of bracketing is explained in varied ways within the literature (Klein & Westcott 1994; Osborne 1994; Polkinghorne 1983) but there is general agreement that bracketing involves the identification of personal predispositions followed by an attempt to filter these out of the observation. Laverty (2003, p. 6) suggests that Husserl’s goal was to actually see things as they are through intuitive seeing. Husserl (1970) sought to show the purely immanent character of conscious experience by means of careful description. This phenomenological approach emphasises viewing knowledge of the world through the study of consciousness and assumes that phenomena have their own essential essence or truth which can only be revealed through bracketing to ensure objectivity. There is a sense of inconsistency in the Husserlian rejection of Cartesian dualism associated with the separation of the observer and the observed. It seems that within the varied explanations of bracketing, a form of separation is actually assumed between the
observer and the phenomenon. A conscious awareness of personal biases toward the phenomenon being observed presupposes a subject/object relationship where the phenomenon is observed as if from a separated self-situated fixed point in time and space.

This thesis is wary of a qualitative methodology such as phenomenology that looks for truth through an application of the scientific method of inquiry with its subsequent determination toward unbiased observation. Moustakis (1994) introduces his concept of ‘epoch’ to describe the process of bracketing one’s experiences as much as possible in order to experience a phenomenon in a new way but maintains that this ideal is rarely achieved. The phenomenological process attempts to offer methodological structure by reducing data into significant statements or quotes and then combining these into thematic categories (Bloomberg & Volpe 2012). The result of this analysis is to produce a rich textural and also structural description of the experience of participants with the entire process being dependent on the observer’s ability to employ a bracketed approach to the work (Creswell 2007). The bracketed approach to observations suggested by Husserl (1970) is important to consider given its similarities to Buddhist notions of detachment and nothingness but is limited by its insistence in denying any fore-ground. Rather than adopting a bracketed approach to the phenomenological experience, it was assessed as more important to consider how embedded ontological understandings could be incorporated into this thesis and this became a useful and even essential element within the research.

A phenomenologically-based methodology other than the Husserlian variety is warranted and comes from two convictions; first that bracketing was not going to allow for introspective dialogue which was considered a necessary study and second, that a suspension of beliefs and the subsequent denial of an ontological framework would limit the capacity to engage and respond in a transparent and intuitive manner with students. It was unclear as to whether the process of bracketing was entirely possible and even if it were, the absolute necessity to employ such a procedure was not considered to be beneficial to the research.
Research is value laden and these values cannot help but influence the work (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Taylor 1987). The acceptance of a vantage point from within which the world is viewed is consistent with a rejection of any notion of a ‘God’s eye view’ (Kinsella 2006, p. 5). Whilst each vantage point is unique in its ability to bring a particular non-objective way of seeing the world, it is possible to adopt a more inclusive view through mindful practice. Green (1995, p. 18) notes that ‘once we accept the notion of vantage point, we become aware that no one has a total vision from any place in the world’. In this sense every single individual’s view of the world comes to be seen as lacking and notions of neutrality and privilege begin to diminish. An acknowledgement of a decentred self occupying simply one of an infinite number of vantage points is a necessary precondition for hermeneutic analysis to occur with any authority. The decentred self is not an all-or-nothing proposition but takes its place as a continuum which inevitably leads toward a state of no-self, as maintained by Gadamer (2013, p. 279):

All correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought, and must direct its gaze ‘on the things themselves’. For the interpreter to let himself be guided by the things themselves is obviously not a matter of a single, ‘consciousness’ decision, but is the first, last and constant task. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.

Researchers believing themselves immune to prejudice by denying that they are subject to conditioning through previous life experiences are mistaken (Kinsella 2006).
The acknowledgement that we are subject to prejudice does not diminish the work but rather opens the way for this understanding to be used to provide further insights for investigation and interpretation.

The employment of bracketing as a way of distancing the researcher from the phenomena is considered an integral component of Husserlian phenomenological practice and it is because of this distancing that it was not considered appropriate for a research design to involve coparticipation between researcher and participants (Husserl 1970).

Hermeneutic phenomenology provides this thesis a methodology that encompasses the essence of descriptively-based Husserlian phenomenology (regarding its concern with the human experience as lived) with an added emphasis on the observer’s personal interpretation of the phenomenon. Heidegger introduced hermeneutics to phenomenological research because it was believed that pure description was limited in its ability to reveal meaning (Osborne 1994) and also suggested that the denial of the self in the interpretive process was counterproductive. Personal preconceptions are seen as important influences in the interpretive process as it is through these preconceptions that interpretation is possible. It is assumed within this thesis that ‘an interpretation is never a pre-suppositionless apprehending of something presented to us’ (Heidegger 1962, p. Sect 31).

The large and also seemingly trivial details are considered equally important and brought into focus with the intention of creating meaning and understanding. These interpretations take place by looking through a lens which acknowledges presuppositions. Interpretations assume that presuppositions are present and cannot be denied (Wilson & Hutchinson 1991). Gadamer (2013) refers to these presuppositions as the means by which we orient ourselves with a topic and stresses the importance of self-awareness. This study acknowledged the importance in finding a methodology that could provide a voice that might be heard throughout the range of differing texts that were involved. These texts include not only the spoken words of students but also the scribbled notes on the edges of visual diaries and workbooks, as well as a range of visual material including drawings, paintings and photographs.
The embedding of a hermeneutic methodology within this study was fore-grounded by ontological understandings informed by a personal mindful practice. Mindfulness itself may be considered a methodology (McCowen, Reibel & Micozzi 2011; Sellers 2013) and when this mindful approach to observation is practiced using hermeneutic phenomenology, new interpretations and meanings become more noticed. The next section will discuss the role that mindful engagements play in enhancing the research in terms of its relationship to hermeneutic phenomenology.

5.3 Mindful Hermeneutics

Mindfulness as it applies to phenomenological hermeneutics might be best thought of as becoming aware of the unnoticed or as experiencing the world as if for the first time:

There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?" (Wallace 2005).

Wallace (2005) uses this story to reinforce that most basic tenet of Buddhist ontology which proposes that the way to enlightenment begins when we become aware of what surrounds us. Becoming truly aware of surroundings in this sense requires a process of decentring and disidentifying (Covey 2005). Decentring asks that phenomena are experienced without the need to identify or name, in much the same way as that of impressionist artists, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In this cognitive state, those filters formed through previous experience that are normally present and that prevent us from seeing clearly and objectively are removed. Disidentification allows the endless dialogue to continue within our mind enabling a detachment from thought. This form of detachment challenges habitual ways of operating as a separate
entity within the world. Disidentification is an act of metacognition where a shift of perspective occurs; we are located without the privileged sense of performing in a motion picture of which we are the leading actor. This shift in perspective is seen to transpire within the students through an engagement with mindful practice and is discussed further in chapter six.

The introduction of mindful awareness in the classroom is initiated through meditative exercises, usually presented after a period of pause or reflection and often makes use of the singing bowl. These meditation exercises are undertaken with students in a seated position focusing on the breath as it moves in and out of the nostrils and ranges from one to five minutes in duration. These activities become a way through which all of the students can experience mindful awareness on both a personal and group level. The meditations are guided to the extent that students are asked to be aware of their breath and the effect it has on muscle tension, relaxation and inner-calmness. After each meditation, a brief discussion is initiated by the students where they share their experiences. We become acutely aware of what is taking place and how we are feeling during these meditation sessions. At the beginning, students thought that meditation was a relaxation activity or something that might be practiced before sleep. However, it was soon realised that a state of meditation is a heightened state of consciousness and awareness. Meditation requires focused concentration and when practiced over time increases cognitive awareness (Black, Milam & Sussman 2008; Burke 2009; Ergas 2014). It has a stimulant effect which is evidenced by a sense of clarity and determination rather than, as might be expected, sleepiness if it were simply a relaxant.

A relationship exists between the desired outcome of a state of emptiness through meditative practices and the implementation of a phenomenological outlook. This state of emptiness is such where habitual patterns of thought and preconceived ideas are challenged and re-imagined. Garfield (1995, pp. 236-7) adds insight into the part that meditation can play in promoting a phenomenological outlook:

Attachment arises as a consequence of the persistent, pervasive psychological, verbal and physical habits that constitute what
Buddhist philosophers call the ‘root delusion’, the ignorance of the true nature of things. That confusion consists in confusing existence with inherent existence and issues inevitably in one of the two extreme views – reification or nihilism. Only through extensive meditation on the nature of phenomena and on the nature of emptiness can these habits be abandoned.

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach to the methodology informed by meditative practice is not seen as something separated from or externally applied to the study but is an integrated part of the way the classroom operates and becomes the methodology used by those involved. The meditative sessions that take place at the beginning of each teaching period create an atmosphere that enable the students to ask questions of themselves concerning their intensions when preparing to paint or draw. Such questions go to the heart of trying to understand the nature and purpose of art and of creativity itself.

Mindful meditation as practiced within this study is a deliberate and conscious attempt to become cognisant of the lived experience of being together in the classroom. The meditation becomes an activity that is performed at the beginning of each session and provides a framework that maximises objectivity and awareness. The process of meditation requires a degree of metacognition where the breath is observed and concentrated on and where an awareness of ourselves breathing also becomes apparent. This continuous self-referential process is methodologically in keeping with the structure and function of the hermeneutic circle which is discussed in section 5.5. Such metacognition is required at times throughout the meditation to ensure that when the mind strays and becomes filled with unwanted thoughts, the meditator (student) can bring the focus back to the breath.

Sugunasiri (2009) suggests that mindful meditation can enable the meditator to become aware of an underlying methodology that may be applied in a broader sense to other areas of life. The way that meditative practice and the personal insights and understandings that come from it are transposed into the process of creating artwork
is an important finding of this study. Sugunasiri (2009, p. 61) lists some prominent features of meditative practice as they relate to classroom practice:

1. Attention to detail.
2. Building in variable.
3. Building in knowledge, understanding and awareness.
4. Systematicity.
5. Unwavering Focus.
6. Reminding.

Attention to detail (1.) is experienced in the classroom meditations as an acknowledgement of body posture. Suzuki (2011, p. 7) makes this statement:

These forms\(^{23}\) are not the means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture is itself to have the right state of mind. There is no need to obtain some special state of mind.

Students are asked to sit on their chairs with a straight back and with hands resting gently on the table or on their knees. This posture is adopted at the beginning of each lesson while the sound of the singing bowl is still in the air. The silence and concentrated state that this posture elicits is remembered and it is suggested that this experience be drawn upon during those times when focused effort is required to overcome habitual ways of seeing, so as to simply see an image or object for what it is.

The knowledge, understanding and awareness (3.) to which Sugunasiri (2009) refers comes from an acknowledgement of the breath through meditation. It is the most fundamental of all bodily functions and a deep understanding of its meaning is revealed through focused thought. Suzuki (2011, p. 11) suggests that ‘What we call “I” is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale’. It becomes possible during the meditation sessions to calm the mind to the point where there is

\(^{23}\) By ‘forms’ Suzuki is referring to postures. The full lotus posture, for example, expresses the oneness of duality. Suzuki asserts that if we think of our body and mind as two then this is wrong but it is also wrong to think of them as one. He believes that our body and mind are both two \textit{and} one. Our life is not only singular but also plural. ‘Each of us is both dependent and independent’ (Suzuki 2011, p. 7).
only the movement of air going in and out. An awareness of the coolness of the air as it enters the body and the warmth as it leaves is obtained. There is no mind or body but only the swinging door. The concentration on the breath is the basis for the sitting meditation known as zazen and it forms the basis of the Zen meditative technique (Suzuki 2011).

Unwavering Focus and Reminding (from above) relate to one another in that they are both concerned with the metacognitive aspect of the meditation as mentioned earlier. During the meditation sessions and in the discussion that follows, discussions take place on the self-talk or reminding process that is often required when drifting off into unwanted thoughts. We begin to realise that through meditative practice we are training ourselves to regain focus on the breath. This ability to pause and regain focus is practiced during the classroom sessions when engaged in drawing and painting activities and also during more reflective times when students have the opportunity to describe thoughts and feelings to each other and in writing. These invasive thoughts that occur during meditation are thought of as weeds in the mind; Suzuki (2011, p. 20) makes this statement:

We pull out the weeds and bury them near the plant to give it nourishment. So even though you have some difficulty in your practice, even though you have some waves while you are sitting, those waves themselves will help you.

As the meditative practice develops these invasive thoughts are less distracting and it offers an affirmation of the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology. When Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 111) speak of the dialogue that takes place between the observer and the phenomena to be understood they argue that questions should be asked about ‘what it means to those who create it, and attempt to integrate that with its meaning to us’. This study uses mindful hermeneutics in a similar way but sees the dialogue referred to by Bentz and Shapiro (1998) as more than that which might take place between the observer and the observed. The dialogue that occurs within this study is
also self-referential and requires metacognitive reasoning which is experienced and developed through meditation.

The implementation of hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology for this research is intended to reveal an understanding of human expression within a contextual awareness and perspective (Aanstoos 1987). It promotes an interconnectedness between all involved in the work so that the observer comes to be unified with the observed. It is assumed that the researcher is embedded within a context through which he or she both transforms and is transformed into a creative state of no-self. This may present a problem in terms of validation but it is overcome in varying degrees through an honest disclosure by the researcher about the extent to which they are influenced by the given context and by their presuppositions and life experiences. One of the outcomes of using meditation as a practice through which personal insight may occur, is that each individual within the classroom becomes both a researcher and subject of their enquiry. The hermeneutic approach invites those involved to actively and consciously construct their own understanding of the power of a reflective attitude to both personal and shared space. This adoption of a metacognitive inner dialogue when experiencing phenomena requires a shift in perspective from that of a centred-self observing the world from a distance to one which assumes the self to be an integral part of the experience. In this sense, the self becomes subsumed within the wider experience and dualities cease to exist.

This inner space created through meditative practice is experienced during periods of creative activity as a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). It is within such a space that the potential for altered perspectives and non-habitual ways of observing within an art-making environment become possible. The concept of latent space is now introduced and discussed.
5.4 Latent Space

The infinite vastness of outer space is unfathomable in a world consumed with beginnings, middles and endings. Lives are imagined to be linear – moving in a single direction from birth until death. The research contends that just as an infinite outer space exists, so too is there an equally infinite inner space. It is the movement toward an inner space that creates an environment which allows an experience of life in other more profound ways. Inner space has the potential to inform and change and it is in this sense that the term latent space is coined.

The concept of latent space is explained here in two sections: 5.4.1 and 5.4.2. The first section will make reference to the literature regarding the concepts of nothingness, emptiness, space and impermanence. Beginning this section in this way is important in that it challenges the view that these terms may have which tend to see them as nihilistic rather than within their intended Buddhist meanings. The second section 5.4.2 looks at the role that emptiness or space has in the tradition of Eastern visual art practice. The concepts associated with the use and effect of negative space within Chinese and Japanese art is discussed by way of reinforcing the importance of emptiness (space) within these traditions.

5.4.1 Nothingness, Emptiness and Space

The review of literature in chapter two pertaining to the Buddhist concepts of nothingness, emptiness and space, stress the importance of not thinking of these concepts in the negative or considering them as the absence of substance (Brazier 2013a; Krell 2008; Nyanaponika 1972; Olendzki 2009; Yen 2008). These concepts are elusive but possible to experience through unexpected events or deliberate and focused meditation. Common usage of the word emptiness is taken to mean the absence of something which was once apparent or had an existence. A glass of water,
for example, can be imagined to be half empty. When the word emptiness is used in a Buddhist sense however, it is suggesting that the glass was always empty. A basic teaching of Buddhism is that all things are empty in the sense of them being empty of a permanent substantial essence. In other words the glass is both empty and impermanent.

Emptiness and impermanence are not the negative or nihilistic concepts they may seem to be but rather offer a freedom to explore the world with limitless possibilities. Perhaps a phrase such as ‘without limit’ may be better than those emphasising emptiness, nothingness or impermanence. When the world is viewed within a Buddhist ontology, nothing is permanent and the fixed solidarity of anything is not seen or acknowledged. The concept of impermanence extends to the notion of (no) self which is prominent within the literature (Hayman 1997; Jackson 2003; Olendzki 2009; Yen 2008). All that is seen and experienced is change and impermanence. This does not mean that objects or forms are not actually physically seen but rather that these forms are seen as illusory (Hagen 1997, p. 145). Objects within the world are experienced in the context of them existing because of the absence of all else. Objects are dependent on this absence and this dependence is what is intentioned to be experienced more than the object itself. The essence of the object rather than any factual detail is more important to traditional Japanese and Chinese artists and reflects privileging of the relationship between objects more than the object itself. Another way of thinking about emptiness or impermanence is to see the interdependence of one thing from another rather than being seduced into believing that any given object exists as an independent unchanging entity.

It is the impermanence of the world that allows events to move forward and it is for this reason that impermanence is regarded as an agent of change. The impermanence of life, all life, is the reason that it is held as being so precious within Buddhist philosophy. Hagen (1997, p. 20) uses a metaphor of a rose to explain the relationship between impermanence and its influence on the way we experience existence:

Pick up a flower – a beautiful, living, fresh rose. It smells wonderful. It reveals a lovely rhythm in the swirl of its petals,
a rich dazzling colour, and a soft velvety texture. It moves and delights us. The problem with the rose it that it dies. Its petals fall; it shrivels up; it turns brown and returns to the earth. One solution to this problem is to ignore the real rose and substitute a plastic one, one that never dies (and never lives). But is the plastic rose what we want? No, of course not. We want the one that dies. We want it because it dies, because it is fleeting, because it fades. It’s this very quality that makes it precious. This is what we want, what each of us is: a living thing that dies.

The acceptance of impermanence and transience as the natural order permit living entities to see emptiness as a state that can inform a world view which in turn, inspires and transcends the noumenal. Emptiness allows for a calm and a silence that possesses the power of suggestion, stimulates the imagination and enhances perception. Someone sits and writes and looks at a computer screen conscious of all else that is not the computer screen; the space that is from the edges of the screen to the furthest reaches of the universe can be imagined a fertile void of emptiness. It is from this empty space that the computer screen and everything else came to be and it is into this space that it will one day return.

5.4.2 Emptiness and the East

The traditional art of Japan and China cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of concepts like emptiness and space along with the associated influences of Buddhist philosophy. In the case of Japan this is especially true of Zen Buddhism with its emphasis on meditation. The literature identifies the importance of meditative practices as a natural cultural pursuit that influences most aspects of life in these
countries (Gagh 2009; Oldstone-Moore 2011; Tzu 2011). This meditative influence is historically expressed within many forms of visual art and this is particularly true of drawing and painting which is of relevance within this thesis.

Descriptions of emptiness or nothingness in works of art are referred to as ‘negative space’. These negative spaces are devoid of suchness and serve the purpose of separating objects which have substance. Negative space can have the effect of adding emphasis to an object and defining it in relation to other objects. Positive shapes and negative shapes are discussed in art classrooms as binary opposites and it requires a subtle but expansive exercise of thought to see the mythological flaw in this way of thought. During one of the classroom activities students were asked to draw a simple object. It was a plastic ice cream container which now contained water. It was placed on the table. Its outline was drawn in pencil and shaded to indicate a light source and establish form. It seemed like a very simple exercise until the question was asked whether the positive shape or the negative shape of the container was drawn. After some discussion it was decided that the positive shape had been drawn. At this point the students were then asked to draw the shape around the container, that is, its negative shape. It only took a few seconds for most of the students to realise that both the so-called positive drawing would look exactly the same as the negative drawing. The only difference between their drawings would not be one of objectively measured actuality but would be the artist’s subjective understanding of the way she or he chose to see the object as it was being drawn. It required a mind shift toward an altered visual perspective in order to think in the negative. It was acknowledged during that session that there really was no difference between positive and negative space, as one required and was defined by the other. These questions of negative space prompted discussions of space more generally and of the nature of emptiness.

Parallels between classroom observations of the interdependence of objects and their surrounds in giving the other definition and form, is congruent with scientific understandings on the nature of matter. Matter was thought to be suspended in empty space where the full and void were two fundamentally distinct concepts of which the atomism of Democritus and Newton were based (Shapiro 2002). Einstein’s theory of general relativity and associated field equations demonstrated that such a separation
is not what is actually happening (Capra 1982). Einstein suggested that matter cannot be separated from its field of gravity and therefore matter and space are seen to be inseparable. In this, material objects not only determine the structure of the surrounding space but are, in turn, influenced by it (Capra 1982; Hawking 1988). Capra (1982, p. 246) encapsulates the scientific concept of empty space having content and meaning:

The distinction between matter and empty space finally had to be abandoned when it became evident that virtual particles can come into being spontaneously out of the void, and vanish again into the void.

The concept of empty space having content is interesting in itself but it begins to resonate more in the knowledge that spontaneous material can become existent from within this space. The scientific reality of something coming from nothing when considered metaphorically sees the possibility of considering empty space within a visual artwork as also offering the possibility of creating matter, thoughts and emotions.

Negative space within Japanese artworks reflecting Zen notions of emptiness as exemplified by the sumi-e style of painting are well understood (Suzuki 1959). This form of painting is distinguished by the sureness of the brush work and the use of emptiness to create meaning and reflect Zen ideals of simplicity, oneness and harmony. From this perspective, space is seen as a unifying force of all elements within a picture as exemplified in Zen inspired landscapes of mountains gradually disappearing into mist leaving only pure white paper where they remain present but silent and unseen. Something being present but remaining unseen was influential when considering the impact of meditative engagements on students within the art classroom which itself has depth, distance and silence. Space within Zen artworks encompasses a power that allows imagination to flourish by suggesting more than it reveals. Such painting invites a participation, not as a passive observer but as a contributor to the narrative. This silent space asks for a sharpened perception and a
willingness to explore and become vulnerable within a landscape that has mystery. At times the space and silence into which solid forms of rock seem to disappear begin to be as real and actual as the mountains they conceal with the line between the real and imagined becoming invisible. The use of line in many art forms is applied by way of containment. Line defines a shape and separates foreground from background. The line in Western art is used to keep some part of the painting in and keep other things out. When we ‘draw a line’ we are saying that this is the point at which we go no further. The absence of the use of definite line in Japanese art reflects the oneness and incongruity of the separation of anything. There is no hierarchy or privileging of elements within the painting which is then free to be experienced as equally weighted positive and negative space – each informing the other. Ross (1960, p. 98) describes the use of space within Japanese painting as being ‘filled with Ch’i, the Spirit or Vital Force.’

The spirit or force that finds its place within the empty space of so much Japanese art is filled with potential. It asks the viewer to consider its depths and to interpret its meaning. Looking into the space of Japanese art is an invitation to look within ourselves where the act of engagement becomes an act of reflection and introspection. Considering art in this metaphoric way creates a depth of understanding of the role that Zen can play in contemplative thought. Space within the art create this possibility of contemplation and so is latent in the sense that it holds a dormant yet still unrealised capacity to inspire, inform and be seen.

This research acknowledges the contribution that latent space makes toward the development of artworks. My experience as a meditative practitioner and art teacher provides with me with some insight into the potential that latent space has to influence the art-making process in ways that encourage a freshness of approach and a willingness to explore. Such influence is experienced and seen to have a similar effect on students within the art classroom as is discussed in chapter six.

The next section of this chapter explains the various methods used to generate and analyse data within the research.
5.5 Method

a) The Classroom

The research centred on four students chosen from within two larger groups of six attending a co-educational Catholic secondary college in Melbourne’s outer south-east. One group was made up of a combined year 7 and 8 class while the other was a year 11 class. The two groups were randomly selected from their respective larger regular art class. Student names were randomly selected from those who returned the required parental permission form and who had also personally agreed to take part in the study. The selection process consisted of drawing the names from a box which was placed in plain view at the front of the classroom. This process ensured transparency and quashed any imagined favouritism toward particular students. Each group was withdrawn from their larger class during regular timetabled ninety-minute art classes. The research groups were seen once per week over an eighteen-week block. They were separated from their regular class by being taken into an adjoining art room where the observations and activities were conducted. The adjoining room had a window through which the main class was visible so they were not entirely isolated. Whilst the emphasis within this study was the interpretation of phenomena as perceived by the individual, these two groups may be considered to be focus groups at least to the extent that part of the research design was interested in looking at the meanings created through the interaction of individual student members. Morgan (1988, p. 12) suggests that valuable insight may be generated through ‘the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would otherwise be less accessible without the interaction found in a group’. This is true when attention is given to the lines of flight and chance interactions that happen within the groups or assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari 2013).

It was important to experience the work we did together as a community of learners sharing all phenomena as they occurred within the space. The establishment of trust being also important, was achieved in part by my painting and drawing with the group and through a willingness to share my frustrations and successes with others. In this sense, the teacher/student relationship with its inherent power, was broken down to
the point where such distinction was not apparent. Given this, the feeling within the classroom was relaxed and while it is assumed that the students never forgot my role as ‘the teacher’, an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect developed.

As the study continued, there was more awareness of the little things like the way that students sat at their desks and of their facial expressions or the inflections in voice and the words that were used within the room. The attitude with which students approached their artwork and levels of concentration also became a focus of attention. These impressions were reflected upon and written up as annotated entries both during and at the conclusion of each session. The written entries became an important form of data which aided the memory of what had occurred during the day. Annotations also provided the stimulus and opportunity to revisit and reflect upon any initial interpretations that were made in the classroom. Descriptions were written to be as ‘thick’ (Geertz 1973; Ryle 1971) as possible which meant that events were not simply descriptively recorded but also described the setting and the actions that occurred with as much contextualisation as possible. The intention was to enable the audience of these descriptions an authentic understanding of what was happening from a singular perspective.

The work completed during the classes generated more data in the form of drawings and paintings. These usually originated in the visual diaries and then were often completed at home. This data was photographed and provided a rich source of information about the influence of mindful practices during the classes. In addition to the artwork in these visual diaries, students were also encouraged to annotate their work. These annotations often addressed issues of technique and contained personal insights into the technical process that was undertaken to create the work. Students also commented on how they felt or what they were thinking about while the work was being created. These visual diaries were looked at very carefully for clues about differences in their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the medium they used, and anything else that might provide an idea of what they were thinking about regarding their work practice. The artworks in the student’s visual diaries were engaged with as one might engage a written text where brush strokes and other marks
replaced words and provided insight into hesitations or confidence or understandings about the subject matter.

Students were asked to maintain a written journal of their experiences and thoughts about their art making practice and were encouraged to write something every day. These entries were initially transcribed and codified into statements which was an important prelude to the data analysis. However, upon reflection, simply having the typed transcript to read failed to convey other meanings and inferences contained within the handwriting and other marks made by the student. Authenticity was enhanced by being able to actually see the way that entries were written in the student’s own hand and provided a much stronger connection enabling an encounter with the texts at a deeper level than simply that provided by the words themselves. Diary entries were electronically scanned as PDFs to maintain the subtleties of meaning that seemed to emerge within letter formation, scribbles and misspellings that were made by students.

Each class began with brief informal conversations by way of greeting everyone and organising the materials that were going to be used during the lesson. Once we were settled we reminded ourselves about how we might centre our thoughts during the meditation session which followed. We sat quietly and began to think about our breathing and the feeling of air passing through our bodies. Some students placed their hands on the desks. A singing bowl was used at the beginning of each class as a way of focusing attention before the meditation session. Each of us had a turn in striking the bowl at the beginning of these classes during the course of the semester. One-minute meditations were conducted in silence with eyes gently closed. At the end of these brief meditations we discussed how we felt as a result of being still in body and mind. This reflective sharing of thoughts was an important beginning to each class. Students often spoke of being more aware of the noises around them or of being relaxed but somehow more awake.

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24 A small bowl which is this case was 20cm in diameter made of brass. When struck with a soft mallet a ‘gong’ sound is emitted and continues until it fades out which usually takes a minute or so. The singing bowl can also be used with a harder cloth covered mallet which is gently rotated around the vibrating rim producing the continuous sound from which its name is derived.
Once the meditation session was completed we commenced the art class with what was hoped to be a more mindful and concentrated approach. We worked predominately with watercolours during the sessions in an impressionistic style on a range of subjects. Each student had their own set of brushes and paint. Watercolour is a challenging medium in that it is difficult to make alterations to the work once the paint is applied. A considerable amount of time was spent exploring the strengths and limitations of the medium and experimenting with colour and tone. This was difficult at first for some students who were more result oriented and intent on ‘painting something’. Herrigal (1953) spent many years in Japan studying the way of the bow. His master made it clear to that the aim of the discipline in which he had engaged himself was not to hit the target stating that, ‘if you hit the target with nearly every shot you are nothing more than a trick archer who likes to show off’ (p. 63). The process of doing is in itself the real art. Discovering and becoming comfortable with the medium was explained as something like the exercises and scales a musician does before being capable of confident self-expression. It became obvious to those within the groups that a process of discovery was required if the nature of watercolour paint was to be understood. This was difficult for those students who simply wanted to be told what to do with the painting materials which in my experience is a common occurrence in the art room.

Two differing types of students emerged within the classroom. For some students the art seemed to naturally occur. These students expressed their feelings through experimenting and playing with techniques and washes. They were fearless and enjoyed the glow that came from working with a transparent medium on white paper or even drawing a simple line. They enjoyed the accidents, spills and unintentional occurrences that are inherent with any medium but perhaps more so with watercolour than most others. They worked for themselves and were unafraid of failure. That being said, they often seemed to experience frustration at never feeling that the work was really finished and not living up to their hopes and expectations. Other students were in some ways more thoughtful. They became well practiced in techniques but often laboured over the careful and precise application of paint. Things had to be right. This process often found them frustrated too. Their work was often never good enough.
They became bound up in the application of the paint but did not see the paint as a language or capable of emotive expression.

Langer (1989, p. 32) discusses the notion of our obsession with outcome or product oriented results and its potentially negative effect on mindful practice. She suggests a better approach would be to ask questions like, ‘How do I do it?’ more than ‘Can I do it?’. This approach is seen as associated with an emphasis more on process than product. One group of students experienced the delight of natural expression, without which there is often little honesty in an artwork. Other students enjoyed precision and technical mastery without which a painting or drawing may fail in its ability to be readable. The small group sessions for this study were intent on exploring a middle way that combined the strengths of these approaches and through that, arrive at a deeper or at least different understanding of the creative process.

Sollier (1972, p. 70) sums up the idea of a third way of working:

Yes spontaneity is freedom, the way of knowledge- but only on condition that it is guided by technique painstakingly absorbed and then forgotten by the reasoning mind. Without this condition there will be only frustration and you will once again be a prisoner of a dream.

The work we did together during these classes and the mindful approach that was encouraged did not attempt to find the balance between the technical and the expressive assuming such a balance need exist. The purpose of the work with the students was to explore the idea that art-making techniques and expression are not separate but are one and the same.

b) Data Generation

A range of qualitative methods were employed in the generation of data for this study. These methods incorporated five processes each of which will now be discussed:
i. The use of both a writing journal and visual diary where visual artwork, personal reflections, classroom observations and occurrences were recorded. All of those involved in the study including myself had two primary ways of recording personal data. The first such way was by using what became known as the journal and the second being the larger A3 visual diary. Ethical issues involved with keeping a diary were discussed in class. It was acknowledged that a diary is usually considered to be a private document but it was also acknowledged that diaries could also have a function beyond the reflective self. Both types of diaries used by students within this study were likely to be seen by other class members and certainly by myself and it was with this in mind that students made their entries during the semester. The ability to effectively use both the journal and the visual diary was not assumed and some form of instruction seemed appropriate at the beginning. The literature regarding the use of reflective journals and visual diaries suggests that students need this type of introduction and this is especially true for those students with no prior experience in their use (Dyment & O’Connell 2003; Epp 2008). The use of journals and diaries represented a way of learning that contrasted with the teacher centred classroom model within which students were more comfortable (Friere 1993). Given this context, it is understood that students might not be as familiar with this way of thinking and writing (Dyment & O’Connell 2010).

Each participant was issued with their ruled A5 booklet (the journal) wherein they were asked to keep a daily record of thoughts and feelings about the art classes and also about their ongoing personal meditative practice and art-making. The physical style and look of the journal was chosen with some deliberation. Journals were commented upon by many students as feeling nice to the touch. This was considered an unusual thing to say about what was essentially an exercise book. Some students also mentioned that the plain brown-paper made the booklet seem more important to them somehow. The physical size of the journals meant that they could be carried easily in pockets or bags as one might more personal items like phones or wallets. These journals, through their visual and tactile novelty, tended to be seen by participants as something special and different from their other school books. It was
hoped that such a perceived difference would encourage all involved to write in a different way too; not to simply record events but to use the marks made within as a form of personal expression. Most entries within the journals were completed by students at home but they were also brought to each class and notes were often made by students during class time. These journals became a rich source of data and formed the foundation for informal interviews, classroom discussion and personal reflection. The data generated within these diaries constituted not just the written words but also the actual way the words were written. Some were written hastily and were untidy as if written on a train or uneven surface. Other writings seemed to be carefully constructed and written with a sense of intent. Data was generated from these journals by assuming an empathic view of the words as much as the meaning of the words themselves. The letters and words became graphic representations of feelings or emotions in the same way that the calligraphic marks made by a sumi-e artist convey meaning beyond the simple mark itself. Students were encouraged to write about their thoughts in an expressive and freely associated way. They were invited to make up their own words if they expressed a feeling to do so or to supplement words with drawings or other marks on the paper; Henricksson and Friesen (2012, p. 1) make this statement:

[U]nlike many other phenomenological and qualitative research approaches, hermeneutic phenomenology is particularly open to literary and poetic qualities of language, and encourages aesthetically sensitized writing as both a process and product\(^{25}\) of research.

The journals became a tangible connection between the thoughts and ideas generated within the contained world of the classroom and the expansive world beyond. The visual diary was a spiral bound A3 sketch book containing plain cartridge quality paper. This book was used in class to take both written but also visual notes by way of investigating ways of solving visual problems. It became a space within

\(^{25}\) Italics in original.
which perceived mistakes could be made without fear. The notion of ‘mistake’ became a common topic for conversation within the class and was eventually replaced by the word ‘experiment’ and how this word might relate to in-class discussions on the nature of creativity. The visual diary became a place where risks could be taken. It became an environment where all participants could feel comfortable and confident that they would not be judged by others. A willingness to take risks stimulated by and within a safe environment is an essential precondition of the creative process (Robinson 2001). The use of visual diaries has a long history within the visual arts. In her study of self-practice as an artist, Herivel (1997, p. 55) used a visual diary as the main form of documenting her experiences stating that, ‘My main objective was to discover what it meant to experience the process of being immersed in the discipline of visual arts making’. The maintenance of a visual diary is not a passive process but an active engagement with the work. It was used to clarify ideas in the creation of artworks and for Herivel (1997, p. 58) became ‘a significant aspect in understanding how I construct visual knowledge’.

The visual diary became a highly valued document for all participants once some outline was given as to how they might be used. It was a record of what occurred within the classes and in this it documented their journey as artists. It became a timeline of experiences and insights. Hermeneutics was applied to the visual diaries in that questions were asked of and about the drawings and paintings contained therein. Through this process, a deeper understanding or interpretation was often gained which, in turn, led to more development work. The data generated by students in written form provided the ground upon which later interpretations generated from other data was built. Henricksson and Saevi (2012, p. 73) remind us of the importance of words and language in this statement:

Within hermeneutic phenomenology, writing is the method; it is how phenomenological research is done (van Manen 1997) and it is through language and writing that we hope to come to understand some aspect of life.
ii. Paintings and drawings.

Data was generated in the form of preliminary pencil sketches and watercolour paintings which provided the basis for finished works. Foundational drawings and the annotations that accompanied them were produced in the visual diary. These drawings and paintings did not necessarily develop into a finished artwork. As previously discussed, the emphasis was on process more than product with encouragement to experiment freely with techniques and subjects. The reading of these artworks was dependent on having some understanding of the artistic intentions of the students. With this in mind it was important to look carefully at their journal and visual diary entries to understand what they were thinking about during the production stage. The unstructured interviews also provided an opportunity to discuss artwork that was in progress or completed. The intention in analysing the artworks with the support of other forms of data was to explore whether the influence of mindful practices during the art classes could be seen within the work. The discussion of these interpretations and the extent to which the influence of mindful engagement might be seen in the student artworks will be discussed in the next chapter.

iii. Photographs of participants working within the classroom setting.

Photographs of students working within the classroom were generated by all participants at random times throughout the lessons. The use of the word ‘taken’ was deliberately avoided when describing the way photographs manifest, as the term has an inference of objective possession and also one of depleting in that which is photographed. Nothing was taken when these photographs were made. In fact, the opposite was true in the sense that the photographs provided an opportunity for pause and reflection. The act of making a photograph is so ubiquitous now that the act itself is often unnoticed and this was apparent in the classroom. The class camera was the only device used to photograph classroom activities and this was to ensure that no images were available to students for their personal use which would have been a breach of ethics. The photographs were almost always looked at by everyone at some time during the lesson with individual students reserving the right to delete images of themselves if they desired.
The act of seeing something is not as natural as might be thought. The process of seeing shares with our other senses an act of interpretation filtered through a cultural and historical lens (Classen 1993). Just as unnatural are the representations derived from vision be they drawings, paintings, photographs or other visual media. These derivative images are different from those which occur as a continuous flow from the retina to the brain in that they are the ‘products of a specific intentionality’ (Banks 2005, p. 7). It was with this notion of inherent intentionality within the photographs that they were considered as sources of data. The images generated with the class were with me as I read through the transcripts of the lesson and listened to the recordings. They provided an added layer of meaning to the experience for me and were an invitation to consider the relationship between the visual dialogue used and the extent to which an appreciation and interpretation of the visual is dependent on language.

iv. Unstructured Interviews.

The unstructured interviews began with the same core question for each participant which was ‘what type of things were you thinking about today as you were drawing and painting’ after which the interview took the form of a free flowing conversation which was informed by the participants’ answers to the questions. The purpose of this type of interview was to illicit hermeneutic phenomenology’s concept of inductive epistemology. This form of interview held no particular assumptions or agenda on my part. Such an unstructured approach to the interview was designed to explore unanticipated and unexpected findings. These interviews were conducted in a corner of the room in plain view and usually lasted a few minutes. During the semester every member of the two groups were interviewed on two occasions in this way.

At the conclusion of the interviews, the students were shown the notes I’d made with them and asked to engage in a conversation about my interpretation of their comments. Notes were also made of these conversations. It was important to enable the students to gain a sense of ownership of the data and partner with me as to how the data was understood. This study did not approach the methodology as something that was done to or applied to the students but rather as a set of principles that could be used to gain an understanding of experience.
v. Audio recordings of classroom activities.

Recordings were made of each class as a whole with a small digital recorder. The recorder was placed in a central position on the table we all shared as our workspace. It recorded the general conversations of the room without featuring any particular student. The recorder became a passive listener. It did not privilege one student over another and this emotionally detached device enabled examination of data that would otherwise be missed as attention usually focused on one student at a time. These recordings allowed multiple voices to be heard without necessarily privileging one over another. Much of the recordings were not intelligible in terms of the words that were said but they nevertheless provided valuable data. These recordings reminded me of the atmosphere created within the room. They also contained the random sounds of brushes mixing paint and water being poured.

Those parts of the recordings that were intelligible were transcribed and checked for accuracy by me, the researcher. Notes and descriptions were also made of the sounds that were recorded. The verbal transcriptions were then examined and divided into statements. Statements were organised into clusters of meaning or essential themes using a cut-and-paste method (Rossman & Rallis 1998, p. 171). I moved between the transcripts of conversations and my own interpretation of events that occurred within the classroom. The writing that came from the interpretation and cross-referencing of the recordings was carefully constructed so as to create an evocative response from the audience.

The coding of the recordings presented a problem. It was unclear whether the codes should come from the themes identified within the recordings or be generated based on universal concepts and larger theoretical perspectives and then try to fit the data into them. It was decided to use both of these methods to codify the transcripts. It made sense to use codes i. and ii. (see figure 6) as these themes came very clearly through the transcripts and were considered important as they spoke to the art-making within the context of the group. Coded themes identified in iii. and iv. were not obvious or immediately apparent in the recording but were subsumed within data and found expression in subtle ways creating a subtext. The creation of codes iii. and iv.
provided a focus to look for these subtleties and interpretations. Codes iii. and iv. also generated data that was derived on the level of the individual within the group. The following colour coding was used to cluster the transcripts which were highlighted for ease of reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Painting/Drawing Technique/Activity</th>
<th>Green</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Relationships and Social Structure</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Personal Insights/ Self-discovery</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Mindful/Meditative Experiences</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6: Data Generation Codes**

On analysis of the recordings it became clear that there was a requirement on my part to differentiate between the voice of the individual within the groups and the collective voice of the group. Smith (2004, pp. 50-1) is referring to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) but his thoughts also hold true for hermeneutic phenomenology, as he states:

My advice to someone committed to conducting focus group work within an IPA perspective is to ‘parse’ transcripts at least twice, once for group patterns and dynamics and subsequently, for idiosyncratic accounts. If the researcher is convinced that participants are able to discuss their own personal experiences in sufficient detail and intimacy, despite the presence of the group, then the data may be suitable for IPA.

The phenomenological hermeneutic method as it was applied to the audio recordings, required an act of description more than explanation.
c) Data Analysis

Data analysis was continuous in its search for conceptual themes and insights. Eisner (1991, p. 32) states that, ‘features that count do not wear labels on their sleeves: they do not announce themselves. . . It is not a matter of checking behaviours but rather of perceiving their presence and interpreting their significance’. The process of identifying and interpreting data was conducted using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, namely, the hermeneutic circle.

The interpretive emphasis that defines hermeneutic phenomenology was a challenge in bringing a ‘critical self-awareness of my own subjectivity, vested interest, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research and findings’ (Finlay 2008, p. 17). Hermeneutic phenomenology appropriated elements of descriptive phenomenology and incorporated these elements into the interpretive hermeneutic process of understanding as described by the hermeneutic circle illustrated below:

Figure 7: The Hermeneutic Circle

![Public Domain Image](image-url)
The interpretation and analysis of data used the hermeneutic circle of understanding as an approach to data analysis. The data was generated and engaged with known self-examined existing preconceptions or biases. It was important to be open to these biases. Gadamer (2013) stressed the importance of the implementation of the hermeneutic circle commencing from a knowledge of self:

This openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in relation to it. . .This kind of sensitivity involves neither ‘neutrality’ with respect to content nor the extinction of one’s self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one’s own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one’s fore-meanings (Gadamer 2013, pp. 281-2).

The implementation of the hermeneutic circle required the interpretation of the data to shift back and forth focusing first on personal assumptions and biases and then returning to look at the participants’ experiences in light of these assumptions. It became a continuous process of interpretation and then re-interpretation. This approach to research is as much an attitude as a way of data analysis. An applied consciousness was required to be aware of the other and to be empathetic toward the experiences of those being observed (Finlay 2008). This empathetic approach to the analysis of data is referred to as a ‘fusion of horizons’ by Gadamer (2013, p. 306) where horizon is taken to mean those presuppositions held by all those involved in any given phenomenon. A fusion of these horizons was seen by Gadamer (2013) as an opportunity for new understanding and insightful interpretation.

The adoption of the hermeneutic circle as a way of analysing data meant that attention was given to small details and these were discussed in terms of the whole. The whole, in turn, was interpreted in terms of the small details. This interpretive cycle was repeated throughout the study, the intention being to ‘reveal a totality of meaning in all its relations’ (Gadamer 2013, p. 487). Heidegger (2008, p. 144) adds an important
element to the understanding that the hermeneutic circle plays in generating data for analysis as it relates to works of art. He states:

[that] we are compelled to follow the circle. This is neither a makeshift nor a defect. To enter upon this path is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought, assuming that thinking is a craft. Not only is the main step from work to art a circle like the step from art to work, but every separate step that we attempt circles in this circle. In order to discover the essence of the art that actually prevails in the work, let us go to the actual work and ask the work what and how it is.

An example of the constant shift, back and forth, between the part and the whole is found in literature through the interpretation of a word within a sentence. The word has a meaning beyond itself when seen within the context of the sentence and the sentence has meaning only through the cumulative meaning of individual words. In the case of a watercolour painting, a brush stroke finds its deeper meaning as a mark made on a painting which in turn is made up of individual marks. The hermeneutic circle explores this non-linear way of interpreting data by establishing a relationship that invites entry points by the researcher at different levels. These levels relate to one another and offer different perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text. In this, the hermeneutic circle points toward a process of data analysis offering a nuanced interpretation that other forms of analysis may not (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2013).

The language used to discuss and interpret the works of art and other phenomena encountered became a central concern within the study. It was not enough to simply describe what was happening using words which may have been more suitable for purposes of straight reportage: being in a classroom with students cannot be reduced to a technical or academic interaction but involves the intuitive ability to feel and act in a way that reflects a compassion for the other and a willingness to serve. The
methodology and consequent analysis of the data required using words and phrases in a way that reflected this intuitive state. Gadamer (2002, p. 106) stresses the relationship that exists between language and our engagement with life:

The word becomes binding, as it were: it binds one human being with another. This occurs whenever we speak to one another and really enter into genuine dialogue with another.

A relationship exists between language, our ontological beliefs and our relationship with other people (Henricksson 2012). Each of these three elements both influences and is influenced by the others. Hermeneutic phenomenology endeavours to illuminate our lived experience and provide meanings; ‘it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness’ (van Manen 1997, p. 11). Descriptions of the phenomena occurring within the classroom needed to capture more than simply that which was taking place. They needed to offer a sense of the experience of being there and also a sense of the importance that the small details held in their ability to provide deeper layers of meaning. Gadamer (2013, p. 393) states that, ‘in hermeneutic phenomenology, the task of the writer is to stimulate and hold the thought of the audience in a productive movement’ and therefore it was important that words were chosen that might stimulate genuine response and feeling. The words chosen in this study were not just my own. Extensive use was made of quotations by the students. Their voices provided an authenticity to the work and grounded it in the shared lived experience. The interpretation of these quotations required a language that was both descriptive and evocative. It was important that the data found a voice that could be understood. Gadamer (2013, p. 415) suggests the fundamental importance of the voice used in descriptive analysis when he states that, ‘no text and no book speaks if it does not speak a language that reaches the other person. Thus interpretation must find the right language if it really wants to make the text speak’. The language that is used and the prehistory of the researcher are recognised as important considerations in the interpretive analysis of texts even when those texts are not linguistic in nature. A recognition of my pre-existing prejudices and
the part that these prejudices played in my interpretation of events was a crucial component of the work.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

The need to protect the research participants and develop a feeling of trust within the research groups was a prime consideration within the study. It was also important to create a sense of integrity and to ensure that there be no hint of misconduct or offensiveness that might reflect badly on those institutions that gave permission for the study to take place (Isreal & Hay 2006). These concerns required an anticipation of ethical issues that may arise and actively address them within the research plan. Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 54) state that, ‘A board concern for research ethics may begin with mindfulness of the effects of the research on those who participate in it, including the researchers’. This statement suggests a relationship between a state of mindfulness in the Buddhist sense and the question of ethics. Mindfulness requires a metacognitive perspective where a higher self ‘observes the various inquiring selves who engage in the thinking and doing that is research’ (Bentz & Shapiro 1998, p. 54). An overview of the ethical issues that were important to address within this work was made possible through the adoption of such a perspective.

The ethical issues that were of particular importance formed themselves under the following headings: i. ‘Informed Consent’ which involved the process of obtaining permission from all those involved to partake in the research; ii. ‘Confidentiality’ meant ensuring that privacy of all involved was maintained throughout the study and that a protocol for the storage of data was maintained; and iii. ‘Protection from Harm’ meant that the experience of being a participant in the study had no negative physical or emotional effects on the participants involved.

i. Informed Consent
The process of informed consent began with an introductory explanation of the nature and purpose of the study to the entire class from which the smaller group would be acquired. This information session was conducted over a thirty-minute period and allowed time to answer any questions that students might have concerning what they could expect from becoming participants. It was stressed during these sessions that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could decide to withdraw from the study with no explanation for withdrawal being necessary.

The methods used within this study required participants to agree to be observed within the classroom and also to allow my access to personal written journals, visual diaries and artwork. In addition to this, I needed permission from participants to allow themselves to be subject to being photographed. These permission forms were written in plain language and distributed to the school principal, the relevant classroom teacher, parents/guardians of those students who indicated an interest in the study and also to the students themselves for an acknowledgement by signature.

ii. Confidentiality

Confidentiality within the research was maintained by not disclosing the identity of the participants to others outside the art class. In the case of working with a small group where the identity of other group members were obviously known, it was important not to reveal inappropriate information about individual group members to others within this smaller group. Confidentiality cannot be entirely guaranteed at all times and the possibility of an unintended breach, however unlikely, was discussed with participants (Strike 2006). The study took place within a Catholic secondary college which had its own policies regarding confidentiality and the protection of harm for its students and these policies were respected at all times. The actual names of participants were not used in the study either specifically or as might be shown on artworks or within journals and visual diaries. Any discussion or interpretation of student work was careful to not disclose individual identities through information that might relate to them. Electronic data was stored in a password protected facility with access only available to myself and my principal supervisor. Student journals and visual
diaries were kept in a locked filing cabinet. These physical documents were given back to the students involved in the study at the conclusion of the data analysis process.

iii. Protection from Harm

A mindful approach to the research meant that the participants were placed at the centre of the process of inquiry. An empathetic approach to the work meant that participants were seen as individual human beings within a social context. Teachers and others working with children have a duty of care to those for whom they are responsible. This duty of care was taken to mean that I owed a duty to those within the classroom due to the trust placed in me by their parents and the larger community. In the case of teachers, that duty has been described as being ‘in loco parentis’ to the student concerned. It was with this responsibility and willingness to act in place of the parent that classroom collaborations transpired.

Concluding Remarks

The data interacted and created a depth of meaning and understanding that was only possible using a qualitative approach. Data is described by O’Toole and Beckett (2010, p. 171) as something that ‘you need to converse with, unmediated by what you think you might be supposed to be saying to each other and looking for’. It became important to see the threads that joined these various forms of data as it was considered that any individual form was not enough in itself to provide an authentic reading. The fusion of these data achieved a contextual account of the individual students’ ways of being (Titchen & Hobson 2012, p. 128) and enabled interpretations to draw upon, on the created rhizome of layered meanings. This form of integrated data generation meant that phenomena were not seen necessarily in isolation where

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26 Italics in original.
one form of datum might comment on or support another, as could be expected in a multiple methods approach using, for example, triangulation (Titchen & Hobson 2012, p. 260) but also as individual parts within a whole experience.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is philosophically based on an assertion of the validity of human lived experience. It also relies on a range of artistic, imaginary and descriptive texts to show the moment—‘the phenomenological now’ (Moran 2000, p. 43). The next chapter will employ a range of such texts and literary traditions to provide a rich interpretive description of the phenomena experienced by students and myself within this study.
Chapter 6: A Painting Finds Voice

Figure 8: Author’s Original Artwork 6

There is a time in the painting process where the artist stops actively driving the work and instead begins to listen to it. This stage of the painting sees the addition of more detail to the foreground and the suggestion of shadows or waves in the distant water. It is near completion. I tend to stop at this stage and come back to it the next day with fresh eyes. In this instance I took a pause and let the painting tell me what was required to bring it to some form of completion. The foreground needed work and I considered the inclusion of a fence to push the distant headland further back and create some sense of distance in the work. This fence was to be entirely an invention on my part but seemed to be needed.

I listened to the paint as it described itself to me. There occurred a shift in the power balance from a place where I had once told the painting what I wanted to a place where I now needed to do as I was told. A painting always knows what it needs from the artist if the artist is willing to listen. It was evolving (becoming) before my eyes and beginning to have a life of its own with its own sense of direction and purpose. It became my task at this stage to act on those wishes and let it take me toward completion. How was it
that mere marks of paint on paper could convey such thoughts to me and ask so much of me? I began to think of the person to whom this painting was destined. This painting would talk to her in some way too but perhaps in a less demanding voice.

Introduction to Data Analysis

This chapter provides an analysis of the data generated through the implementation of a mindful approach to art-making within the research space. The analysis of the data generated draws on poststructuralist understandings of the lived experience and Deleuzian sensitivities. These understandings frame the analysis using a key word within the research question; *becoming*. This chapter presents in four sections (6.1–6.4), where each section examines and discusses the artwork and written material produced. The sense of any observer is subordinated within the images, words and thoughts of the students enabling an empathetic multilayered understanding of data as it is revealed. It becomes the narrative of an experience in keeping with the essence of a hermeneutic approach as was discussed in chapter five. A willingness to allow the interconnectedness of data to speak becomes an essential precondition for dialogue to take place, as such described:

The hermeneutic route to understanding is through the iterative use of patterns, metaphors, stories and models to amplify understanding. We ‘dialogue’ with the phenomenon to be understood, asking what it means to those who create it, and attempt to integrate that with its meaning to us (Bentz & Shapiro 1998, p. 111).

It is inherent in the hermeneutic approach to tell the story from the perspective of the person doing the work (Bryman 2001). Personal inquiry and ongoing refinement on the part of students is revealed in the observations, artwork, diary entries and the
transcripts of conversations that follow. These data are moments in time and do not represent an ending or final statement. They do not arrive but are always becoming in the sense that they have evolved from prior experiences. They are part of an impermanent and continuous flow of creation and as such are subject to change. Any confidence in perceiving phenomena as real and of substance is challenged by the Deleuzian becoming and the inherent impermanence of the present moment to which it alludes. To observe phenomena is to watch a moving picture; a film where one moment or frame becomes the next, and add light on to the nature of the moment. The illusion of movement experienced when watching a motion picture is the result of a natural feature of the eye by which an afterimage persists for a brief moment on the retina when that image/frame is gone. Each frame of the film is a discrete and separate image much like a photograph. Many of these discrete images are projected each second, one after another, onto a screen. This continuous blurring of images from the past to the present and to the future creates the illusion of movement: the illusion of reality which is known as the ‘persistence of vision’ (Monaco 2000). The notion of the present moment as being more than one-dimensional is offered by Reynolds (2010) where he states that, ‘any living present, for it to be meaningful, involves a retentive and potentive element rather than being a self-contained instant, or a series of such instants’ (p. 58). The adoption of a view that sees events placed on a continuum of becoming is part of an overall stance within this thesis that looks for rhizoidal interconnectedness between all things as they are contained by smaller assemblages within the larger assemblage which is the research space.

Connections between (within) participants and their surroundings are noticed as potential lines of flight requiring an immersion into the rhizoid and a willingness to accept the unfamiliarity and disturbance that thinking in such a non-linear way may reveal. Emerging patterns were discovered in the way that the students responded to mindful engagement with artwork produced and reflective comments that were generated. These patterns offered further insight into phenomena and through this process even other dimensions of thought were realised.

27 An afterimage is that which continues to appear in one’s remembered vision after exposure to the original image has actually ended.
The following exploration of the varied forms of data in this chapter were not conducted from a fixed place or time or sense of self but involved continual movement. Such movement enabled those altered and unexpected thoughts that find expression by ‘travel[ling] in the thinking that the writing produces’ (St. Pierre 2000, p. 258). The nomadic wandering through the data challenges the relationship and often inherent power imbalance associated with observer/subject duality and negotiates the boundless (borderless) spaces both around and within us. The nomad ‘does not respect the artificial division between the domains of representation, subject, concept and being; it replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that know no bounds’ (Massumi 2013, p. xi). This nomadic way of engagement in the classroom is explained by Dixon (2008, p. 94) in asserting that a deconstruction of traditional teacher/student identities allows a ‘way of seeing, a way of reading or analysing a complex and unstable set of storylines made available within the conversation of the classroom’. Focus beyond the borders means a shift in emphasis beyond the obvious image contained within the frame (habitual expectations) toward the undefined space between and surrounding the frame without which the image (phenomena) offers only obvious and literal interpretation. Braidotti (2011) reminds us that creativity is not a passive process. It is nomadically active in looking for the ‘active displacement of dominant formations of identity, memory and identification. Becoming has to do with emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the “outside”’ (p.235).

The ways by which data was generated and presented are seen as supporting a view that supports curiosity toward all things: a trait which is fundamental to a mindful state. Data came about through the adoption of a shared attitude by and between participants which is that of the ‘mindful inquirer’ (Bentz & Shapiro 1998, p. 36). The relationship between adopting a mindful enquirer approach to the research and fundamental elements of Buddhist philosophy is seen in their shared propensity to inhabit multiple perspectives. Inquiry does not always mean to look for an answer. It is often enough to ask a question and to ponder the question itself (Kabat-Zinn 1994).

Students generated combinations of data and were engaged as elements contributing to the rhizoid of the classroom and in this sense, work produced was not seen as being entirely their own. The connections, experiences and influences that were entangled
within the classroom also contributed to the work at individual and shared understandings.

This chapter asks questions derived from the data with the conversation generated being ongoing with (between) students and a non-embodied self. The work(ings) experienced by each of the four featured students in this discussion is influenced through layers of thought and experiences generated by each of the four students back to the larger classroom group that became a cycle or flow of experience that perpetuated throughout the space. These students were not selected as a separate representative sample from within the larger class. They (we) were seen as being in a state of immersion and transformation containing within (between) each, the spirit of others working within the space both past and present. Those involved in the research present as ‘a multiplicity connected to other multiplicities in ways that are non-constraining-intensities becoming rhizome becoming intensities and so on’ (Sellers 2013, p. 13). Writings and artwork generated are not presented as the record of a fixed moment on a linear progression but rather occupy an ongoing middle space where rhizomatic connections challenge notions of logical progression or privilege. Students are considered as both self-contained and merged with one another offering a ‘spreading multidirectionality’ (Sellers 2013, p. 13).

As data is being generated there is a tendency to see individual students as self-contained and separate sources of information. This is in obvious conflict with Buddhist understandings of no-self, and is rather a connectedness between all things. The natural tendency to individualise students within the thesis is also at odds with Deleuzian notions of haecceity and poststructuralist understandings more generally. Binaries and the categories that divide are dissolved within Deleuze’s plane of immanence ‘where immanence means to remain within’ (Davies 2010, p. 55). The question may be asked ‘within what?’ Deleuze maintains that the plane of immanence means to remain within more that the self but to remain within all of life whether that life be organic or inorganic. It is the moment when a subject realises it’s immanence that haecceity exists. Halsey (2007) describes such moments:
A haecceity is a moment of pure speed and intensity (an individuation) – like when a swimming body becomes-wave and is momentarily suspended in nothing but an intensity of forces and rhythms. Or like when a body becomes-horizontal such that it feels only the interplay between curves and surfaces and knows nothing of here and there, observer and observed. (Halsey, p. 146)

Understanding Deleuzian haecceity requires a particular type of sensitivity and willingness to experience the essence of an object or individual more than their actuality. This level of sensitivity is considered an important element to include in a hermeneutic study but is difficult to incorporate within the methodology. The possibility of using elements of traditional Japanese and Chinese art is considered as a metaphor to gain an understanding of the notion of haecceity. Japanese and Chinese ink paintings often suggest mountains, rivers and clouds more that clearly defining them. It is sometimes difficult to see the outlines of shapes or they are simply thought of as being unnecessary. These paintings try to capture the spirit of those elements within the landscape that distinguish one from the other. Each element within the landscape is revealed through the density of the ink, the speed and intensity of the brush stroke and the use of empty space. The unseen energy (or as it is expressed in Japanese, ‘Ki’) of the artist is felt within the work.

The notion of Ki as it relates to Japanese art informs the understanding of haecceity within this thesis and changes the way that students, artwork and spaces are experienced.

Deleuze and Guattari (2013, p. 306) make this statement:

There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are
haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations or movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacity to affect and be affected.

The Ki or energy of the mountain, river or cloud is the haecceity of a person or subject or thing. A person is not to be thought of as being separate or described but is experienced and felt. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach to this thesis asks that engagement with students, the data and metacognitivity is conducted at the depth that a haecceitic sensitivity offers: a sensitivity that recognises that we are essentially identified not as ourselves but by our relationship with all that surrounds us.

Given this understanding of haecceity, it is incongruent to use the customary self/other binary when documenting excerpts from interviews undertaken in the learning space with the students that follow. For this reason, names identifying those in dialogue during these exchanges are omitted as a gesture, acknowledging the ambiguousness of a separate self engaging a separated outside world.

The experience that follows is not offered in a particular order or hierarchy. Any attempt to reach a fixed and unchanging truth derived from the data is also not on offer. Massumi (2013, p. xiv) states:

[that] [t]he question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make it possible to think? What new emotions does it make it possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body?

This chapter now looks at the effect that mindful engagements have within an art classroom on the students and their subsequent work. The purpose of the observations conducted is to see whether such interventions can stimulate new perspectives of vision and disengage habitual modes of thought.
Context

Fragrances are evocative and memory laden. Art rooms have a particular fragrance about them. They contain (combine) the familiar earthy smells of paper and canvas and paint and more. It is a suggestive space that portends doing something and sharing with others or of being alone which may also be experienced with others. An art room is not like other classrooms in a school. The room used by students in this thesis is large enough to push four good-sized rectangular tables together to form a larger rectangle. The table is at a height that requires stools instead of normal chairs to sit comfortably at and is cool and smooth to the touch. The stools are seldom used when we paint something. They are mostly used when there is a need to draw something or to annotate visual diaries. The muscular freedom that comes from standing to paint seems to help the flow of the work. The room also contains some storage shelves for paper and an old broken printing press that serves as a table. Natural light comes from the adjoining classroom and also from an external window. Even with this we still need artificial light to work. The room also shares a common wall with a material design class that often uses hammers and power tools so the noise from both directions provides a challenge at times to our levels of concentration during the meditation sessions but this distraction diminishes over time.

Within the annexed art classroom, we can see into the main classroom so even though we are physically separated, a shared human experience is maintained through this visual connection and through the sounds that are shared.

Having a separate area in which to work affects the students. As we walk from the main classroom at the start of each lesson, through the doorway and into our own work space, a calmness comes over us.

Diary Entry:

Kaitlyn: Today in art I felt like I belonged because nobody was bullying me, yelling at me and calling me names, they were friendly. There were noises all around us (e.g.) people shouting, hammers and may more but it didn’t matter.
We sit as a group around the table and gradually become quiet. This is certainly partly due to the size of the group and my presence but there is something else. The quiet that comes is not that which happens in anticipation of something. It is not the silence that comes with the tap of the conductor standing before an orchestra or the quiet that comes as the tennis player finishes bouncing the ball and is about to serve. It is a quiet that is simply quiet. A space created within a space. There is noise coming from the rooms either side of ours but the imagined silence we create at times during our classes together drowns it out to the point of being unnoticed.

6.1 Becoming Rebeka

A particular nomadic consciousness forms that understands differences between conception and perception (Karr & Wood 2011, pp. 35-8) where an engagement with data manifests at a transcendental level. The sense of ‘I’ is becoming consumed within the assemblage; indiscernibly and indecisively. Nomadic thought is achieved through losing this habitual sense of self occupying as it does a narrow vantage point from which the world is experienced. In this, it shares important similarities with Buddhist notions of nothingness with its concept of no-self being seen as essential to a fully realised life. To move toward a nomadic state is, according to Holland (2013) the act of becoming undifferentiated from all things. It is to be absorbed into the essence of being. Nomadic sensitivity is achieved by ‘eliminating all images and thought standing between it and the outside’ (Holland 2013, p. 113). To experience the work of the students in the Deleuzian sense of becoming nomadic, requires a movement toward the imperceptible and denying the tendency to subjectify and categorise those surrounding things that separate desires from perceptions. It means improvising with the world and through that, losing self.

The visual diary is there before me and presents itself without effort. It is now perceived, looked at carefully and enabled to tell its story. It began to speak even
before it was opened; a book being judged by its cover. The newness and shine had
gone by now becoming transformed into a much softer, textured and nuanced surface
that suggested the passage of time. It had created an assembly with its owner. I could
see the hours the diary and Rebeka had spent in each other’s company. This was seen
within the creases of the cardboard cover that formed deep lines which I imagined the
result of been casually thrown on to a desk or stuffed into a school bag; still showing
the indignities. The square factory cut edges were rounded off now and the familiar
metal spiral spine was mis(shapen) in parts and no longer uniform in appearance. It
was tired. The lower right corner was dog-eared and discoloured from being used as
the place from which the diary was opened and engaged with so many times.

Looking deeper into this corner suggests the volume of pages that follow and hints at
their content; purple, green, blue and red. It speaks of being worked with, travelled
with, used with, and of use with. Layered pages seen beneath the corner of the diary
are contained (retained) within the cardboard covers forming the interleaved
assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari (2013, pp. 102-3) speak of assemblages, which are
fundamentally territorial, as having a horizontal axis that ‘comprises two segments,
one of content, the other of expression’. The pages of the visual diary contain drawings
and words which are seen as its basic content but it also contains the expressions of
the student or her ‘collective assemblage of enunciation’. A language is revealed within
this body of work (visual diary) beyond the obvious visual and literal that invites us to
make (create) an interpretation (understanding). The vertical axis of this visual diary as
an assemblage has territorial or reterritorialised sides which stabilise it, and cutting
edges of deterritorialis, which carry it away. A (de)territorialised expression is
suggested by Deleuze and Guattari (2013, pp. 361-408) as seen in the artist who is
prepared to abandon the safety of known forces and expectations of the world to
embrace a relationship with forces beyond. Deleuzian notions of deterritorialisation
are interpreted to mean that those forces beyond the world are the forces to be found
within a contemplative world characterised by an awakened state of mindfulness.
The only word on the front cover is ‘Rebeka’ written in thick black marker. It seems confident and even has a feeling of loudness and volume. It is to be taken as the name of the visual diary rather than that of its creator. The front cover of the visual diary contained the/became the student in the same way the hands of the potter may be imagined when holding the created bowl of her or his design; a signature within a signature. The mind wanders off in thoughts that are instantly arrested upon turning the front cover of the visual diary for the first time.

Rebeka’s eyes are closed as she begins to hear the sound of the singing bowl. Steady breathing is noticed with the lowering of her shoulders as she relaxes into the one-minute meditation. Her face is still, her hands resting on the table one in the other. The entire group is silent throughout this exercise which occurs at the beginning of each of the sessions we have together.

Diary Extract

Rebeka: With the singing bowl you can just sit there and relax. Listen to the sound of the bowl and be the last person in the room to hear
It relaxes your mind. At home now normally before I go to bed I do meditation. It helps you fall asleep fast. Personally I think that the singing bowl and meditation work pretty well if you put effort into it and time.

Figure 10: Rebeka 2

Rebeka’s hands adopted a shape during the meditation that seemed very natural for her. One hand resting on the other in quiet contemplation. I was reminded of the many statues and illustrations of the Buddha I had seen. Thumbs touching creating a circle. The gentle cupping with her palms facing up in a gesture of acceptance, ready to receive and to hold that which might come.

There is a progression of drawings and annotations that Rebeka completed of a photograph of a fruit bowl that she liked. Progression is not the right word here as it implies something getting better: a measurement against a standard which in this instance did not exist. The interest is more in seeing Rebeka working on her drawings and in trying to understand the processes that are happening. Any interpretation of her drawings is understood to take place through the personal characteristics of the
researcher and these need to be acknowledged and reflected upon: what it means to teach something (anything). Epistemology continues to be grounded in the acceptance of a constructivist approach to knowledge which accepts a level of uncertainty and assumes that providing students with the environment that gives them the time to ask questions of themselves and others in order to form personal truths and meanings is good teaching practice. Given all this, it feels too focused still on outcomes more than processes. The focus on outcomes is further driven by Rebeka and others in the group. Students appear to be more comfortable with the teacher-centred/product-oriented pedagogy to which they are accustomed. A pedagogy emphasising the importance of achieving correct answers and scoring high grades is at odds with the socially democratic constructivist approach to teaching reflected through mindful practice. Students are not expected to draw something they like and then take it home – a trophy or medal for coming first – although it might feel easier if a result (product) driven process to lessons was the aim.

Audio Transcript:

They all look crap. . .like really crappy bad (laughing)

What do you mean by crap?

The fruit is. . .doesn’t look like fruit. I can’t draw anyway (laughs in a forced way). It’s not like the photograph.

Isn’t that a good thing? It’s a drawing created by hand using a pencil.

Yeah?

Well, it will never look exactly like the photograph and why would you expect it to? It’s a different image created from the photograph. It’s yours.

I picked a photo that’s too hard that’s all.

Rebeka’s hand moves across the paper with hesitation, the eraser never far from the pencil. She looks at (perceiving) the photograph of the fruit bowl which is propped up
against the pencil case in front of her. Her eyes darting backward and forward from
the photograph to the visual diary. Tentative marks are being made. It is an act of
contemplation, an imagined/imaginary event. Drawing, like creativity itself is
imagination in action (Robinson 2001, pp. 111-37). The creative act is being
experienced where imagination subsumes perception.

Audio Transcript:

How’s it going Bek?

What do we do if we can’t see all of the fruit like this one (pointing) when it’s behind
something?

What do you see?

I can see this apple but not he one behind it so how can I draw it if I can’t see it?
(exhales loudly and seems frustrated)

[At this, another member of the group tells her to ‘just draw it’. Rebeka does not
respond to this suggestion/interjection.]

Tell me what you can see.

It’s in front of me (pointing again but this time her index finger touches the
photograph in different places) I can see all of it just not the stuff in the back-
ground.

Look at the photography really carefully and forget about seeing apples or
whatever they are. Just think about shapes and colours. Like I said before you don’t
need to copy it exactly. Just try looking at it really carefully and draw what you see.

Rebeka’s eyes move from the photograph to the visual diary; the brief moment of
transition between seeing the photograph and beginning to draw. A memory of the
image(ination) kept somewhere in space. The impossibility of seeing two things at once
suddenly occurs. I watched her eyes again trying to see that moment of imagination
when the subject of the drawing is unseen but then transformed onto paper as
something else filtered through a mind with its own history and future. It is this brief
transitionary period where created (latent) space is filled with hope, fear and intent.
She is courageous.
The lines drift and flow around each other, giving way to each other, effortlessly weaving in and out. At once form-ing, trans-form-ing, in-form-ing. This detail, from one of Rebeka’s first drawings, focuses attention on the use of line. The lines here have movement and direction. They are broken lines that intersect and move on independently but are affected by the encounter. We merge into this drawing and meander along its pathways always conscience of the emptiness that is contained within [by] these lines. The white paper is not empty but has the same value as the lines and tones - positive and negative shapes in union.
Visual Diary

Rebeka: These drawings were drawn using a HB pencil. I got some wet tissues and smudged them. I think they look like their [sic] round. I messed up the shadows I think.

The smudging and blurring that Rebeka speaks of start out as an accident. She uses a dirty eraser to change a line and it created an area of grey on the paper which she likes. Rebeka then uses a wet tissue to continue this shading effect and experiments with materials. It is informative to see her reaction when the eraser smudges her work. She might get frustrated or annoyed but the opposite reaction occurs. She thinks it interesting to see what it does to her drawing and continues working with enthusiasm. The mistake she is trying to correct is forgotten and is now seen as something positive. We become our thoughts.
Rebeka finishes these drawing and begins to walk around the room looking at the work of others. She pauses briefly at each person she comes to saying nothing and returns to her table. Connections are being made between Rebeka, the drawings and others within the room. A rhizoidal interplay is taking place where lines of flight connect between middles, a gathering of middles within multidirectional movement. This interplay is non-linear and (in)definite, it could not retrace its steps to a beginning (start) but was rather a continue(ing/ous) combination of negotiable pathways. Rebeka created these pathways as she moved around the table slowly and with purpose, occasionally placing her hand on the table as she watched. The emphasis she had previously invested in getting a drawing right or finished was becoming less important now for/through her and this could be seen. It was as if we had all given ourselves permission to make mistakes and in doing so realised that mistakes were no longer possible to make.
Visual Diary

Rebeka: When I was doing these [Rebeka 4 and 5] I wasn’t thinking about anything really just the painting. I asked about what to do if we couldn’t see all of the apple….like if one was behind the other and we couldn’t see it all. The teacher said if you can’t see it you can’t draw it. He said to just draw what you see and it doesn’t matter if one apple is in front of the other.

This short annotation in Rebeka’s visual diary are affecting in both its simplicity and its profundity. The wider question is considered of whether those things which are profound are always revealed in simplicity. There is a consideration of what it means when Rebeka says that she ‘wasn’t thinking about anything’ except the painting and drawing; being absorbed in the moment. The effortless act of Rebeka being engaged in a world of careful observation and mark-making is described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997, p. 29) as a state or moment of flow experience:

What is common to such moments is that consciousness is full of experiences and these experiences are in harmony with each other.
Contrary to what happens all too often in everyday life, in moments such as these what we feel, what we wish and what we think are in harmony.

Rebecca’s diary speaks of the cognitive disenthrinement that was required by her in the way that objects are observed and interpreted. There seemed a need to draw the entire apple even though it was obscured by others to the front. She did not seem to understand the idea of simply drawing what was observed but instead felt that entire apples needed to be represented regardless of their proximity to others within the bowl. To see is to interpret something as an act of cognition. When the fruit bowl is observed there is no actual image projected within the eye. Ramachandran (2004, p. 25) makes this statement:

The first step we must take toward understanding perception is to forget the idea of images in the brain and think instead of transforms or symbolic representations of object and event in the external world.

It is possible that Rebecca has never perceived objects with the eye of an artist; an eye that tries to look at the visual world without the filtration of past experiences or the desire to create those recognitions which often provide such comfort and safety in the observer. The act of perception is so automatic that the interpretation of the visual world seems effortless but such automation is not desired when drawing or painting. The notion that ‘seeing is believing’ is challenged to the extent that perceived objects are somehow simply given and beyond interpretation. The meditative engagements that inform the work of the students open the possibility that ‘seeing is thinking’ far more than it is a question of belief. Deleuze (2003) discusses the thought processes that Francis Bacon went through in the execution of his work and explains that a painter needs to overcome his or her habits of perception and to actively work against
this natural tendency. The surrealist movement of which Bacon was a part, was explicit
in its aim to do just this – to destroy the balance between the brain and its environment
– between the brain and its desire to form habitual connections. Rebecca seems to be
making the first steps toward disempowering the brain and in doing so opening the
possibility of experiencing and reacting to a given phenomenon as it really is, in all its
suchness.

Notes from my field diary:

- R’s [Rebek is] looking and seeing. Seeing in a different way? Different
  subjective state. Seeing relationships within the subject that were not so
  obvious at the start. Transported/flow.
- Distance between artist and object vanishing. No duality at one with the
  work. She is the work. She’s not doing the work. There’s no work just
  action. Creativity is/in action.
- Looks at pencil tip carefully, turning the pencils around and then looks
  away at nothing for a few seconds. Is she thinking conscious thoughts?
- Head now rests on her hand. Seems unaware of others but still aware of
  drawing and relaxed.
- Aware and relaxed. Volitional/intentional and relaxed. . .

Rebeka is prominent in my thoughts upon revisiting my field notes, and what the
experience of observing her had to do with the flow state and the meditative practices
introduced to the students. Zazen, or sitting meditation is generally considered an
indispensable preparation toward the Zen experience, satori. This method of
meditation concentrates on the breath and it was this meditative method that was
introduced and discussed within the group. It is a highly concentrated and purposeful
routine that is practiced by students of Zen to the point where insights into the human
condition may reveal themselves either gradually over time or suddenly in a moment
of revelation. Watching Rebeka, it is noted that the focus and intent that she is applying
to her drawing is a meditative practice too, no less valid than the more formal zazen style. Rebeka assumes a state of flow but also one of contemplation. She is finding space within herself and a stillness that observational drawing demands of its practitioner. It is the same stillness that Zazen practitioners must perform but uses the intense observation of an object to draw rather than the sensation of the breath to focus upon.

The process of drawing and painting is now seen not as something that is commenced after the Zazen based meditation activity at the beginning of the class but rather is (becoming) the meditative act itself within the classroom.

The nomadic approach which was adopted in conversing/observing Rebeka meant that phenomena was processed within a deterritorialised (unbounded) environment. In order to survive, nomads notice things that others might not or if they are noticed in a non-nomadic way, may be dismissed as unimportant or of little consequence. Nomadic thought is that which notices and gives weighting to even the small things. Braidotti (2011) makes the point that ‘in order to produce more grounded accounts and more subtle differentiation in the kind of nomadic flows at work in our world, we need more conceptual creativity’ (p. 9). The classroom is not a natural environment but one constructed of the inter(actions)/(relationships) of/between people. The classroom environment encountered within this thesis is one where emphasis is placed on the ‘the cracks, the voids, the hyphens, the slashes and the outcrops...undoing...remapping a different space...a whole new landscape featuring otherworldly affects always marginal and transversal’ (O’Riley 2003, p. 29). It is informative that (O’Riley 2003) uses words like ‘outcrops’, ‘landscape’, ‘voids’, and ‘slashes’ to describe the nomadic journey. They might just as easily be used when discussing a drawing or painting. The interconnected/broken/continuing pencil marks made by Rebeka are beginning to look like lines of flight; a rhizomatic creation. They are dynamic movements with no beginning or end point. They create and dissolve boundaries and form their assemblages. A drawing, like a rhizome is made only with lines that transport our thoughts to sometimes unfamiliar places (Deleuze & Guattari 2013).
'The pen caresses the round shoulder of the hill, feels its sensuous lazy curves, then jumps staccato down the aggressive juttings of rocky ledges.' (Franck 1973, p. 37)

Observations of Rebeka changed the way meditation was seen being used in the classroom. It provided an insight into the true potential of art-making as a meditative practise in itself. Where every mark on the paper from the pencil or the brush becomes a breath in and out. An expression of ourselves and of our shared humanity. In a way it did not matter what Rebeka used as her subject matter because in a broader sense, all of her drawings and paintings were experienced as continuing (self) portraits folding one upon the other; separate yet connected (Deleuze 1992).

6.2 Becoming Amanda

Watercolour paint comes complete with its own rules and disciplines. These rules are a function of the way that the paint reacts to its environment. Arguing is pointless when trying to make it do something that it cannot. By watching carefully at the way it wants to flow and splash and fall, a relationship is formed; often a tense relationship at times and even frustrating but one that is always authentic. Water that carries within it those minute suspended grains of colour always creates to some extent unexpected visual encounters on paper and travels (runs) to places that were unexpected or untentional. It follows its own nomadic pathways along areas of wetness and dryness. It suggests more than represents and in doing do sparks imagination. It is a medium of subtraction more than addition. What is omitted becomes as important as that which is rendered. Its colours fuse (bleed) into each other in their wetness. Repelling and then absorbing, absorbing and then repelling. It requires those who use it to accept these qualities and work with them.
Painting with watercolour asks for an imaginative engagement with the work that is not as required of other mediums because it is a transparent medium. Oil and acrylic paints and pastels and many other mediums are opaque. They cannot be seen through. This means that lighter colours can be placed over darker colours, white over black; reworking the painting, working over mistakes, corrections upon corrections, until the painting is thought to be complete.

The confidence that comes with knowing that mistakes can be covered up produces a range of emotions and expectations. It encourages the confidence to try something in a painting and see if it works knowing that it can be easily altered later. But this confidence in knowing that corrections are easily made does not ask the artist to look very far into the future. The question is seldom asked when working in oils, what will happen later if I place a mark there? Or there? Should I place this colour down first or not? What might be the consequences of working from the foreground to the background? Watercolourists constantly ask these questions of their medium and of themselves. They need to be able to project themselves into those parts of the painting that are not yet apparent. They need to be able to anticipate and not just react to what appears before them although they need to do that too. When presented a clean white sheet of paper, watercolourists require the courage to know that unintended events are likely and not easily reversed.

Observations and conversations with Amanda became focused on the question of conditions under which an atmosphere might be created through mindful engagements where risk-taking was seen as a normal and necessary part of the creative process. In this atmosphere, the thought of taking a risk was not considered fearful but simply a part of the art-making process. Could the act of painting liberate spontaneity by destroying doubt and hesitation ‘removing the mental blocks that thwart self-expression’ (Sollier 1972, p. 7). The cultivation of such an environment seemed even more imperative when using a medium with those inherent fearful natural qualities of watercolour. Robinson (2001, p. 136) maintains that creativity moves through different phases and that ‘trying to produce a finished version in one move is impossible’. One could go further than this and suggest that the finished product is an unnecessary goal to the creative process and it may even be a hindrance.
What does it mean to produce a finished version of anything? Is a painting or drawing ever finished?

**Diary Entry:**

**Amanda:** This lesson we painted seascapes again. Before we started that we hit the gong and meditated for a bit. We concentrated on the sound of the gong, our breathing and the weight we are putting onto the chair. After we started our seascapes I felt concentrated when doing it because it was interesting how our brains can work out what the pictures we painted are.

![Figure 15: Amanda 1](image)

Amanda is seen to notice those things which go unnoticed. She becomes aware of the paint running down the paper and being carried by the water, responding to and moving with the paint. She picks up the paper and begins to tilt it in the direction she wants the pigment to flow. It seems instinctive to her. When the paint is not going where it is
intended there is no panic, no frustration, just acceptance that this is what happens and then she begins to use gravity to work with the paint and not against it. Water flowing within a flow state. A complex interaction is happening here between the medium and Amanda. Submitting to the medium in order to control it she becomes both master and servant in one. Dualist hierarchies vanishing to be replaced by a state of consciousness that sees the moment as it happens without judgement or the desire to dominate. The paper in her hand moves freely in all directions without many brush strokes being applied. It is painting itself through the movement of her body. A dance of hope and expectation becoming one with the painting, travelling within the rhizome that is the experience. While she is waiting for the paper to dry, the painting is carefully observed. It is offered and received slowly from her. The painting is held at arm’s length and there is silence for a few seconds before we speak to each other.

Audio Transcript:

Have you tried to explain what we’re doing together in these the meditations and the paintings and diaries?

I did. . .like my dad asked what we were doing and um. . .I said like um. . .we were doing a lot of watercolours and like we focused on things and stuff.

How did you describe to him what we were doing?

I said we had a singing bowl and when you hit it and it has a different sound. I think he understood what it was. I said it made us calm down and think about nothing. Just breathing and stuff. I said it made me feel like drawing and made me look at stuff properly.

What are the classes like for you?

I think they go really fast. I mean it feels like five minutes. Time seems different here because I enjoy it I guess. I’d like to hit the singing bowl one day and watch everyone else.
It’s a good idea. From now on we’ll all take turns starting the class by hitting the bowl.

The words Amanda had spoken during our brief exchange were considered. Her voice was animated and she spoke with a smile. Her eyes were looking intently at the painting as we spoke – she looked at it in the same way someone does when they have lost something and are trying to find it – she glanced at me briefly. She seemed settled and comfortable pressing down on to her chair. Consideration was given into what it meant for Amanda to look at something ‘properly’. The moments of pause she created for herself when she engaged with a subject to draw or paint were observed. There seemed to be an intention on her part to look beyond the physical appearance of the object and to let it simply speak to her. When continuing to paint, Amanda tests hues and values on a scrap piece of paper. Lingering (thinking) on the colour with her eyes moving quickly between the photograph propped up in front of her and the paint. Minutes pass before she seems satisfied and then starts to fill an empty pallet pan with watery mixes of pigment. Amanda was thinking. She was thinking about what she was seeing (perceiving). It was a not a passive endeavour but one of intent. The difference between what it is to see and what it is to think was considered, and why these two terms were considered as separate processes. Arnheim (1969, p. 37) states:

Visual perception. . .is not a passive recording of stimulus material but an active concern of the mind. The sense of sight operates selectively. . .Perception involves problem solving.

When Amanda is ‘looking at stuff properly’, she is thinking. She is cognitively active and concentrated. A stillness (meditation) seems to be within her as she opens her eyes and visually engages. Painting and drawing are as one (becoming) act of meditation. The work contained in her visual diary was revisited to see if this meditative exchange could be understood by travelling through the paint and the lines.
A window within a window. I become transfixed by the irregularity of the bricks. Brickwork is not meant to be like this. These are not the bricks of an artist concerned with perfection or notions of being correct. Rather than being identical to each other, these bricks confidently expressed their differences in colour and shape while still maintaining their dependency on those surrounding them for support and structure. At once independent and dependent in a non-dualist assemblage. These were an
essence of bricks with an inherent understanding and acknowledgement of the hand that laid them. A human hand with its own frailties and imperfections.

Pencil lines appear beneath the painting creating a feeling of the processes involved in its creation. There is no hint of trying to hide these working under-drawings. It is honest and it is part of the work. This painting is still becoming. The hand of the artist has not finished here. My eyes follow these thin pencil lines around the brick noticing the rough outlines. Overlapping lines of flight invite me to go slowly and to notice. A confidence presents itself in this work that speaks of understanding the idea that a suggestion is more than a literal rendition. This is a painting depicting more than meets the eye. It contains a thought or feeling that is not possible to express in words alone.

A shift in the way I perceived these bricks suddenly presents itself. Instead of seeing the bricks I become more interested in the negative spaces between the bricks. The untouched paper that the bricks made their way around. The painting transforms from red blocks into one of pale lines. The painting has obviously not changed and yet it seems like a completely different painting. These interconnected lines form a pattern and become the conduit of other lines. Lines of pencil and the faint lines left behind from the overlay wash of pale-cool-grey both provide texture and interest to the bricks and mortar. To speak of the negative spaces presents the idea that ‘nothing’ can be important. This goes against the grain of Western culture. The importance of ‘nothing’ does however permeate Zen Buddhist philosophy. Lao-tzu (1996, p. 11) contends this:

We join spokes together in a wheel,
    But it is the centre hole
That makes the wagon move

We shape the clay into a pot
    But it is the emptiness inside
That holds whatever we want

We hammer wood for a house
    But it is the inner space
That makes it liveable

We work with being
But non-being is what we use.

A habitual way of seeing the positive side only is being tested in this painting. A mindset insisting on foregrounds in front of backgrounds now seems unhelpful. Learning to apprehend and see the depth of meaning within negative space enables a deeper understanding of meditative practices and the possibilities that are associated with a willingness to perceive the known as if it were unknown. The intended focus of attention within (Amanda 2) is the window with its curtain tied back revealing a dark interior (Amanda 2—Detail 2).

I can see the care that was taken to ensure that the dark interior colour of the room did not bleed into the curtain colour. Watercolours have the element of time contained within them. It takes time for the colours that are applied to dry and it is only then that a second colour can be introduced next to the first, if a clean dividing line is intended. A sense of time passing can be seen in this window detail. Clear water was applied to
the paper in the shape of the blue curtain before a wash of colour was applied into this wetness; the paint flow stopping at the edges of the wetted paper. I imagine Amanda waiting for a few minutes while this first wash dries. The discipline of the paint was being observed as it had to be. I thought about what was occurring during those few minutes of waiting in the space between the artwork and the artist, one waiting on the other; the medium by its very nature imposing a period of pause and reflection on the artist.

Diary Entry:

Amanda: Today is the start of school holidays. I started doing a bit of meditating. To prepare myself I went into my room where it was quiet and sat on top of my bed with my legs crossed and back up straight. At first I didn’t really get into it well but a couple of days later I finally got the hang of it. I felt so relaxed and it was very calming. I actually liked it and I thought that it was a really good way of spending my extra time. I started to think about thoughts that I had about things that worried me in the past and now it just seems stupid to have been so worried.

The curtain ties show traces of green in those places where the yellow merges with the blue. A transparent medium creating colours for (by) itself. Folds of blue material being held back to reveal a space beyond our reach. A private inner space that remains impossible for all but Rebeka to reveal itself. The creation of an inner space is offered through meditative practice as experienced by Amanda. In the waiting of the water to dry, the watching, the quiet, perhaps she ‘finally got the hang of it’.

A complex interrelationship begins to emerge between the focus of the painting and the area surrounding it. The window is bounded by a seemingly solid structure that has multilayered meanings. From one perspective the red bricks may be seen as trapping the window into a fixed unmovable position. Stubborn ways of habit and predictable
outcomes. Another perspective focusing on the cool pale lines offer a rhizomatic plan of escape where any number of possible outcomes present themselves. These lines (of flight) take the eyes inward through the window into an unfamiliar inner space. So too, do they leave the painting in all directions into an equally unfamiliar outer space.

Notes from my field diary:

- Amanda arranging items on her desk. Painting finished now. Brushes on one side, palette on the other.
- Looks at the water container contents discoloured from brushes. (She) holds it up to the light coming through the window – looks at the colour formed from all the colours used doing the painting.
- Stands – walks to the sink where she empties it – (She) rinses it again. (It is) much more diluted this time and once more she looks at the colour of the water – holding it up to the light of the window. This is repeated. She fills the container one final time – pours it down the sink.

As I observe Amanda’s attentiveness to the fading colour value of the water being discarded, I could not help but think that she is reluctant to see it go as one might a friend with whom a confidence was shared.
6.3 Becoming Josh

Diary Entry:

**Josh:** We did a bit of meditation at the start. We closed our eyes and concentrated on breathing. I noticed that when we breathe in, the air is cold but when we breathe out it is warm because it has been in our body. The gong was used a bit today as well. We used our brains to make out what the pictures we drew in the landscape meant.

![Singing Bowl](image_url)

**Figure 19: Singing Bowl**

After having read Josh’s diary entry, a conversation that we had at that time, during the class is remembered; he told me about the difference in the temperature of the breath as it enters and leaves the body. He tries to calculate how many breaths he had
completed in his life but was not sure how to do it. It was the first time he had ever noticed this temperature difference, the breath being warmed in during its brief entry into the living body and then exhaled. He asks others in the room if they experience it too but they hadn’t until he mentioned it to them. Then they all felt it. The smiles on the faces of the students as they experience the feeling of coolness and warmth is noticeable. It is a moment where something as automatic and natural like breathing suddenly becomes an awareness to us. I wonder if it is always the obvious that becomes invisible and forgotten over time. We became aware of something so close and so fundamental to our very existence that it had vanished from consciousness. We live without food for weeks, without water for days but without air for only a few minutes. We are unaware of this most fundamental of bodily functions even though our lives are so immediately dependent on its continuance. It is as though we have all become reacquainted with an old friend. A poetic excerpt by T.S. Eliot expressed a similar sentiment:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time (Eliot 1974).

Audio Transcript:

Why do you think we concentrate on the breath in these classes when we meditate?

It’s easier than anything else (he laughs). It’s like always there you don’t have to look for it. It’s natural. Yeah it’s like just there all the time.

It is not understand why the moment when Josh noticed his breath did not mean more at the time as it is seen now as a profound phenomenon that affected us all. Something happened within Josh at that moment. It was as if he had been awakened from a
dream. Was this an aesthetic experience? An anaesthetic dulls the senses creating drowsiness then sleep. The senses are cut off from the world. An aesthetic experience has the opposite effect in that our senses are seemingly more alive and aware of their surroundings. I thought back to the story of the two fish swimming together being asked about the water. The things we take for granted are those that are unseen (unnoticed) and yet are all around us. I wondered if Josh might now begin to look at other things around him in a different way, noticing things as if for the first time. There is a story of travelling priest who came upon the Buddha sitting in quiet meditation. At the end of their conversation the priest, being very impressed by the Buddha’s countenance, asked him how he would like to be remembered. The Buddha was said to reply, ‘remember me as the one who woke up’ (Das 1997).

An interpretation of Josh’s experience involves a combination of empathy and intention. The interpretive process is wholistic:

Every person is on the one hand a location in which a given language forms itself in the individual manner, on the other their discourse can only be understood via the totality of language. But then the person is also a spirit which continually develops, and their discourse is only one act of this spirit of connection with the other acts (Schleiermacher 1996, pp. 8-9).

Josh’s spirit spoke to all of us that day. It spoke of a knowledge so deep that it had been unknown and then was finally revealed. It was the realisation that we were all alive and together in that room at that moment. Sharing the space within the room and within ourselves. A (latent) space was created within Josh through the shared meditative activity at the beginning of the class; latent in the sense that it had possibilities. It is not a fixed state of emptiness. It is waiting and it is revealed. It has the potential to be filled with new and unexpected thoughts and feelings. In this instance, the creation of this latent space enabled Josh to become aware of something he had taken for granted; his breath. At other times, the creation of this space provides any number of other possibilities. It is a space that can be made at any time by any
student through simple meditative engagements and becomes a fundamental foundation for the ability to be able to see new possibilities.

Diary Entry:

Josh: It was my turn to hit the gong today. I tried the hard hammer first but it sounded crap. The teacher said I should try the soft hammer. It was good and it lasted a long time. We tried to be the last person in the room to hear the sound but it was hard because of the noise in the next room. When you put your head near the bowl it makes you dizzy. I hope I get to hit it again soon.

Josh’s diary is placed in front of me on a table where it seems distant and lifeless and disconnected. It is carried into another room and I sit with it on the floor. This change of physicality and location creates an association between myself and Josh and the time becomes right to tread quietly through the pages. I do not want to experience it in any particular order and there is no interest in seeing the linear progression of skills, techniques or in the quality of his writing. The visual diary is seen as an assemblage within which Josh’s sense of becoming becomes apparent. The visual diary seems at first to be a discreet entity; a front and back cover with fifty pages between them. To see this diary in the Deleuzian sense of a thing becoming changes the placement (perspective) and the ways by which the work is engaged. The diary no longer become something separated from Josh; fixed and unchanging in space and time. Colebrook (2002, p. 125) maintains that ‘[t]he supposed real world that would lie behind the flux of becoming is not, as Deleuze insists, a stable world of being; there is nothing other than the flow of becoming. All beings are just relatively stable moments in a flow of becoming life’. With this in mind, it is understood that the visual diary is another living entity with the potential to inform and change.

The book is opened where it ‘asks’ to be opened; the specific location perhaps the result of being opened at that page many times before. The redness of the brush
handle that presents itself on the page before me is observed. The texture of the paper is noticed along with the fluid quality of the paint and the confidence in the hand of the artist.

![Figure 20: Josh 1](image)

Where does a painting come from? Colours and shapes on white paper. The complexity of tone and sensitivity to form and light experienced within the work are compelling. This red brush had weight and presence. It existed. It might be picked up in hand and used to paint itself again and again in a perpetual spiral of fused colour and brushes.

The painting is attached to the page with a strip of clear tape applied down the left hand side. It was never intended to be permanently displayed in any way. It has a humility about it. It does not shout ‘here I am’ but rather maintains its silent presence and waits. It becomes the experience of listening to an intimate conversation between Josh and himself. The brush is imagined as lying in front of Josh as he sits in stillness and thinks. The manner in which the paint is applied to the paper reveals such a moment of pause in Josh being revealed within the brush strokes and the multilayered transparencies of colour. The paint confirms thought and careful observation over time. The passing of time. The waiting and patience that the medium demands of the artist. The hard edges of one colour against another, possible only when the one is completely dry, contrasting with the soft edges of the pigments applied when one or more edges are still wet and subject to natural forces.
Jos’s painting is experienced as the visual expression of a meditation. It is transcendental; an intuitive acceptance and validation of Josh as himself. Deleuzian insights into what we consider to be the natural world change the world they describe.

What is considered supernatural becomes natural and that which we have always seen as being so natural reveals how wondrously supernatural it is (Franck 1973). Jos’s painting is a record of a past experience that is living again through the movement of eyes as they follow the lines and realise that a drawing or painting is not an object but an action.

**Jos’s annotation:**

‘I tried sucking some of the paint out of the paint brush so it looked like it was lighter on one side so it also looked like the sun was shining on the paint brush’.

The shadow on the painting that is cast on the surface below (by) the brush is observed. The vague shape of the brush showing itself as both physical and apparent. The cast shadow presenting as evidence that the brush was actually t(h)ere before (with) Josh occupying both space and time. The edges of the brush as it makes its way around forming the distinctive shape are noticed. There is no attempt to make it smooth and finished or to correct anything. The hand moves with a certainty suggesting that Josh understands that mistakes cannot be made here. It is through this understanding that the work reveals itself and the conversation begins within the painting and with those who are capable of listening. Jos is speaking through the painting in a language without words or recognisable symbols to be seen. The painting is like a voice heard in the distance where the sounds being made are faint and cannot be understood except through the tone of the voice being heard. The tone of voice contains meaning. The warmth of the sun shining upon the paint brush is now felt and the painting is heard.

Van Manen (2007) suggests that, ‘not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze toward those regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the
porous membranes of past sedimentations and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect’ (p. 12). Josh speaks in a language at first unfamiliar but then suddenly clear. It is a language untroubled by the necessity to be heard (encoded) by the ears and processed (decoded) through the brain but one directly absorbed into consciousness through its purity. The directly absorbed pre-reflective consciousness of a phenomenon is the essence of phenomenology and precludes the efforts of hermeneutics. This consciousness reinforces an awareness of the latent space being created that accepts and receives the visual. Another page in Josh’s visual diary is revealed.

Figure 21: Josh 2
Josh’s annotation:

I really liked this one. I did it really fast and didn’t care what it looked like but when I did it I started to see flowers so I just kept going. It was fun but it looks a bit messy. When I held it up the paint ran down so I move the paper around a bit. Before the paint was dry and it was still a bit runny I blew onto the paper and made the paint go where I wanted it to go.

The reds moving forward with the cooler greens behind. I turned the visual diary upside down. It seemed to make no difference to the way it was read. Josh’s annotation begins to consider the thought processes that are taking place. This painting begins its life without intention or thought but it becomes something as it unfolds. Josh begins to see things in the paint as it is applied and runs and bleeds. The distinction between subject and object does not exist here as there is no obvious object to be seen. This is a work of pure imagination and conceivably even a type of self-portrait. When Josh is asked where the idea comes from the reply is that he is ‘just mucking around with the paint’. Later when asked what he meant by ‘mucking around’ he said he was ‘seeing what would happen – it wasn’t a painting about anything it was just fun’. Josh seemed frustrated at the question and forces a smile before returning to his work.

Josh was asked to try to articulate a feeling or personal experience into words and his frustration could be understood in that the painting itself was his answer. It did not need to be transformed into words on paper any more than a written poem might need to be explained through a painting. Josh made his statement in paint. It made little sense to transform it into another medium to make it clearer.

Looking deeper into Josh’s painting, it begins to be seen as a map of endless (ceaseless) connections. The rhizomatic meanderings of the paint at first seem haphazard but then patterns emerge. It is a pattern of haphazardness where randomness becomes the pattern. It is natural for us to look for patterns and so a rhizoid may at first glance be confronting because there is no pattern to discern. The order we try to look for in
things makes it possible to focus on what is alike and what is different. When nothing superfluous is included and nothing indispensable omitted, an understanding of the interrelation of the whole and its parts as well as a hierarchic scale of importance and power is possible. The rhizoid’s non-hierarchical structure challenges this natural predisposition to look for order and yet a type of order within the chaos persists. This ordered chaos or progression from order to chaos is expressed in the second law of thermodynamics which says that the universe is moving from an orderly state to a state of disorder and that the final state will be one of total disorder (Arnheim 1971). Buddhist philosophy speaks to this through its understanding of the impermanence of all things and of all structure. This fundamental understanding within Buddhist philosophy of gradual decay is in keeping with not only our consideration of the physical universe but also with our understanding of the relationships between people and their environment.

Diary Entry:

Josh: Monkey brain – not correctly focused. I did some clouds [Josh 3] and was shown some techniques to make it better. I was proud to be able to do it.

I was interested in the techniques and liked leaving some paper to show white cloud. The colours went from light to dark. They didn’t stay in the same place but they moved around a bit after I put them on the paper. It was fun to watch them move on the paper.
On reading Josh’s diary entry it occurred to me that there are two types of flow when engaged in watercolour painting: firstly, there is the flow state explained by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) where the activity being undertaken is so absorbing as to change someone’s perceptions of time and space. This is the flow state where the differentiation between the artist and the object vanishes and where even a consciousness of the act of drawing or painting is subsumed by the task at hand. The second type of flow, alluded to by Josh where he spoke of the fun he had watching the colours move around on the paper, is flow of paint on paper. It is one of the unique properties of watercolour paint.

Josh’s face is observed as he applies the paint. He is in a highly concentrated place but not one that seems to cause him any anxiety; in fact the opposite is observed. He smiles at times and then suddenly becomes determined again. We spoke earlier in the lesson that day about the Buddhist notion of ‘monkey brain’ (Hagen 1997) when the mind wanders off in random directions or when we cannot experience any stillness. It
conjures the image of monkeys in a tree constantly moving from one branch to the next with no obvious purpose. It becomes tiring to watch them with their continuous movement just as we can become tired by experiencing constantly intrusive thoughts.

His eyes are focused on the paint and the tip of his brush. They express the wonder and surprise of someone engaged in the act of discovery. Josh was exploring the process of painting as a nomad might search for food or shelter. He did not actually know what was just over the horizon but felt compelled by a different type of hunger to know and discover.

At times he picked up the paper and tilted it to make the paint run in a particular direction. He was very careful at the beginning of his work to keep some pristine white paper to depict clouds but the more he painted the less untouched paper remained. Josh did not seem to worry about this. He responded to the paint(ing) as it evolved before him and made changes to his intentions as possibilities both opened up and closed becoming adaptable and yielding to the paint. A rhythm began to take over Josh. He stood up from his stool and continued painting. He hardly paused as he applied the paint but here was no sense of urgency or rush either. He worked at a constant and measured pace. There was no ‘fixing’ mistakes or going back to start over. There was only a responding to each subsequent brush stroke as it related to the whole.

Flow is affecting, and its acceptance as a natural constant goes to the heart of ontological understandings. In Buddhist and poststructuralist understandings, the world is seen as a state of flow (becoming) and this state was to be represented in Josh’s approach to work and in a willingness to trust himself and realise that he was engaged in an act of creation without the necessity to achieve completion. The painting was undertaken as an exercise in Josh’s visual diary. During the time he was actively engaged, he never spoke to anyone and no one spoke to him. I wondered if the others in the room sensed Josh’s flow state and gave him the space he seemed to need; an inner latent space that Josh created for himself.
The visual arts classroom, a very familiar place, was arguably too familiar in the sense that important phenomena were often unnoticed. An awareness of the real work of the art classroom was becoming lost within habitual ways of working and thinking. The importance of our work was apparent watching Josh paint; observing his face, his
hands and the evolving painting. Josh was a reminder of the joy that is possible to experience in simple journeys. The practice of hermeneutic phenomenology asks for a shift in perspective where a separated metacognitive self is imagined that is at once involved as a being with the assemblage but is also the assemblage. The adoption of a hermeneutic methodology expects an engagement with the world that goes beyond the given, to one which asks questions and interprets meaning. Such an engagement is ‘seeking after a meaning which is perhaps hidden by the entities’ mode of appearing’ (Moran 2000, p. 229).

Emerging themes were beginning to form as a result of my observations, interpretations and interactions with the students. The notion of a ‘questioning self’ and ‘flow’ seemed to reoccur as did an awareness that the creation of latent space as a practiced skill more than a chance happening. The intriguing possibility of meditative practice and art practice becoming one in the same also began to emerge. These themes were further expressed and refined through an interpretation of the following work undertaken with Kaitlyn.

6.4 Becoming Kaitlyn

Diary Entry:

Kaitlyn: During my first landscape after seeing the teacher do his it made me forget about what was happened in the past few weeks and made me completely calm just going with the flow as I painted my landscape. It was definitely one of the only times I’ve been that calm for a while.

[Three days later:]

Whilst I was painting my second painting it happened again. I completely forgot about what was happening in my life and I was just sitting there going with the flow letting the paint
brush take me in the right direction when painting my seascape. I honestly love this when this happens to me.

Kaitlyn’s statement that ‘it happened again’ is evocative; what the ‘it’ in this sentence meant to her was considered. It was clear from Kaitlyn’s diary entry that she had experienced the sensation of flow but it was apparent that there might be more to interpret from this statement.

Kaitlyn is observed near the singing bowl activity area one morning before the beginning of the session. Other students are already entering the classroom in a relaxed manner and sitting down waiting to commence. Kaitlyn waits for a few seconds and makes her presence known by throwing her books on the table and then stating that her mobile phone had just been confiscated by a teacher in the previous class.

Kaitlyn: I’m not getting it back until tomorrow after school...it’s bullshit...I wasn’t even using it...it was just on my desk...it’s bullshit.

We said nothing and proceeded to set the bowl up on its doughnut shaped cloth stand and asked if anyone would like to strike it to begin our meditation.

Kaitlyn: I’d like to hit it (muted laughter from the others).

The bowl is placed in front of Kaitlyn and she is handed the striker. The moment she takes the striker a change comes over her face. She receives it quietly, sits down and looks at the bowl taking a deep breaths and relaxing her shoulders. She sinks into the chair and we wait. As the singing bowl is struck, Kaitlyn places both hands on her lap with one still holding the striker and closes her eyes for the minute or so it takes until
the ringing ceases. The exquisite silence that follows after the last reverberance of the bowl is felt. It is difficult to describe real silence. It is so poignant to hear silence and unnerving to be surrounded by the ambiguity of a room being filled with no sound (nothingness). Does silence or nothingness need to be understood and interpreted? Was it not enough to simply experience it?

Pascale (1978, p. 155) speaks of a similar ambiguity where he describes a negative space line drawing of a chair:

> Ambiguity may be thought of as a shroud of the unknown surrounding certain events. The Japanese have a word for it, *ma or mu*, for which there is no English translation. The word is valuable because it gives an explicit place to the unknowable aspect of things. In English we may refer to an empty space between the chair and the table’ the Japanese don’t say the space is empty but ‘full of nothing’.

The silence was an invitation to experience a sense of self at another level and to listen to those more difficult to hear elements within us. Elements that have no actual sound but still resonate continuously and just as loudly in their own way as any singing bowl might.

Kaitlyn did not move during this brief meditation time and her breathing became longer and more measured. The room was indeed full of silence at the end of the meditation which was broken after a few seconds with Kaitlyn saying, ‘good’ and then smiling.

There was a need to understand what had just been observed. Kaitlyn was unsettled and angry when she entered the room but became more focused and good humoured after the brief meditation activity. This was unremarkable in itself as such a transition happened with other students on previous occasions. The interesting thing here was that Kaitlyn wanted to hit the bowl. It was as though she knew what to do to help herself out of the negative feelings being experienced. She took control of the situation
and used the meditation to alter her perspective. The meditation wasn’t something that was *done* to her, it was something that she did for herself. In the moments after the bowl was struck Kaitlyn became as one within the meditative engagement and had empowered herself.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 24: Kaitlyn 1**

The observation of Kaitlyn continues, as she sets up paints and arranges the materials required to begin her work. When asked if her visual diary could be seen, the response is, ‘no problem’ and she points to it on her desk adding that it is just, ‘mucking about stuff’.

How should Kaitlyn’s ‘mucking about’ be interpreted? An attempt is made by looking into the pages of her visual diary to sense an understanding of Kaitlyn and her approach to her artwork. This diary was Kaitlyn’s lived experience. It documented a journey of discovery but it was not a sequential journey. Turning the pages did not give a sense of linearity to progression. It was as if the diary pages had been thrown into the air and reassembled in a random order; a multilayered assemblage of words and images that I could see and hear but not fully realise. It was understood that looking through Kaitlyn’s diary was not as much a process as an event (Friesen 2012). It was a function of time and grounded in the information I gathered through my five senses. The
information assembled from this interaction was being processed by my mind in real time. It was an empirical interaction with the work in the sense that I had assumed that everything that was to be interpreted was available to me only through the intermediary of my senses. My engagement with the work was little more than what Risser (2010 p. n.p.) described as

a matter of data, sense data to be sure but data nonetheless. Considered this way experience is nothing more than a basic component of knowledge that completes itself only through an act of reason, that is, in the establishing of patterns, of generalisations. . . . It is something that stands within the framework of calculation and repeatability.

Figure 25: Kaitlyn 2
All the visual diaries were now able to be seen in the context of the phenomenological framework that informed it. The emphasis that had been placed on the interpretation of sensory data was being replaced by a realisation that the demands of a phenomenological approach meant that it was the event or phenomenon itself which was of importance more than any empirical interpretation. This came as a revelation to me. It was necessary to consider the lived experience of looking at the diaries, the artworks and the students as fundamental to the process of investigation itself and not merely as an adjunct to other interpretive processes. Up to this point, experience was seen as something that happened to me from ‘out there’ or from the experiential world and travelled into my mind as an uninterrupted line of flight. Instead, experience or phenomena was now seen as inseparable from myself and the world. Phenomena were not events that happened to me but rather were me. Being fully immersed in a lived world means that any notion of separation between this outer work and my inner work is a fabrication or convenience. This shift in thinking from an actor participating in a privileged and featured role; reacting to the world as it manifests, to being one of countless elements interacting rhizoidally to generate meaning and experience, was revealing. It was also very humbling in the sense that notions of self were subordinated within a greater whole. It occurred to me that this was the no-self that is so central to Buddhist philosophy. The sense of an integrated self who is operating as part of a larger reality reinforced the idea that there is no such thing as a self that remains eternally unchanged because everything changes and appears and disappears. The only permanence is impermanence and interconnectedness.

Heidegger (1971b, p. 57) underlines this notion of connectedness with the experiential world:

To undergo an experience with something...means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms us, and transforms us. When we talk of ‘undergoing’ an experience we mean specifically that the experience is not of our making. To undergo here
means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us, and submit to it.

It was with this attitude of immersion and sense of submission and selflessness that Kaitlyn’s visual diary was looked into more deeply and the conversation with her work continued.

Figure 26: Kaitlyn 3

Diary Entry:

Kaitlyn: I am much more comfortable with painting sceneries with a little bit of surrealism in it. I don’t like painting realistic scenery because in my opinion no-one can capture the true beauty of nature itself.
The evolution of this painting (Kaitlyn 3) is experienced within Kaitlyn’s visual diary. It began its life as a quick sketch (seen in Kaitlyn 2). Kaitlyn was working from a photograph she had with her which had been cut from a magazine. There was not very much notice taken of the photograph and it seemed to be used as a very general visual reference. I wondered whether it was a source of confidence or a tangible connection to something beyond the classroom, perhaps a place where she had been or had imagined. The photograph was never placed into the visual diary but remained in Kaitlyn’s work folder. When it was pulled out of the folder it was placed on the desk in front of her as she worked. There was no observation of her picking it up or even looking at it but it was a constant presence as her exploration of with(in) the landscape continued.

The movement of her eyes as she worked was observed; a constant referencing from the pallet to the paper with brief pauses to check on the colour hue and value being mixed by applying colour from the brush to a scrap piece of paper. She was concentrated but still a part of the larger group, as expressed by her joining in conversations or laughing with others at something funny being said. These socially interactive moments were a brief but welcomed and even necessary distraction to the work being done. Watching the way Kaitlyn’s eyes moved create an experience of an expression of memory or emotion in me. This was not a mere copying exercise or act of dictation. The reference photograph had but minimal input into the work being created yet it was being created. The emerging images being generated within Kaitlyn’s visual diary were essentially emerging from within her; it was felt that the inspiration for this work was coming from the way the paint behaved on the paper. It was an acceptance of the qualities of the medium itself that seemed to keep Kaitlyn interested in the process of painting far more than the final product itself. Her willingness to experience the unknown and unpredictable qualities of the watercolour medium was empowering for me.

The qualities of the medium are hinted at by Weston (2011, p. 101) when he states:
[that] watercolour, of its very nature, has the character of magic. It might take an artist of genius of the stature of Turner to transform a grubby dried up little pan of paint into something as pellucid and moving as his mystical *The Blue Rigi, Sunrise*, and yet the potential is there for all of us to at least try to make art using the simplest of means.

Looking carefully at (into) ‘Kaitlyn 3’ there was a consciousness of the way my eyes moved around the work. I began imagining myself walking within the landscape and adopted the way of the nomad in the sense that Toynbee (1946, p. 166) offers when he speaks of the steppe-surface and the water-surface as being only accessible to man *[sic]* as an itinerant traveller with ‘[n]either offering anywhere on its broad surface, apart from islands and oases, a place where he can settle down to a sedentary existence’. ‘Kaitlyn 3’ evoked an unrest in me as I wandered around its hills and valleys not so much looking for a place to rest as a place to stop and take in air and feel myself in its presence. Her approach to work developed a reflective quality which was seen within the paintings. The act of reflection asks us why we become self-conscious and involves seeing, thinking, remembering and wishing (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2013). Self-conscious reflection is the essence of phenomenology but it is not enough in itself. The act of reflection implies that the act itself is directed toward something. It is intentional (Husserl 1970) in the sense that a relationship is created between the reflective process occurring in consciousness and the object of that reflection.

An interpretation of Kaitlynn’s work using the hermeneutic method, brought to the phenomenon of her painting a personal history in watercolour practice and reflection. The painterly gestures and paint strokes that Kaitlyn made within ‘Kaitlyn 3’ meant more to me than simply the result of physical contact between brush and paper. There was something else apparent here. The way the paint worked (was worked) on the paper had a loose and almost haphazard quality about it that was unpredictable and accidental. This effect of the paint on the paper had been self-observed in my own work. There was bleeding of colours forming unanticipated hues and shapes. It was a
work that celebrated the inherent vagueness or untameable qualities of the medium. It was sensed that as Kaitlyn surrendered herself to these qualities, she began to find some control over them. When the painting was shown to me we spoke briefly about the thoughts she was having and feelings she may have experienced during the painting process. A few minutes later, Kaitlyn was writing in her diary and when she finished, I asked if I could read it.

**Diary Entry:**

**Kaitlyn:** Sometimes I think when I draw about raw emotions and how I can show them, I think of these amazing ideas but I lack the skill to put them to paper which irritates me. Often I wish to give up on art because I feel as if it isn’t good enough. So I throw it out or give up on it. I’ve never had a lot of support with my art. So I find myself not enjoying it at times because it’s unappreciated so the only time I show I have a form of art talent in in my art classes. I think the art classes we’ve at school have made me look at things differently in a sort of quieter way I think. Maybe I look at myself differently. When I look at my paintings I sometimes feel that they were done by someone else which is weird but it kind of make sense to me.

On reading this diary entry, I want to try to understand what Kaitlyn means by the feeling she expresses that the painting was done by someone else. I think I know what she means but am not certain. Kaitlyn created her painting within a state of flow which was by definition unencumbered by a sense of self or of the self even being present. This lived experience of painting was that of being at one with the process rather than any notion of implementing it and partaking of process. We lose ourselves in the work. In this sense she was not actually there as the painting was done. Her essence was present but her sense of being there as a separate self was not. It may best be thought of as being in a dreamlike state, which upon awakening means that we have a sense of
detachment from what might normally be considered reality. The altered dreamlike (flow) state is one that can be induced through meditative practice and just as it enabled Kaitlyn to see the familiarity of her painting as if from the viewpoint of a stranger, so too can it enable us to see the world and our place in it through an unfamiliar lens.

It is noted that both Kaitlyn’s experience and my own are an example of the ‘pointed mindfulness’ that Franck (1973, p. 15) alludes to when he discusses the nature of Zen. Mindful practice in the art classroom offers a direct way of seeing that is unfiltered by the privileged intervention of the senses. This practice provides a glimpse into the true self and in this, it heals and sustains. The accepted way of Zen to prepare for such an inner awakening is generally considered to be gained through sitting meditation or Zazen. This form of meditation was practiced within the art classroom by students and proved to be enlightening but something else was experienced too; we found that the act of painting became for us a meditative experience that was perhaps even more profound than formal meditation. Painting became a form of pointed meditation where the act of concentration on the flow of paint on paper created a contemplative state of inexpressible fulfilment.
Chapter 7: A Conversation

The addition of the yachts tended to create a balance and sense of distance in the work and this was needed. I also added a signpost in the lower-left corner as it was felt that some height or structure was needed there to balance the vertical structure of the sails on the yachts. At this stage I am also considering the addition of an old decaying fence in that corner.

The dialogue between us continues. The success or otherwise of this work depends in part on the integrity maintained toward an impressionistic rendition of the scene. I begin to look for any unwanted detail or any areas of the work that are too informative. If the painting can be left to settle in a place where there is still some space to interpret and question then it has not been taken too far and is near completion.

The discussion taking place occurs on a number of levels. On a more pragmatic or practical level I look to those things within the work which might be described as right or wrong. Is the horizon generally level? Is there a sense of aerial perspective where elements fade in intensity as they recede into the distance? Is there a clear focal point...
within the work or are various elements fighting for attention? These questions need to be asked because if there are any mistakes in these fundamental elements they tend to become an annoying distraction and the work fails.

Another discussion occurs on a more aesthetic level where considerations of theme and emotional response are considered. Answering these questions requires the ability to look beyond oneself and see the work from the perspective of another. It can become easy to get too close to the painting and to lose sight of it. At times the artist may get so close to the work as to simply not see obvious mistakes or problems. This is why a certain ability to engage in metacognitive thought is helpful. The two figures on the beach have not as yet been rendered and the colour of their clothing is still being considered.

Introduction to Discussion

The previous chapter engages a hermeneutic relationship with the data generated from four students working within a secondary school-based art room setting. My (multiple) place within this assemblage of players is also examined and contemplated as immersions within the shared phenomena. A narrative unfolds within and between all those involved with the intention of coming closer to an understanding of what it means to be engaged in the construction, reflection and sharing of visual art. The engine driving this conversation is the use of a hermeneutic methodology, as previously discussed in chapter five, informed through its framing within a Deleuzian theoretical ontology as argued in chapter four.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the interpretations made from the analysis of the data generated in chapter six. The adoption of a hermeneutic analysis enables a multilayered engagement with the data which includes direct descriptions of phenomena as they occur within the classroom along with reflective interpretations of artwork, the coding and examination of written transcripts, as well as a visual reading of photographs.
This manner of observation, analysis and interpretation of students and their work within this research study indicates that the adoption of mindful practices and sensitivities has a positive effect on their engagement with the art-making process.

This chapter looks at the following specific findings, apparent from the research undertaken:

1. The adoption of an attitude of latent space is acquired through meditative and mindful practice. Such practice provides the opportunity for non-habitual ways of visual engagement to become prominent within the art learning space and is discussed in section 7.4 ‘Returning to Latent Space’.

2. To visually engage with the world is not a passive and automatic activity but an act of cognition requiring interpretive thought processes. Visual observations within the art classroom become more nuanced and enriched through meditative practice focusing on momentary transience and maintaining a memory of the past. Acknowledging a past provides the base from which contemplative reflection takes place. This is discussed in sections 7.2 ‘Mindful Recollection’ and 7.3 ‘Visual Perspectives’.

3. The creation of a mindful working environment within the classroom is dependent on establishing a culture of trust within and between all participants. The art-making process established through a mindful approach is in itself a meditative act. This is discussed in Section 7.6 ‘Situated Imaginings’.

7.1 The Research Question Revisited

This thesis sets out to address the following question: ‘How might mindful practice enable becoming within a visual arts classroom?’
The research question emphasises the word *becoming* as a key element for consideration. Being a fundamental concept within Deleuzian thought, becoming was discussed in chapters 3.1 and 4.4 and is further discussed here with reference to its relationship to hermeneutic phenomenology.

An analysis of phenomenologically-based research approaches reveals a general difference in between researchers where either a descriptive Husserlian model is adopted or one more interpretive and Heideggerian model. These two approaches are discussed in chapter five wherein the reasons for employing a more subjectively-based interpretive analysis of the data generated is established in keeping with a Heideggerian approach whilst also acknowledging that both approaches are used. Data generated from the research shows the importance of pure description for establishing a base from which interpretive analysis may occur. Just as the current dialogue is challenging perceived differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Bryman 2006; Mertens 1998; Newman & Benz 1998; Olson 2013; Ragin 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998), this research also takes descriptive and interpretive approaches to data analysis to be essentially interdependent.

A middle way between Husserlian and Heideggerian philosophies is imagined as being informed through an engagement with the Deleuzian notion of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari 2013). A rethinking of the current dualist discussion concerning descriptive and interpretive phenomenological methodologies is shared with Vagle (2014) who sees Husserlian phenomenology as essentially concerned with being conscious of something (of-ness). The reality under investigation in this understanding of phenomenology is before us and becomes the source of thick description (Geertz 1994), considered necessary for insights and understandings to be formulated. Husserlian phenomenology presupposes an ‘I’ or ‘self’ from which attention toward an object is generated; in this understanding, the individual is always conscious of something. In contrast, Vagel (2014) sees Heideggerian philosophy as being interested more in intersubjective relations (in-ness). In this sense, phenomena are not directed from the outside-in (of-ness) but rather come into existence as humans relate to the given phenomena and each other in the world (in-ness). Since Heidegger, it is difficult to distinguish between phenomenology and hermeneutics (Freeman & Vagel 2013)
and this became apparent as the research continued. The connection between hermeneutics and phenomenology places *being* at the centre of interest. It de-emphasises consciousness and asks more about what it is *to be in the world* in its numerous intentional ways. Neither a purely descriptive (of-ness) nor interpretive (in-ness) mode of engagement with phenomena are complete in themselves in that they tend to de-emphasise the random nature of existence which is ontologically taken to be self-evident. The phenomenological process of ‘through-ness’ (Vagle 2014) is a more informative way of understanding how research in this thesis was conducted. The word throughness is evocative and suggests that situations are inherently unstable and changing. It also assumes that intended meanings are constantly moving in a state of fluidity. This endless movement toward something else is what Deleuze (1994) considers a form of *becoming* and it is in this sense of the word that the research is postured.

The concept of subject and object existing independently of one another, connected only through the application of a research methodology fails to see that the relationship between the one who sees and that which is seen is one of interdependence to the point where they are indistinguishable. To consider this notion is to re-imagine the dualism of descriptive or interpretive analysis with a willingness to adopt a mindful approach to investigation acknowledging *becoming* as a central theme. Adams (2012) suggests that we move toward a dialogue with the phenomenon being experienced. This dialogue is both literal and figurative. It is literal in that research designs are engaged to encourage dialogue between participants about the phenomenon experienced. It is figurative because as researchers we move throughout and within our interpretations as they become known and upon which we reflect.

The research question asks that the ontological (to be) more than the epistemological (to know) is considered in terms of the approach that this thesis adopts. The methodology that stems from the research question generates a contemplative approach to notions of self which become decentred as the work proceeds. The self is not championed as something with a separate existence but is embedded within the methodology of reflecting upon ontological understandings derived from Buddhist
notions of no-self. This loss of self is described as being similar to that which is experienced by those in the flow-state as Csikszentmihalyi (1997, p. 31) describes:

[C]hallenges and skills are in balance, attention becomes ordered and fully invested. Because of the total demand on psychic energy, a person in flow is completely focused. There is no space in consciousness for distracting thoughts or irrelevant feelings. Self-consciousness disappears.

The research question also asks that ontological beliefs be re-examined and used as a means to question underlying assumptions concerning that phenomenological state which is experienced as ‘the present’. The use of the word becoming subsumes an acceptance of experience without certainties, beginnings or endings and challenges notions of the present. An understanding of becoming is revealed through an acknowledgement of the suchness of that existence which surrounds us and is within us (Leighton 2015).

The next section discusses the role that memory plays in reinforcing mindful practice. An awareness of past experiences with the art-making process is encouraged and informs the continually emerging present moment within the classroom.
7.2 Mindful Recollection

The effects that mindful engagements had on the way that visual arts students in a secondary school setting engaged with their work were considered. A particular quality of attention was encouraged which might be colloquially defined as ‘seeing with the eye of an artist’. There is an understanding that the artist perceives the world in a different way or with altered sensitivities to that of others (Arnheim 1969; Crowther 2009; Edwards 1989; Eisner 2002). The hermeneutic approach to data interpretation looked for clues within the work produced by students for changes in their visual perception. Examples of this altered state of perception occurring and its effect on student engagement with the work were discussed in chapter six but an example from each of the four students is worthy of mention.

There was a moment when Rebeka was drawing a photograph of some fruit in a bowl. Her perception of the fruit changed almost instantly as she began to draw what was actually there. Rebeka had initially perceived the fruit as separate pieces within the bowl and expressed frustration at not being able to see those pieces partly hidden from view. As we discussed this, her perception changed to the point where the fruit was seen as colours and shapes requiring nothing more from her than careful observation and the ability to remember the image as it was rendered onto paper. This shift in perception was also seen in Amanda’s work when, in her words, she began to ‘look at stuff properly’ after a meditation session. Amanda described her meditation sessions as ‘thinking about nothing. . .just breathing and stuff’. These meditative experiences created a shift in the way that objects were seen by her and understood. Similarly when Josh was asked to write something about his meditative experience he mentioned the change in temperature of the breath as he inhaled and exhaled. It was the first time he had noticed this and he expressed surprise at this sudden realisation. Josh began to notice other things with a fresh approach which included the way he looked at the subjects of his artworks. Kaitlyn wrote that ‘it happened again’ in her visual diary to describe a flow state that she had experienced whilst painting at her home. This was something that she had experienced before but was unnoticed. This difference in
perception for Kaitlyn was her ability to experience a flow state and to be able to create such a state within herself through meditative practice.

These examples of altered perceptive states can be placed within a spectrum with anaesthetic on one end and aesthetic on the other. Robinson (2001) considered this anaesthetic-aesthetic spectrum as moving respectively from a state of unconsciousness to one of heightened consciousness where being in an aesthetic state means being aware and focused. In this, there is an interdependent relationship between the Buddhist state of mindfulness and the aesthetic state. Degrees of unconsciousness vary and so anaesthetists administer an amount of anaesthesia for each patient depending on the type of operation and the associated level of unconsciousness required. Just as there are varied states of unconsciousness so too are there varied states of consciousness which are capable of being altered (Greenfield 2000).

The adoption of mindful practices are seen within the research as a way by which presented phenomena can be experienced with heightened intensity. When Buddha was asked how he would like to be remembered after death he is said to have replied that he would like to be thought of as ‘the one who woke up’ (Das 1997). In this sense, to wake up is to see the world as if for the first time while still acknowledging and remembering a past.

The literature associated with definitions of mindfulness tend to emphasise it as being present-centred and non-judgemental where an intense focus on the moment becomes the most important element (Baer 2003; Kabat-Zinn 2005b; McCowen, Reibel & Micozzi 2011). This emphasis on the moment whilst important, is often overemphasised at the expense of other fundamental elements, the most obvious of which is the notion of memory. The experiences of classroom-based mindful engagements within this thesis were multifaceted in the sense that they demonstrated a relationship between an awareness of the present moment which was centred on a sense of past. Relationships between the past and the present became obvious in the ways by which the artworks were approached within the classroom and the reflective qualities and insights that arose from this engagement which informed subsequent
practice. An acknowledgement of the relationship between the past and the present within the literature is seldom to be found where mindful practice is discussed in either clinical or educational settings (Brazier 2013a; Brazier 2013b). This disregard for the function of memory lessens the potential for mindful engagements to be considered at more profound levels and tends to ignore the full implication and potential of its original meaning. The importance of an acknowledged past, be it distant or recent, when considering the present moment is an important finding that came from the research.

A deepened sense of engagement with the artwork was expected at the level of the present experience and this is expressed by students working on their art within the study. The extent to which this engagement is enhanced through an acknowledgement and acceptance of the past was enlightening and I refer back to the work of Amanda in chapter six where she expresses how her perception of past thoughts and feelings seem different now as a result of mindful reflection:

**Diary Entry:**

**Amanda:** Today is the start of school holidays. I started doing a bit of meditating. To prepare myself I went into my room where it was quiet and sat on top of my bed with my legs crossed and back up straight. At first I didn’t really get into it well but a couple of days later I finally got the hang of it. I felt so relaxed and it was very calming. I actually liked it and I thought that it was a really good way of spending my extra time. I started to think about thoughts that I had about things that worried me in the past and now it just seems stupid to have been so worried.

Mindfulness maintains an emphasis on the role that memory plays in order to sustain an awareness or ‘remembrance’ of the present (Analayo 2006; Batchelor 1997; Conze
This means that in order to be fully aware of the present moment there needs to be consciousness of previous moments and future moments (Reynolds 2010). As discussed in chapter six, the impermanence of the present moment as it becomes the next is understood as being similar to the persistence of vision where the blurring of motion picture images from the immediate past to the present creates the illusion of movement. Hagen (1997) spoke of the ability to keep in touch with the past as that of ‘reacquainting’ which he likened to the idea of memory. In this light, mindful practice is considered an act of continuous consciousness of the past, whilst experiencing the present and an anticipated future.

Engagement with (in) the work does not take place in a vacuum or as a series of discrete ever-present moments. Such an engagement does not make an awareness of a given moment possible, lacking as it does a personal reference point. The way that art is perceived and produced within the classroom suggests that there is something more nuanced than simply an awareness of the moment at work. The themes that were explored by students and the sources of inspiration used to produce the work were not presented or experienced as discreet slices of time but rather integrated within a temporal flow and as such were understandable. This ability to understand that which is perceived is connected to working memory which may be thought of ‘the capacity of the mind to maintain and manipulate relevant information so as to be able to engage in purposeful activities’ (Dreyfus 2011, p. 47).

It became apparent through the research that the intervention of a mindful approach to the work was not just seen through the effects of a heightened sense of the non-judgemental moment in that the influence and effect of memory on the personal and shared experience of those involved in this research was also profound. Mindfulness is now understood as a cognitive activity fundamentally related to memory with its influence being proportional to an individual’s ability to retain relevant visual information and being able to integrate and adapt this information continuously in real time. This then becomes a process of continuous flow (Jha, Stanley & Baime 2010). The mindful attention to detail that is experienced by the students when drawing and painting is retained so as to inform and instruct further ongoing visual engagements.
In this sense, mindfulness is synonymous with concentration and the ability to imagine the future.

### 7.3 Visual Perspectives

This section of the discussion builds on the relationship between thinking and observation presented in sections 2.3 Mindfulness and Cognition – an Interactive Relationship, 4.1 The Poststructuralist Buddhist and 4.2 Deleuzian Buddhism. It is suggested that to see something is not a passive act but one involving a cognitively-based interpretive process.

To concentrate on an object can lead to narrowing down the focus on specifics and tends to exclude broader perspectives and relationships (Analayo 2003). This was evidenced, for example, when students began to look at the colour of reflected shadow in the workings of their paintings. We all observed the fact that shadow had a colour and that this colour was dependent on the reflected light from other objects. We also noticed that a highly concentrated state of observation provided some information about the colour and intensity of the shadowed areas but it was not complete. Concentration in itself was not enough until it was combined with a mindful approach which offered insight into otherwise unnoticed elements within the experience. Some of these elements were beyond the area of that which was being observed and painted but were still contributing to the subject in terms of colour and reflected light. In this working practice, the act of mindful attention was not just that of selecting visual information and focusing on it but was rather taken to mean the function of noticing all of the many elements of an object or scene whether they be directly related to the focused observation or not and subsuming them too within the final work. The state of flow which Csikszentmihalyi (1997) describes is one where there is an effortless experience of activity. It is a state in which the sense of a separate self diminishes and where one becomes absorbed within the work undertaken to the exclusion of any
sense of space and time. This is the state that is considered to be greater than the individual components of the activity. In terms of an art class, one can be provided with materials, subject matter, time and even motivation to an extent but the state of flow is something which cannot be provided. It comes from an inner space and its presence is often unnoticed until it disappears from view.

As an exercise within art classes, it is interesting to think of solid objects as being in the negative and to notice (remember) them only in their absence, that is, to be acutely aware of the emptiness or nothingness that takes the place where something once existed. When this occurs, this sense of absence or space can be perceived. Lord (1980, p. 60) describes the reaction of the artist, Alberto Giacometti:

He began to paint once more, but after a few minutes he turned round to where the bust had been, as though to re-examine it, and exclaimed, ‘Oh, it’s gone! I thought it was still there, but it’s gone!’

Although I reminded him that Diego had taken it away, he said, ‘Yes, but I thought it was there. I looked and suddenly I saw emptiness. I saw the emptiness. It’s the first time in my life that this has happened to me’.

Seeing the nothingness of something may have been unnerving to Giacometti but it is a source of contemplation and creativity within Buddhist traditions and remains a fundamental element to strive toward within meditative practice. A review of the literature concerning the idea of nothingness supports the view that to experience this cognitive state is to enter into the world with an altered sense of reality (Brazier 2013a; Nyaniponika 1973; Olendzki 2009). This altered world view is seen from a decentred perspective which creates a freshness and sustained interest creating an experience of nothingness and subsequently provides opportunity to experience a state of flow.

Further to the discussion expressed in the sections 3.1 and 4.1 concerning the Buddhist concept of nothingness, it is possible to experience a sense of nothingness by imagining a physical space in which some action is expected to take place. Students were asked
within this research to try to imagine being seated in a theatre about to watch a live performance. The curtains open to reveal an empty stage. The emptiness of the stage can feel more profoundly empty because of our expectations of something being there. Another example discussed was to imagine the seconds of silence between the final few taps of the conductor’s baton that bring the orchestra to order and the first sounds that are heard. The silence in those moments are full of expectation and potential. With this heightened sense of awareness it is all but impossible to see the stage as truly empty or the moments before the orchestral performance as ever completely silent. Students expressed their thoughts on the absolute silence within the room after the diminishing sound of the singing bowl had finished as having a similar presence or feeling of anticipation. It seemed as though the memory of the sound was replaced by the silence but the act of listening was still fully engaged. We were listening intently to silence.

The memory of an object, a performance or a sound exists within imagination often after it is gone from reality. The people working within the classroom in this research used mindfulness as a way of enhancing the experience of attentively and purposefully noticing that which was before them. This act of noticing was consistent with the literature in relation to an acknowledgement of the importance of being present in the moment (Bhanta 2003; Cullen 2011; Kabat-Zinn 2005b) but the additional influence that memory had on a mindful approach was also experienced. An acknowledgement of the role that memory played as the thread that ran through our conscious moments was an important addition to our understanding of the cognitive processes that were operating within the classroom. The role that memory played in blending the moments together was demonstrated in the way that students engaged with the art-making process.

Each of the four featured students within this research followed a similar method or approach to painting. This approach consisted of a focused observation of the object that was being painted followed by the application of paint on paper or the refinements of a pencil line. As the eyes of the student left the object being painted or sketched and moved toward the watercolour paper, the image being painted was no longer in actual view. It was held in memory for that second or so before the marks
were made with brush or pencil. The memory of the object was held and consequently transferred to the paper. I contend that it is in those few moments of suspended and remembered reality that the creative act may be seen to take place. The image is held and processed and interpreted until it finally transformed into another state of reality. It becomes a reality consisting of both deliberate and unintended marks on a two-dimensional surface. It is not a tracing activity where the given visual reference is always seen and directly engaged. It is rather an act of imagination and purpose. It is an act of cognition that turns the perceptions of reality into codified marks made with paint that becomes a type of language. These visually suggestive marks of varied shape and colour work together just as words in a sentence might and they too have their own form of grammar and ways to create meaning. It became clear in observing the student’s work that perception was in itself an act of cognition, an act of thinking, such as Nagarjuna\(^2\) (1995) describes:

\[
\text{Seeing itself does not see} \\
\text{Nonseeing itself does not see} \\
\text{Through seeing itself} \\
\text{The clear analysis of the seer is understood (p. 139).}
\]

This passage proposes that in order to know what the subject of vision is, it is important to undertake a careful analysis of the perceptual process and not simply be content with the purely sensual.

This section concludes with an understanding that a separation exists between seeing and thinking which may at first glance seem to have merit. Visual information is often considered as being received passively which is only then later interpreted at a cognitive level by the brain (Arnheim 1969). This commonly held belief is based however on the misapprehension that an actual self-contained inverted image of the observed world is projected onto the retina and then interpreted after presumably being projected onto a screen at the back of the brain within the visual cortex (Edwards 1989). This belief would have us assume that the lens within the eye of any similar

\(^2\)Nagarjuna 2nd CE was a Buddhist saint and Mahayana Buddhist philosopher.
animal to humans would operate in the same way and would certainly operate in the same way within a particular species. This may be an interesting metaphor for the way we see the world but it is unhelpful as it perpetuates the myth that seeing and thinking are two distinct functions. There is no actual observable image of anything inside the eye or the brain. Seeing and cognition are part of the same function, as Ramachandran (2004, p. 25) imparts:

Just as little squiggles of ink called writing can symbolize or represent something they don’t physically resemble, so the action of nerve cells in the brain, the patterns of firing, represent objects and events in the external world.

The ability for the brain to change the way it functions as a result of meditative practice is well established within the literature (Begley 2004; Davidson et al. 2003; Farb, Segal & Anderson 2012; Kilpatrick et al. 2011). Seeing and thinking are not separate activities but are regarded within this research study as interdependent contributors toward the total process of visual perception.

The following section builds on the current discussion within this chapter pertaining to mindful practice, cognition and memory. It reintroduces the metaphor of latent space as previously discussed in chapter five.
7.4 Returning to Latent Space

‘To empty one’s mind of all thought and refill the void with a spirit greater than oneself is to extend the mind into a realm not accessible by conventional processes of reason.’ Edward Hill (1966)

This section follows on from the introductory remarks made about latent space in chapter five and considers how the concept of latent space offers a valuable metaphor to employ when considering the place that meditative practice may have within visual arts classrooms.

Figure 28: Monkey and Wasp
The introduction of latent space as a metaphor to think about art-making practices becomes an important element of this thesis and is exemplified in a work by Mori Sosen29 (see Figure 27) It is a watercolour painted in the form of a hanging scroll or kakejiku depicting a monkey looking upward toward a wasp. The effect that such seemingly empty space between these two keys elements has on the interpretive narrative of the work is immediately apparent. Chinese and Japanese art have well established traditions in the function and use of space in its contribution to meaning (Kuo 2015; Takeda 2013; Weiss 2013). Without the space between the monkey and the wasp, the painting loses its drama and sense of expectancy. The emptiness between the monkey and the wasp is seen as an essential element in the painting and becomes full of possibility within the story being presented. Had there been little or no space, it could be assumed that this story would have a sudden and unfortunate ending for the wasp or frustration for the monkey. The distance between the two creates a tension and a potency that would not be possible had they been closer to each other.

The painting playfully suggests that something will likely happen within this space. Some action will take place; the monkey may jump, or the wasp fly away. It is the creation of the space which offers possibilities for action and in this sense the action is as yet unseen but latent. The space created is seen to be anything but empty but rather full of potential. It creates opportunity for a range of outcomes to transpire. Latent space is created within us through meditative practice (Brown & Ryan 2003; Grossman et al. 2004; Michie 2008).

This space and emptiness asks something of us in a way more profound than that of either the monkey or the wasp. It asks that we look deeper into this apparent nothingness and begin to interpret the reason it exists and the potential it has to create meaning within the work. Space and nothingness, as foundations of Buddhist ontology (Suzuki 1964), are discussed in terms of the self being illusionary (Dilthey 1997; Olendzki 2009; Yen 2008).

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Those with a knowledge of photographic darkroom practice would be familiar with the term ‘latent image’. A latent image is that which is captured after projection from an enlarger onto undeveloped photographic paper. The photographic paper remains white. It may be mistakenly thought of as an empty or blank piece of paper but this is not true. The image is present but latent in the sense that it can only become visible after the photographic paper has gone through the progressive steps of development, stop bath, fixing and rinsing. An environment is created into which the paper is immersed which enables the image to be revealed. Until this environment is created the photographic image remains present but concealed and unknowable. It is considered still a magical experience when a white piece of seemingly blank photographic paper is carefully placed into developer, enabling a pale distant image to gradually appear from the emptiness.

The metaphor of the latent image became for this research, that of latent space which is taken to be that inner space created through focused attention and meditative practice enabling the potential for creative expression. It is an acceptance of that quiet space which provides an opportunity for students to look and think about everyday common phenomena as if for the first time.

Practised meditation places us as the monkey in Sosen’s painting where we too focus on the wasp; the small thing, and realise it to be more important than initially thought. As artists we first look at the big picture and get a sense of the overall feeling which is given but then we look again. We look at the subject with an eye that asks questions of colour and shape, value and tone. These questions are answered by the artist through carefully considered and mindful observation.

Latent space is seen within the context of this research as that space within which creative understanding may be revealed. It is the space between the intended and the actual, from the imagined to the apparent. Meditative engagements and practice provide a way for the intentioned but still unrealised artworks to manifest. These intentions reveal themselves in many ways. At times they are experienced as the moment between preparing to make a mark on a piece of paper and the mark being made. At other times they are experienced as feelings of hope or anxiety. Art work is
often made from within a state of flow where the self-consciousness of any particular emotional experience is subsumed in the art-making process itself (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). As a result of the adoption of latent space, the process of art-making becomes in itself an act of meditation.

Attention and focus was situated between the real and the imagined; a liminal place from which a type of transformation may occur. The word liminal is derived from the Latin *liminia* meaning threshold and suggests a line that exists between environments. Turner (1967, p. 4) discusses the notion of liminality as a rite of passage and this is a helpful way of thinking about it as it suggests a transition or movement from one place to another; from one state of mind to another. James (1912, p. 374) offers an insight into this state of mind:

Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there are potential forms of consciousness entirely different.

This liminal place to which both James (1912) and Turner (1967) allude is what in the Celtic tradition is referred to as the thin place (Béres 2012). It is a place where a mindful view may manifest and flourish. It is not a place that can be imposed on people but one that, once experienced and with practice, may be engaged with at will. It is not a place with fixed dimensions but rather is always the size it needs to be. It may be a space that is defined more by what it is not than what it is; a space with substance yet never fully formed. It is latent with possibility and empowering. An acknowledgement of latent space asks that a movement is made from the macro to the micro, from the space in which the teacher and the student interact, to a space of awareness perceived in an embodied way (McCowen, Reibel & Micozzi 2011).

The integration of mindful practices stimulated by Zen-based meditative techniques enabled the creation of this space and encouraged students through this experience to become reflective practitioners.
7.5 The Mindful Classroom

It takes time to reflect on and interpret the effects of a mindful approach to art pedagogy or for that matter any pedagogical engagement. The qualitative methodology used in this thesis incorporating as it did the use of phenomenology and hermeneutics asked that a nuanced and sensitive part be played by the researcher both with regard to those involved in the study and for the interpretation of data generated. This sensitivity was derived through an understanding or empathy for how a mindful approach might be observed in people through a personal ongoing experience of its impact. The engagement with the students maintained within this project was informed through a place of personal lived experience regarding art-making and meditative practice. The thought that a researcher could implement and gain meaningful information from such a study without a personal history of practice was not only considered to be unhelpful but is actually not possible according to the literature (Huppert 2009; Weare & Nind 2011; Wisner 2013).

The ways by which a mindful attitude toward art-making was introduced within the classroom for this thesis were important to consider. Interventions such as meditative activities may seem unusual or even threatening to those unfamiliar with its history and so it was essential to establish an atmosphere of trust and support within the group. This trusting environment was established through encouraging an atmosphere of equality by realising that we are all students in one way or another and by acknowledging that art classrooms needed such an atmosphere to enable free thought and creativity to flourish. To build a trusting environment required a display of both generosity and calm on my part and to this extent I drew on my understanding of how a mindful approach to working with students is important. I also offered a model of behaviour and an attitude of trust in the way I worked as a group member. This attitude was expressed both verbally and non-verbally. Verbal expression was provided through my tone of voice in discussing our previous experiences of art-making processes. The non-verbal communication was possibly even more important and influential. It found expression through making eye contact with students and maintaining an unhurried and confident presence within the room. Non-verbal
communication also occurred at the level of the art-making itself. When I was drawing and painting something as one of the group, I sensed on many occasions that I was being carefully observed by the students and that they were noticing the way I looked at objects or mixed the paint with the water or how I made the brush-marks on the paper. My usual experience in the past of painting something within a shared student space was one of casual interest on their part or often no interest whatsoever. This unexpected attention to my approach highlighted to me the importance of modelling my work practice in a clear and direct manner.

When Rotne and Rotne (2013, p. 39) discuss establishing a supportive learning environment they describe the teacher as ‘one who is embedded in and co-creator of a reciprocal practice community’. I tried to remain mindful of this attitude and approach, sensing that it was particularly relevant to creative practice. Robinson (2001) speaks at length about the necessity of students feeling comfortable enough in their surroundings to try new ways of working or thinking without fear of ridicule from peers or teachers. It was assumed within this thesis that such an atmosphere was an essential ingredient if a creative space was to transpire. The creative process involves a degree of risk as by definition, to be creative is to try something new or unknown and with unpredictable outcomes. This willingness to look beyond comfortable boundaries and to go to unexplored areas is dampened or even extinguished if people feel they need to get everything correct and never make mistakes. A fear of failure is difficult to overcome and we all at times felt its effect during the project. This fear often manifested itself through a discouragement to engage with the task at hand or by immediately giving up at the first indication of dissatisfaction. I refer to a conversation I had with Rebeka during the first week of the project that we had about a bowl of fruit she was attempting to draw. Rebeka was very unhappy with the result of her drawing as it did not look like the photograph being used. Explaining to her the fact that she was translating the fruit bowl into a completely different medium was my attempt to see if she might be less critical of herself but the feelings of frustration remained as indicated by her comment that ‘I picked a photograph that was too hard. . .that’s all’. In retrospect, I might have approached this engagement with Rebeka differently. I think now that she was asking me for some really practical advice and criticism of her
work when all I gave her was encouragement to move on and to forget about any disappointment. Rebeka maintained a seriousness with her work over the weeks and did not respond well to encouragement from anyone but rather tended to carefully plan pieces of work in the hope of eliminating the unexpected as much as possible. She described herself to me as being a perfectionist and we had discussions about the positives and negatives of bringing such an approach to our art-making. We agreed that the most obvious negative of having a perfectionist approach was that it was very difficult for her to feel comfortable enough to experiment with the materials without having pre-determined expectations of outcome. As Rebeka’s meditative practice continued over the weeks we both noticed an increased willingness on her part to take risks with the paint and to enjoy the process itself as much or even more than the final product.

It became a fundamental requirement to give ourselves permission to fail and to see these so-called failures as a necessary part of the learning continuum. This courage to try something new without guaranteed success became part of our work and without such an attitude it is difficult to see how a project such as this would be possible. There is an unattributed Buddhist saying that ‘You will not skid if you stay in a rut’ meaning that to stay in the rut ensures that known outcomes will be achieved but that they will always be the same safe outcomes that had always been achieved. The students were aware of the type of mindful work we would be undertaking and approached the project with a willingness to work outside of the rut and to have a different experience of art-making within the classroom. The question of how such a mindful approach might be introduced was considered.

There is no singular correct way to present the concept of mindfulness to a group of students although there are many possibilities depending on their background, age and learning environment (Coholic 2010; McCowen, Reibel & Micozzi 2011; Schoeberlein 2009). These factors were not seen as separate elements but as integrated influences for reflection. The school ethos within which the research took place was in the Catholic tradition. This type of school environment encourages students to consider a metaphysical world beyond themselves and to take the notion of personal reflection as a normal and necessary part of life. There was an emphasis
on silent prayer and an expectation of reverence toward their participation in the Mass or during other times of assembly within the school’s chapel and as participants in the daily timetabled religious education classes. Given this background, the students did not see anything unusual in being asked to sit quietly with their eyes closed or to be still. These types of spiritual experiences with which the students appeared to be comfortable, provided a valuable foundation for the introduction of mindful activities. A common method of engaging the experience into a state of mindful awareness is through the senses (Rotne & Rotne 2013) and with this in mind it was decided to draw on the student’s familiarity with sitting in silence and with eyes closed. Within this state, physical attention was drawn to the sound and feeling of the breath and also to the sounds that might be heard within the room and beyond. This is a simple yet powerful exercise with the capacity to centre the self and to encounter a sight, sound or feeling without necessarily identifying with it (Covey 2005). These activities were completed over one- or two-minute sessions usually at the beginning of our classes and then their effects were discussed. Some students stated that they felt incapable of feeling anything or that what they felt was thought of wrong or incorrect. Once again this tendency to think in terms of correct or incorrect was well-ingrained and only gradually dissipated over the coming weeks. As the art classes continued, these meditative activities came to be seen as a normal part of the lesson and students were observed to be engaging with them effortlessly. A singing bowl was introduced to the sessions as an external device to encourage students to find the space to pause and collect their thoughts. We listened to the sound of the bowl gradually diminish over a minute and became mindfully focused on our surroundings. As the sound vanished there came that moment when there was no sound and it was at that moment when we were most attuned to our bodies, each other and our surroundings. I thought of this singing bowl experience as a way to create latent space and to use this space to re-engage with the work at hand with added insight and purpose. These meditative routines had a formal quality about them. There was the ritual of sitting still at our shared table and taking some deep breaths before a member of the group directed us to close our eyes and listen to the singing bowl and focus on our breath. On other occasions we were asked to become aware of sounds or temperatures or our weight pressing down on to the chair. As the weeks passed another form of meditation
gradually revealed itself to us which was more informal and came from the actual class work being undertaken.

Informal meditation is not instigated externally by a singing bowl or other devices and might not seem to be meditation at all when causally observed. The informal meditation I experienced and witnessed came from the process of drawing and painting. It was expressed and felt through doing these activities so that the very act of painting became for all involved, at one time or another, a meditative act (Franck 1973).

I thought back to observations of Josh in chapter six, as he painted a landscape in watercolour where the observation was described as seeing ‘a visual expression of meditation’. Watching Josh develop the painting from a blank piece of paper into a visual expression of his engagement with the subject matter was a privilege in that I realised I was witnessing a very personal moment; I was with a person in a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). The flow-state that became possible through the painting process was for Josh an act of meditation. It occurred to me that such an experience may never have been observed had a trusting working environment not been established and felt. The meditative state that Josh was experiencing placed him in such a space as to be unaware of everything but the work being undertaken. He seemed oblivious of others in the room and to the movement of time. In this state of consciousness he was vulnerable and exposed. It was affecting to realise that he felt so comfortable sharing that deeply personal space with us.

The methodology used within the research to generate data was based on the establishment of a classroom environment built on trust. Such an environment enabled a willingness to adopt meditative approaches in engaging with the work and this was seen as a vital component of our shared experience.
7.6 Interpreting

The choice of hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology for this study asked that the research be approached with a ‘phenomenological attitude’ (Finlay 2012, p. 19). This required a willingness to describe what was experienced within the classroom as it appeared which is at the heart of the phenomenological interpretive process. Descriptions of the way that the art classes unfolded were multifaceted and attempted to provide enough richness and detail to allow the reader to imagine themselves in the space. The dialogue that occurred within and between the students involved in this research encompassed more than just a literal description. In keeping with the spirit of the methodology, a type of language and voice was adopted to take the audience beyond the literal and invited them to engage with the data from multiple sensitivities. It was in keeping with the methodology to try to take the audience on a journey through the data and become immersed in it rather than adopting a more objective positivist encounter. To this end the language used in the analysis constantly shifts from the literal to the imagined and includes moments of fleeting thought. Disparate connections are made and there is an emphasis on prose and metaphor to get the data to speak and become alive. ‘Phenomenology, not unlike poetry,’ says van Manen (1997, p. 13) is a ‘poetizing project; it tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world’.

Finding a voice that reflected the relationship between student perceptions and generated data was challenging. When (Finlay 2012, p. 32) discusses the language of phenomenological interpretation as ‘ironically playful, creative interpretations’ she also warns that these descriptions should not overpower the sense of the observer being present. A certain rhythm was attained within the descriptions and interpretation that was testament to the transformational nature of the research. The experience of working within different cognitive dimensions enabled a nuanced engagement toward the data. This was particularly true of the visual data. Looking at the student artwork became a meditative experience not unlike that expressed by the students themselves when they were being produced. An altered state or perspective was maintained where the paintings were seen simultaneously as both literal objects
and noumenal narratives. Beyond the purely literal, the descriptions emphasised the imagined story of the artwork and these were offered with the intention of moving the audience from a place of passive viewer to that of both active creator and meaning-maker. The descriptive prose derived from students’ work gave the reader an opportunity to be become invested with the work rather than seeing it from an disembodied distance. This intimate engagement asked that the ordinary become extraordinary and more nuanced and unexpected. I looked toward Finlay (2012, p. 33) when thinking about my approach to the descriptions and analysis where she suggests that ‘the value of phenomenology remains [sic] its ability to bring to life the richness and ambiguity of existence’. I wanted to bring the layered and faceted data that was generated to life through language and to encourage an audience to ask questions of the data and reflect upon responses and answers. Van Manen (1997, p. 129,130) is unambiguous in the role he sees language playing in hermeneutic analysis and the intended effects of the words that are used when he states that:

Textural emotion, textural understanding can bring an otherwise sober-minded person (the reader but also the author) to tears and to a more deeply understood worldly engagement. . .To write phenomenologically is the untiring effort to author a sensitive grasp of being itself.

Experiencing the given or suchness of a phenomenon with hermeneutic insight and empathy altered the environment, changing it into one where every instance or happening came to mean something more imperative. To embrace a hermeneutically phenomenological stance became both an art and a science. It asked me to find my place both within the history of scientific method that champions observation and description over intuition, but also within the environment of the hermeneutic circle with its emphasis on personal interpretation and reinterpretation (Heinonen 2015). The scientist does whatever is possible to negate the possibility of personal bias in their research where a hermeneutic approach assumes that this is never entirely possible nor even necessary.
‘We don’t see the world as it is we see it as we are’.

(Anais Nin 1903-1977)

It is not possible to be uninvolved or to not be personally invested in research which encompasses such a degree of observational scrutiny and self-evaluation. Hermeneutics is founded on the belief that researchers are ‘embedded in a context of explanation that intrudes into the context of the data’ (Bentz & Shapiro 1998, p. 112). My biases needed to be acknowledged and reflected upon as they influenced the observations and interpretations which were conducted. I asked myself how my ontological outlook had changed over the years and how, as a result of this, my understanding of reality and truth had also changed (is changing). Validating qualitative research such as this involves coming to terms with the relationship between the context of the data and the context of self that is brought to the work. As an artist I am not without preconceptions about what constitutes an artwork and am therefore aware that the way I demonstrate a painting or drawing to others and offer criticism of their own work is subject to a particular point of view. Being conscious of the potential to over-influence the students was in some way a check on these biases but I was concerned that this was not enough. I thought back to the meaning of hermeneutics which is ‘the art and science of interpretation’ (Bentz & Shapiro 1998, p. 105) and came to understand this desire to interpret as having the essence of an enquiring nature. To enquire is to search and to ask questions of one’s self and one’s surrounding. I determined that I might use this essence of hermeneutics to provide a methodology based on asking questions and listening. This student centred approach helped to ensure that I did not become the focus within the room and had the added advantage of promoting a sense of equity and shared experience between all involved.

Phenomena were noticed from the perspective of a self which was both present and absent. I was moved toward those things to which I was attuned more than to those that may have been noticed by another researcher. These differences between
researcher-based on individual life experiences is seen to be both one of the strengths and one of the weaknesses of phenomenologically-based methodologies (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Different researchers working with the same students and within the same environment generate a unique set of data and interpretive insights as to what was being observed. Distinctly self-oriented phenomena are experienced continuously and assumptions that such observations are more than a moment in time seen through a personal and changing ontological lens are questionable. There is the element of chance or luck in observationally based research. The very act of looking in a particular direction edits out all the other possible directions to which one’s head may turn and with that, all the possibilities for interpretation that may otherwise come. I became aware that this research was subject to the chance happenings and instances that occur in the normal running of an art lesson and that any interpretation of phenomena made, came from the interaction of these lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari 2013). In discussing the nature and validity of data generated within a phenomenological project such as this, Finlay (2012, p. 32) suggests that ‘phenomenologists are challenged to recognize that any knowledge produced is contingent, proportional, emergent and subject to alternative interpretation.’ I did not know how to be sure that I was observing and processing the phenomena within the art room in a way that a hermeneutic analysis demanded. It was understood that a heightened awareness and sensitivity was needed to be brought to the research and that a mindful approach to the methodology might facilitate this endeavour. The mindful approach initiated was one that incorporated moments of pause and reflection being used as an integrated element or process within the observations. This method of working and acknowledging data kept me reminded that I had been required to adopt a number of seemingly conflicting roles.

My responsibility was to ensure a safe learning environment for the students and to maintain the professional expectations held by the school of their teachers. This teacher role was constantly in the background of everything I did within the room and necessarily so, but I did not want it to interfere with the other roles that I concurrently needed to maintain. The adopted teacher role, whilst necessary, had the unwanted potential of reinforcing a distance between myself and the students based on assumed
inequalities of power, status and influence. It was expected that the quality of the data generated depended on a relaxed and trusting relationship between us all and so the difficulty was in determining the extent to which the traditionally formal teacher-student paradigm might be reimagined. Challenging traditional expectations around the balance of power within classrooms is often problematic due to the resistance of teachers and students to adopt non-habitual ways of working together. Resistance by the students to embrace a more democratic classroom environment was strong at first and only gradually became less apparent as the worked moved forward. This resistance to change more often took the form of students seeking praise by doing what they thought I required of them. They seemed uncomfortable with being given permission to try new ways of working or of making mistakes. There were many instances where students seemed afraid to get something ‘wrong’. It was important to continually ask ourselves about the validity of these thoughts concerning notions of correctness or incorrectness and what place they had in an art classroom.

Any number of activities may have been employed to break down assumptions of how teachers and students were expected to work together but it was appropriate to engage students as individuals by modelling an approach to art-making. All of these engagement and trust building methods worked with each other with differing emphases observed and experienced over time. The encouragement provided through my modelling meditative practice, reflective thought and practical art-making techniques was acknowledged by students and I sensed it was welcomed. Being aware of my influence within the room made me feel at times as if I was being watched with some intensity. In their study of teacher effectiveness, Stronge, Ward and Grant (2011, p. 351) concluded that ‘the common denominator in school improvement and student success is the teacher’ and it was with this in mind that I approached the classroom with some caution. Realising the influence I had in the room, I needed to reinforce that idea that I was presenting a particular approach to the work which was a good starting point but that it was not necessarily suited to each and every person. We all had to find our own way.

Descriptions that came from the data were blended between recounting the actual lived experience (van Manen 1997) and the narrative that emerged from within the
data itself (Langdridge 2008). This is what is meant by a hermeneutic approach to phenomena. Hermeneutics and phenomena are inseparable in that a phenomena is only given meaning and substance once interpreted and without a phenomena there is nothing to interpret. This may seem obvious but the mind shift required from one of passive and habitual observation to one of asking questions of how something was seen rather than what was seen did not come without effort. The use of the question ‘what is seen?’ to generate data gradually became the hermeneutic question ‘how is it seen?’ The effect of using the feeling of ‘how’ as the perspective through which to engage with the data created a sense of curiosity and made what were often very common phenomena more important and meaningful.

Data generated in the form of paintings, written responses, photography and conversations provided an insight into the influence of mindful engagements in a number of ways. In the case of painting this influence was observed in the gradual willingness of students to embrace watercolour as their medium of choice. Paint flowed and moved on the paper in unintentional ways and where once this might have been a source of frustration, it now became accepted as being the nature of the medium. Watercolour is not suited to perfectionists or those intent on getting things to be ‘correct’. It can only be mastered to the extent that its natural properties are obeyed and this requires a particular attitude on the part of the artist that is both courageous and resigned to chance happenings. A quietness enveloped in the room at those times when we were in a state of flow with the work. This quietness was both actual and felt. My experience of intense quietness within classrooms is that it can be a nervous or even confronting challenge for students who are so accustomed to external stimuli or the comfort of familiar background noise. Tension often builds in these circumstances until the silence is broken by something or someone and it is then often followed by the release of laughter. The silence described here however was different. The students came to their own place of quietness as they worked quite naturally and seemed untroubled with it. Meditative influences are seen to be an important factor in the student’s ability to remain focused and engaged for extended lengths of time regardless of an individual approaches to the work.
Two generalised types of students were noticed as the class room work continued. For some students the art seemed to naturally occur. These students expressed their feelings through experimenting and playing with techniques and washes. They were fearless and enjoyed the glow that came from working with a transparent medium on white paper or even drawing a simple line. They enjoyed the accidents, spills and unintentional occurrences that are inherent with any medium but perhaps more so with watercolour than most others. They worked for themselves and were unafraid of failure. That being said, they often experienced frustration at never feeling that the work was really finished and perhaps not living up to their hopes and expectations. Other students were in some ways more thoughtful. They became well practiced in techniques but often laboured over the careful and precise application of paint. Things had to be right. This process often found them frustrated too. Their work was often never good enough. They became bound up in the application of the paint but did not see the paint as a language or capable of emotive expression.

Langer (1989, p. 32) discusses the notion of our obsession with outcome or product oriented results and its potentially negative effect on mindful practice. She suggests a better approach would be to ask questions like, ‘How do I do it?’ more than ‘Can I do it?’ This approach is seen as associated with an emphasis more on process than product. One group of students experienced the delight of natural expression, in an artwork. Other students enjoyed precision and technical mastery without which a painting or drawing may fail in its ability to be readable. The small group sessions for this study were intent on exploring a middle way that combined the strengths of these approaches and through that, arrive at a deeper or at least different understanding of the creative process.

Sollier (1972, p. 70) sums up the idea of a third way of working:

Yes spontaneity is freedom, the way of knowledge- but only on condition that it is guided by technique painstakingly absorbed and then forgotten by the reasoning mind. Without this condition there will be only frustration and you will once again be a prisoner of a dream.
The meditative practices employed during the art classes was seen to facilitate this middle way of seeing and working. It created an emphasis on students noticing the sensitivity with which they engaged their work more than one of looking toward an end-point. In this sense the act of painting and drawing in the classroom is an act of becoming which may be considered an endless end in itself.

7.7 Situated Imaginings

Literature concerning the effects that mindful engagements may have on individuals and groups is dominated by accounts of research and analysis of its application in clinical settings within the cognitive sciences (Baer 2003; Bishop et al. 2004; Brown & Ryan 2003; Kabat-Zinn 1994). The appropriation and employment of mindful clinical procedures by psychologists and therapists has been shown to relieve a wide range of cognitive disorders in patients for over more than four decades and this work continues (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 2009, 2013; Langer 1989, 2005; Langer, Heffernan & Kiester 1988; Rodin & Langer 1977). When mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) was introduced into the U.S.A by Kabat-Zinn (1994), its impact was immediate and the rate at which it was accepted within the psychological community was exponential (Ergas 2014). This acceptance rate shows no signs of slowing and is now at the point where an entire ‘mindfulness industry’ has established itself offering everything from serious peer reviewed scientific studies and clinical trials to individuals offering mindful palm readings, personal aura encounters or cures for cancer (Hyland 2015). Perhaps the commercialism and packaging of mindfulness to the general public is not to be entirely unexpected. Brazier (2013b) sees the current marketing of mindfulness as symptomatic of a predominately Western culture that tends to focus on the quick fix to a problem more than addressing the underlying contributing factors. There is a concern that the direction away from the original ancient Buddhist insights into the
human condition and toward a neatly packaged form of ‘McMindfulness’ (Hyland 2015) will prevent the full and intended potential of a mindful approach to reveal itself.

This thesis argues that the adoption of mindful engagements by educationalists from the cognitive sciences tends to ignore its foundational intent as a personal philosophy. Brazier (2013a) provides a clear acknowledgement of the origins of mindfulness and makes a case for its potential to help people of all ages to live happier and more fulfilled lives but suggests that it is too often described as an intervention to be administered to those with a problem or in need. It is dispensed in the broad community and within schools as one might dispense a drug. This is not to say that there is undoubtedly a place for mindfulness to be used as an aid to alleviate emotional disorders or as a natural therapy to replace medications for conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Lawlor et al. 2014; Morone et al. 2012; van den Oord, Bogels & Peijnenburg 2011) but the intervention of a mindful approach to art-making as initiated within this research design was not derived from a deficit perspective.

Mindfulness was approached within this thesis as a work practice that had the potential to enhance the already existing talents and qualities within all of us. It was not presumed that those involved in this research were in need of a cure for anything or that something within us needed to be improved. We were simply positioned as people who had the opportunity to engage mindful practices in order to experience the familiar in an altered non-habitual way. It was through this experience that a broader understanding of personal and collective creative possibilities were seen to be possible. Mindful engagement was used within the classroom more in keeping with its ancient Buddhist foundations than its relatively new and popular purpose of being a problem solver. These ancient foundations of mindfulness were based on Buddha’s emphasis on being aware of oneself at all times.

The work undertaken by students produced some frustrating moments regarding, for example, the way that they perceived the success or otherwise of a particular painting or our inability at times to carefully observe something we were drawing, to look beyond the habitually derived obvious and to see with freshness. These frustrations were to be expected and mindfulness was not intentioned or used to intervene when
these feelings occurred. Mindful practice as it was used within the room was not employed to solve problems but to render us aware of them and to notice them. In this, mindfulness was used in a different way to that which is used in the cognitive sciences or those educational settings where behavioural change is sought. A mindful attitude as employed within this research enabled students to be aware of their situation, feelings and suchness be they good or bad and to accept them. Buddhism asserts that whilst we may seek contentment through meditating and detaching ourselves from those feelings that cause unrest, it is still important to be accepting of unwanted emotions and to see them as impermanent and ultimately of little importance. This recognition and acceptance of the present state is the attitude of ‘bare attention’ described by Nyaniponika (1973, p. 32) as the ‘clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at successive moments of perception’. The notion of bare attention goes some way toward describing the feeling that mindful practice produced within the art classroom.

The experience of working with students within an environment that welcomed an attitude of introspection and discovery was both at times profound and commonplace. Initial anxieties concerning the willingness of students to accept meditative practices within the room were ill-founded and quite the opposite was seen. Students entered into the routine of listening and seeing with intent and purpose often describing feelings of experiencing their breath or the sound of the singing bowl in poetic and evocative ways. I was unexpectedly moved by many of their reflections and comments written in diaries or told to me in conversation. These feelings were also expressed within the artwork in different ways.

Paintings and drawings assumed an honesty or integrity about them which was seen in the way that the paint and paper were allowed to behave in accordance with their nature. The desire to dominate the medium was not apparent which may have come from a realisation that such dominance and control was not possible but more importantly unnecessary. This respect toward and understanding of the medium meant that there was more acceptance of chance happenings or unexpected connected visual references in the work. The preliminary pencil lines on the paper were seen as having potential and were likened to ‘lines of flight’ (Deleuze & Guattari
indicating those areas of watercolour wash and colour which were to follow. There was now the possibility of putting these lines of flight to work within and beyond the boundaries of the paper which became for us an assemblage. Objects became shapes and colour became known only in relation to the surrounding colours as they ran and bled within the water forming new statements. Careful observation was made possible through finding a still and personal latent space where ‘innovative ways to conceptualise things as fluid, shape shifting assemblages continually on the move in interacting with the world, rather than seeing them as stable essences’ (Vagel & Hofsess 2014, p. 1) was made possible.

Trying to imagine the influences that mindful engagements had on us all during the time with the students was in itself an act of mindfulness. It required a displacement of self in order to see more clearly, from a place that was at once connected to the work and also not connected. The ontological relationship between myself and the research question may have been seen as much a weakness as a strength. Quantitative research would see any embedded relationship as a form of contamination resulting in a distrust of the findings, assuming of course that total objectivity was ever possible. The aim of a hermeneutic analysis is to reveal the meaning of human expression within a contextual awareness and perspective (Aanstoos 1987) and as such no claims of objectivity were made, or thought to be necessary. Thinking about possible meanings and offering interpretations of phenomena within the multilayered interplay of the classroom required time and reflection through personal meditative practice and is still ongoing. Just as the act of painting became for us a meditative act, so too was the process of consideration about the contribution to knowledge that a thesis like this may lay claim to. The process of generating knowledge is described by Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 112) as ‘a dance in which through repeated interweaving, the observer come to be entrained with the observed’ and so it was for me. There is no proof to be found here and there is no final answer. Such indicators of success or resolution are not the stuff of phenomenologically-based methodologies and suggestions of such concepts being possible are considered simplistic. Natural limits to observed phenomena are non-existent and so any suggestion of an absolute conclusion would have been misplaced.
The process of interpretive knowledge generation used within the research was framed by an understanding that any form of targeted outcome-oriented analysis would miss too much nuanced and often unnoticed information. To Heidegger (1962) interpretations come not from positivist analysis which he considered aggressive but by allowing an opening to occur. From this opening or space new ‘beings’ may manifest where within previous interpretations they may have been unseen. Such ‘beings’ or insights cannot be forced to appear but a space may be created into which they are welcomed and acknowledged. This form of mindful enquiry provided a way for deeper understandings of what was being observed to become known.

In its current manifestation, mindfulness has become a product which is often asked to provide a cure for problems concerning the human condition. Whilst this is a likely outcome of mindful engagements it was nevertheless not its original intention. This thesis incorporated a mindful approach to an art classroom that reflected its original Buddhist desire which was nothing more than to experience the suchness of being and through this engage with the world and each other in oneness.

Chapter eight will bring the findings of this thesis to a conclusion and offer recommendations for future research in this area. It also discusses the limitations of this thesis and ends with reflective comment.
It has been said that a painting is never finished but simply pauses in an interesting place. I looked at the work and decided to add the old fence in the lower-left hand corner. It pushed the people on the beach back into the painting and provided further balance with the vertical masts of the yachts.

The two figures walking on the beach tend to exemplify this loose style of painting. They are nothing more that shapes of paint. There is little or no attempt to paint a person in any real sense. It is left to the viewer to make sense of what these shapes may suggest. We see people on the beach because it makes sense to us. After some time we may get an idea of the clothing they are wearing and even the relationship one may have to the other but they remain just shapes of paint.

The power of this style of painting is in its ability to allow the viewer to participate in the scene and to create his or her own meaning. It is tempting to keep painting and to provide more detail but at this point more detail would take away as much or even more that it might provide. More visual information would make the necessity of the
viewer to think and interpret less important and would diminish some interest in the work. If there is nothing else to ask of the painting and all the information is offered in a clear, concise and clinical manner then what is left to think about and consider?

This painting is not finished. It simply represents my experience of being on a beach one day and getting my feet wet. It became a record of that feeling.

Introduction to Conclusion

This thesis examined the implications of school-based art pedagogy for school students when mindful engagements were experienced. The research was framed within a poststructuralist Deleuzian landscape that focused on notions of becoming, rhizoidal structures and lines of flight that occurred within the assemblage of the classroom (see sections 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4). The adoption of this theoretical framework offered the possibility of engaging with the classroom experience and the data in ways that acknowledged the hermeneutic emphasis on taking notice of the incidental and seeking meaning in the ordinary. Constructivist epistemology informed the research which assumed knowledge to be generated. The interpretation and search for meaning within the data generated was enabled through the focused observation and reflective interpretation of the phenomena under study. A phenomenologically-based hermeneutic approach provided the opportunity to interpret the artwork produced in the context of the classroom and also broader contexts related to ontological beliefs (see sections 1.4, 3.2).

Combining a poststructuralist theoretical framework with a hermeneutically-based phenomenological methodology was problematic in the way that notions of self were positioned. Where phenomenology assumed a separate observing self, poststructuralist notions denied the assumption of a given self. This poststructural Deleuzian denial of self was consistent with Buddhist notions of no-self and
nothingness and so a dialogue became possible between these two ontologies through the concept of haecceity which was discussed in chapter four.

In addition to this, the notion of the self as a fixed unchanging agent engaged in phenomenological observation was destabilised using a Deleuzian view that assumed the self as being another transient entity in an endless process of becoming. The ‘becoming-self’ and ‘self-under-erasure’ of Deleuzian poststructuralism was seen within the ‘no-self’ of Buddhist philosophy and was discussed in chapters three and four. This reimagining of the self provided a way to engage with both Buddhist philosophy and Deleuzian theory and was able to be put to work within the phenomenologically experienced observer-observed relationship.

This thesis identifies a contribution to knowledge indicated in the following four statements which will be further explained within section 8.1 of this final chapter:

First, the approach and use of mindful engagements within this thesis were introduced in such a way as to enhance the students’ existing abilities and not as a cure for assumed deficiencies and shortcomings. A positive classroom environment was seen in contrast to prevailing mindful engagements in schools that adopted a default ‘deficit’ position with the intention being to cure a problem (see sections 1.4, 1.5, 7.7).

Secondly, the establishment of a mindful attitude by those working within the art classroom was found to be a supportive precondition to assume before and during the art-making process. This attitude was informed through an appreciation of the notion of becoming. Further to this, the act of creation within a mindfully focused classroom setting became the meditative act in itself and was seen to be influential in the students’ ability to maintain concentration and focus with regard to their work (see chapter six).

Thirdly, this thesis introduced the concept of ‘latent space’ as a way to imagine the creation of a mindful approach to work within an art classroom and to emphasise the idea of space having real substance and potential to influence thought and action. This concept was used as a metaphor to explain the potential of meditation in expanding awareness and challenging habitual thought. The notion of latent space through
meditative practice created a flow-state within students that could be produced at will (see chapter three).

Fourthly, this thesis made a contribution to the way that hermeneutic phenomenology may be used as a methodology within visual arts research by framing it within a poststructuralist Deleuzian setting. The duality of the subject/object relationship is renegotiated within the Deleuzian notion of becoming and used to rethink the idea of the self as something more nuanced and less constant than is normally assumed within phenomenologically-based research (see chapter five).

8.1 New Knowledge

The research adopted an approach to mindful engagements within the classroom which was based on the assumption that students were not deficient or in any particular need of being helped in any way but were in fact complete and imaginative individuals. It engaged mindfulness as an attitude or approach that emphasised the acceptance and awareness of given surroundings and circumstances. Mindfulness engagements were introduced into the research space by way of enhancing those existing qualities within students and not as a treatment for problems real or imaginary. The distinction between seeing mindful engagement through a ‘glass half full’ more than a ‘glass half empty’ lens is important as it speaks to epistemological assumptions expressed explicitly and implicitly within this thesis which promote a constructivist approach to pedagogy as valued and effective (see chapters three and five).

A curative approach to mindfulness was referred to in this thesis as a ‘deficit model’ (see chapter seven) and was seen to be derived and based on those traditions and attitudes associated with the healing professions. Alternatively, this research offered mindfulness engagements as a process of enhancement that acknowledged the worth that mindful meditative techniques have on students regardless of their current
situation. It is this ‘glass half full’ or ‘additive model’ which informed the research methodology (see chapters one and five).

The additive model is based on the original traditions associated with Buddhist philosophy which emphasise enhancing the existing human condition (Hagen 1987; Hanh 1999). The adoption of this mindful attitude emphasised the importance of becoming aware of one’s body, thoughts and feelings which acknowledged original understandings of mindfulness. Such understandings were not concerned with notions of happiness or unhappiness but rather in providing a pathway toward inner peace (Brazier 2013a). Such peace was thought possible through a denial of a separate self operating outside of the world along with the cessation of feelings of attachment to those things which are impermanent. Buddhist ontology contends that all physical objects are in a constant state of flux which will in time decay and become something else. These objects are inherently impermanent and so are eventually bound to create disappointment should they be coveted and pursued. The non-physical world of ideas, however, were not thought to be limited by those natural laws surrounding life and death and were therefore worthy of continued interest (Hagen 1987; Hanh 1998).

This thesis contended that the art-making process was dependent on both physical and transcendental elements to find expression and it was this unseen or emotional dimension which was of particular interest within the research. Teaching methods made use of meditative techniques within the classroom which generated observable data to which a hermeneutic methodology was applied (see chapter six). These art classes were not driven by the need to produce a finished product in the form of a drawing or painting. Such an approach would have asked for more emphasis on the use of materials and the practicing of varied painterly techniques. Whilst these things are important they were not the focus of the lessons that are at the centre of this study.

The primary aim of the art classes conducted was to enable students to experience a more profound way of seeing and interacting with their environment developed through a mindful approach to the work. This was considered a necessary precondition for creative expression to become possible. The research found that if this
precondition was established from the beginning, then artistic and creative expression naturally followed. The willingness of students to try ways of using brushes or mixing paint was spontaneous under these mindful conditions and reflected a lack of anxiety on their part usually associated with the need to ‘get things right’.

Previous experiences of teaching art required students to first gain an understanding of colour and theories associated with artistic elements and principles, for example, line, shape, tone and texture before any practical work of importance commenced. The research in this study, however, found that such an emphasis on theory was not necessary for visual expression to develop or for students to gain confidence in their abilities. Instead of providing as much information as possible to students before finished artwork was attempted, it was found that students required only a willingness to become visually aware and to be prepared to accept that which was before them.

Through this acceptance, students became aware of their intuitive, natural ability to draw and paint unencumbered by habit enabling visual experimentation and confidence to flourish.

The adoption of a working approach in the art classroom that emphasised a mindful attitude over the acquisition of technical skills was informed by meditative techniques and the consequent establishment of a personal inner space which was termed ‘latent space’ (See section 5.4). This space was a place of emptiness or nothingness. It was a space created in order to receive and accept stimuli from a range of sources and a place where the self might be de-emphasised enabling pure awareness and observation. The research conducted found that the adoption of a latent space within students through mindful practices promoted a more attuned focus toward the visual. This focus was evidenced both in the quality and sensitivity of artwork produced and in the reflective comments of the students (see chapter five). The effect of latent space as a precondition to student art practice was that the desire for a finished art product was de-emphasised and replaced with an emphasis on the art-making process itself.

Students adopted and maintained a flow state (Csikszentmihalyi 1997) and realised that such a state could be achieved at will with practiced meditative techniques. This was a revelation to those involved in the
research as while previous states of flow were acknowledged and welcomed whenever they occurred, they were considered uncontrollable randomly occurring episodes.

The research question of this study asked ‘How might mindful engagements enable becoming within the visual arts classroom?’ The notion of becoming inherently suggests constant movement and that any assumptions of permanence is illusionary. There is no suggestion of the question of finality, completion or even accomplishment but rather an understanding of the power that curiosity and wonder have in the creative process. This thesis addressed the research question and found that if a traditional product-driven emphasis in the art room was replaced by a lived environment that encouraged flow, mindful attention and a focus on process, then creativity naturally occurred. The research also found that the real lesson being taught in art classrooms was not *how to produce* art so much as *how to be* in order for artistic expression to become.

The integration of poststructuralist theory with a phenomenologically-based research methodology was worked within the thesis through a reimagining of the notion of self. Where poststructuralist theory sees the self as essentially non-existent and illusionary (Colebrook 2002; Deleuze 1990; Diamond & Mullen 1999; Hegelund 2005; Levi-Strauss 1966) this same self is considered as not only real but as being the fundamental assumption underpinning phenomenologically-based research (Beach 1990; Crowther 2009; Edie 1987; Husserl 1970). These opposing notions of self are seen to engage with one another within this thesis when the fixed self is considered as a continually emerging and transient agent acting in a Deleuzian state of becoming (Colebrook 2002; Hegelund 2005; Davies 2010). The interest in rethinking the relationship between hermeneutic phenomenology and poststructuralist theory was in seeing whether one could extract from the other unexpected insights and interpretations of data. Berggren (2014) makes the point that there are now many challenges to placing phenomenology and post structuralism in opposition to one another and that recent debates in feminist theory (Ahmed 2004, 2006; Butler 1988; Oksala 2005) are increasingly finding ways by which an amalgam of these two concepts contribute to knowledge and provide new perspectives for analysis.
The hermeneutic engagement with the artwork and written entries of the students and discussions would arguably have been predictable to an extent had the placement of myself as observer remained unchallenged. The adoption of a Deleuzian sensitivity to self demanded both a reinterpretation of phenomena that would have been unnoticed and a willingness to work on shifting ground. This thesis found that the instability and uncertainty of working within a poststructuralist framework enabled a sharpening of the senses being unencumbered by habits of thought and through this a multilayered and nuanced phenomenological experience was enabled. The strength of the phenomenological approach within this thesis was that the lived experiences of the students was taken seriously. This strength, however, is tempered by the poststructuralist contention that phenomenology cannot discover a pure embodied experience prior to ideology. It is the strength of poststructuralism to foreground subjects as placed within intersecting and conflicting cultural norms and to ‘deconstruct that which is seemingly intact or stable’ (Berggren 2014, p. 244). In this, it is concluded that ‘phenomenology needs poststructuralism’s deconstructive critique of power and discourse, while poststructuralism simultaneously needs phenomenology’s recognition of embodied and lived experience’ (Berggren 2014, p. 244). It is this combination that this thesis uses to generate knowledge and gain insight into the influence of mindful practice in the art classroom.

8.2 Future Research

There is a place for more work to be done on the benefits and effectiveness of mindfulness-based pedagogy within the visual arts learning spaces. The emphasis placed on the completed art product in school-based classes is missing the real purpose of art pedagogy and may even be a hindrance. Art classes have more to offer students than simply knowledge of the rudiments of colour theory or of materials and techniques. It is more important to establish an environment that enables creative
responses and consequent artwork to happen naturally. This is not to say that basic practical knowledge and skills should be neglected but simply suggests that their current position of privilege within the classroom be revisited. Future research may consider the traditional art classroom with its emphasis on practical skills and see if students might be better served by more emphasis on the creation of a latent space within themselves through meditative engagements, making it possible for more focused imaginations and spontaneous ideas to occur.

The excitement experienced by the students when drawing or painting previously known subjects with renewed freshness and curiosity was clearly observed. It became evident that only minimal instruction about materials and techniques was needed before students took over the art-making process and discovered for themselves ways to make a drawing or painting work. The next stage of this research area might be to broaden the scope of the work by increasing the number of students involved and looking at a wider range of year levels and subject areas as suggested through the work of La Haye and Naested (2015) who suggest that an integration of the seemingly contrasted perspectives of the visual arts with those associated with mathematics education may offer students deeper perspectives and understandings of both discipline areas. The capacity of the students to acquire the metacognitive ability to establish a latent space for themselves gradually developed with practice. This ability meant that a state of flow being derived from and directed toward the work became the natural way to engage with each other and the subject matter. Reflexive self-volitional mindful practices may have relevance to pedagogical outcomes beyond the visual arts classroom and into other curricula areas and this too is seen as an important area of future research.

Whilst this thesis identified the positive cognitive effects on a limited number of students engaging mindful meditation within an art classroom, it was not within its scope to look at the underlying scientific evidence supporting meditative engagements. Students were seen to experience a different sense of perception as a result of their classroom environment. This observation was at a phenomenological level but it is now possible that the neurosciences might offer an explanation as to why and how these changes of experienced perception occurred. This research did not look
at relationships between neurological changes that might be seen as functions of meditative engagements. Nor did it consider those parts of the brain that react to creative thought processes which would be an intriguing area of future research. Such research may build on the work of Ramachandran (2004, pp. 40-59) who proposes that there are sound evolutionary reasons why humans engage in the creative process and perceive some things as art and others not. As a neurologist, he looks to the physical causes and manifestations of how aesthetic responses are generated and suggests that there may be cognitively-based universal laws of art that can be scientifically identified and tested. Research combining the personally-based experiential dimension of art-making and aesthetic experiences within a study of neurology is an entire field of future research that would make use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

The evolutionary reason for the existence in humans of a sense of aesthetics as suggested by Ramachandran (2004) also has relevance to future research that might look into those poststructuralist notions of becoming which are so prominent in this thesis. A Darwinian understanding of the place and function of humans or any other living entity is based on the premise that we are in a constant state of change. Such change occurs at a level that may be experienced in a single lifetime, as witnessed in the normal ageing process, or may happen too slowly to be perceived thus creating the illusion of stability. These fundamental changes are happening at the level of the visible individual complex organism but also happen at the genetic level where DNA information is being passed on from one generation to the next (Dawkins 1996, 2015). It would be interesting for future work to reimagine the phenomenological supremacy of the individual through the lens of a biologist who sees time more in terms of the passing of millennia rather than in moments. Perspectives of time are entirely relative and dependent on the given physical situation, personal expectations and activity taking place (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). It may therefore be possible to consider the permanence of the individual as being only relatively fixed when viewed from a particular perspective and entirely transient from another. Such a framing of the individual would consider notions of being as contextually informed and of fundamental importance when interpreting phenomena (Schank & Abelson 1977).
8.3 Limitations

The experiences of four art students working within an art classroom was the focus of this thesis. Particular interest was placed on how their engagement with the art-making process was influenced through the use of mindfulness-based activities and sensibilities. The context specificity of any knowledge generated within this thesis was acknowledged (Green 1990) and as such, no assumptions were made about how such knowledge might be transferred to larger groups of students. Whilst the sample size limited the possibility of making such broader generalisations, it was considered to be an appropriate and manageable sample. The perception that a single figure sample size is somehow less valid than a larger one is challenged by Lester (1999) who makes the point that increasing the sample size in qualitative methodologies does not mean increased reliability.

The number of students used in the research was contained, as was the socio-economic context. The choice of using a Catholic secondary college as the setting for the research meant that there were considerable social and religious influences on students that may not have been as relevant had the setting been secular. A full discussion of the setting for the research was offered in chapter five and will not be revisited here. It should, however, be acknowledged that having conducted the research within a religiously-based setting, another factor necessitating consideration should it ever be intended for the findings to be transferred to the broader community, lies in expressing a particular set of social values and sense of mission.

A multiple methods approach to data generation was used which included diary entries, photographs and audio recordings. It did not, however, make any use of video recording equipment and in retrospect having access to such data may have been useful as evidenced in previous studies (Bland & Tobbell 2015; Dann & Richardson 2015; Nind, Kilburn & Wiles 2015). In analysing the audio recordings of individual students discussing their work it became frustrating at times that other layers of
meaning expressed through bodily gestures and facial expressions could not be fully interpreted.

Capturing such data may have offered deeper insights into the subtleties and layered meanings of what was being expressed and provided the opportunity for more informative interpretation. When video is viewed on a screen, the visual content is given equal currency in terms of visual accessibility and focus. It was noticed that when trying to remember occurrences in the classroom or visualising an audio recording considerable information was lost because it went unnoticed or did not occur within the narrow cone of focus. This unavailable information was unintentionally edited out and while this editing cannot be entirely avoided, the ability to look at visual data on a screen from the disengaged perspective of a passive viewer would arguably have opened up different perspectives and reflective thought for discussion.

The issue of personal bias possibly influencing the integrity of qualitative research is well documented (Harris 1992; Lau 2015; Tooley 1998). In chapter five, this thesis discussed the assumption that such bias could not be entirely eliminated from the research process. Hermeneutic phenomenology accepts that bias is present and informs the selection and interpretation of data. This may be seen as a limiting factor in that the interpretive nature of the methodology means that individual researchers observing the same phenomena will likely draw different understandings. This research accepts such a limiting factor as inherent in any work that relies on an interpretive interaction with data. The demands of the methodology employed required the researcher to reject any notions of a detached attitude toward observed phenomena and to become absorbed in a multilayered and personal encounter with the data. An acknowledgement of personal bias within the research goes some way toward enabling the reader to make an assessment of the extent to which interpretations and generated knowledge may be influenced and by what degree (see chapter one).
8.4 Final Thoughts

The complexities of phenomena that occurred within the classroom were experienced through a poststructuralist framework emphasising Deleuzian notions of becoming. Such a framework was at odds with the phenomenologically privileged stance of the observer but became a workable methodology when the assumption of a fixed self was reconceptualised as being relative. A broader context of the self, seen from a less centred perspective, was taken as meaning to be in a state of continual change. Use of a hermeneutically-based phenomenological methodology within a poststructuralist framework rendered any certainties about the nature of the data generated or assumptions about the way that such data may be interpreted problematic. Such instability and uncertainty created a research approach demanding a willingness to engage creatively and observe phenomena in non-habitual ways and unanticipated situations.

Mindful engagements in the visual arts classroom were employed to enable a particular way of engaging with art-making. The emphasis habitually placed on the completion of a final product above all else, shifted toward one focused on encouraging curiosity and risk taking conducive to creative responses. Meditative experiences provided the opportunity for these responses to be realised in an approach that emphasised a heightened sense of awareness through a non-habitual engagement with subject matter. This engagement became achievable with practice and was personally transformative as indicated by student responses (See chapters six and seven).

In addressing the research question, this thesis set out to discover the influence that Deleuzian notions of becoming may have on art pedagogy. It was found that through the adoption of a mindful approach, the art-making process became in itself a meditative act influencing students’ visual interpretations, use of materials and subject selection. The blending of both meditative and art-making activities into implicit and explicit classroom practice produced a thoughtful and considered attitude to drawing
and painting, enabling students to be subsumed within a state of becoming and non-habitual thought.
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