

Chapter 2

Concepts and contexts of artists, art education and graduates evident in literature

There are many ways to view art, and art education, as there are viewers to view paintings. Therefore, it is not my intention to enter deeply into specific theories of art education or art theory in any detail. Much of the assembly of literature and references in this chapter did not precede the collection and initial analysis of my interview data, even though it precedes the data my presentation here. The texts and quotes provided in this chapter are a means to linking what the research participants have said, and what can be found in literature from the field of adult education, visual art education practice, art theory and other social research. While I make references to theories of art, I do so only to help build new theory, and reveal how tertiary art education has been viewed in the past -- from within art school culture, by the graduates in this study, and also from the outside of the visual art discipline.

I want to begin with a passage, not from one of the participants, but from a more recent graduate who, at the time of writing, was clearly facing a common situation in art school graduate experience:

I have only recently finished art school but already find myself disheartened by many facets of the artworld. I can understand why only 22% of finished art students continue their work. I could ramble on for hours about the 'buddy' system of the galleries or whinge about the struggles of emerging artists to scrape even but I find something else much more disturbing--the public's attitude towards art. Throughout my studies, I was continually asked what my course was. The term 'Visual Arts' meant nothing to the average person. Then I would explain it to be 'Fine Art'. To this, they would usually reply 'oh, so

you're a painter'. There is nothing that gets up my nose more than being stereotyped. In fact, paint is the medium I use least. The core of the problem must lie within the Art/Craft Exhibitions. I'm talking about the halls and clubs which, once a year, partake in a token showing. These mix the arts and crafts into one mundane cocktail. The crafts are there solely to make money and the art, usually all painting, is borderline craft itself. An artist with any self respect would not submit their work into such a craft environment. It only lessens their work. If this is where the public get its perception of art it is understandable why the artists of this country are laughed at. I realise, I'm probably being a little harsh but I feel the public and the artists are losing out. Art has been conceptually based for a while. It would be a shame[for] it to be viewed as just pretty pictures for the rest of eternity...

(Keshlin, a posting on the NAVA discussion forum 19.4.99)

The way in which graduates view themselves and their education, how other people see them, as artists or not, rests on ideas about what art, artists and art education are supposed to be. The artist has a role in society, which is understood and negotiated in different ways by different interests and authorities.

From time to time, throughout this thesis I will return to Keshlin's view as I expand on features that came to light from words of the graduates in this study. These words illuminate Keshlin's situation as a graduate artist in the process understanding the what has happened to the lost tribe.

Art and Adult Education

Van Gent (1997) has provided an historical approach to the relationship between art and adult education. He traces the links between government and elite power and the role of art in educating subjects, especially working people. He begins with a view that art was the precursor of adult education by providing "morals in code" (p.24) since the Byzantine era and before. He concludes with the possibility, drawing on Habermas, that in the postmodern era art has a role in the "unfinished project" of the Enlightenment, where 'the "truth" of established science and the "justice" of contemporary society are raised for discussion' (p.120). Therefore, van Gent provides a thread to sew together the various relationships between art, education, the work of

artist educators, artists, theorists, philosophers, social pedagogy and andragogy, in a way no other author does.

In this project I wish follow van Gent's thread in a slightly different direction. This direction traces the ideas of Australian and international art education that result in; prospective students decisions to go to art-school, outcomes like Keshlin's situation above, and the situations where this project's graduates found themselves, even longer after their graduation.

The artist and artistic freedom

One attraction of becoming an artist is rooted in the idea of freedom, and therefore the subject is worth examining through the views of different writers. It is reasonable to assume that most people have an idea of what an artist is. This idea can be a very stereotypic image of the artist with a beret, smock, palette and brushes, the weekend painter winning prizes at the local show, or the idea may be more elite and contemporary, something like Andy Warhol with dyed silver hair, Australian Brett Whiteley as seen through a self-portrait of the artist in a mirror, or Tracey Emin with an *Unmade Bed*. Quite likely that the image of an artist involves some aspect of eccentricity. Artists are often seen as different from the average member of society.

Being an artist involves a kind of freedom not generally common in other walks of life. Modjeska (1999:7) talks about the artist Paula Modersohn-Becker being 'drawn to an artistic milieu in pursuit of the freedom she needs both in love and art'. Her story is one of the abandonment of conventions at the beginning of the 20th.Century, in favour of freedom and values arising within a woman as an "artist". Together with insights to the artistic milieu, Modjeska gives a view for understanding 'bohemian' culture of Paris and other artistic communities at that time. Bohemian culture of that period gives rise to the traditional stereotype of the artist, which has been built upon and modified in more recent times.

Musgrove (1977) in the context of studying adult transitions to marginal situations interviewed self-employed artists as one category of marginal behaviour in English society, and saw the artists as displaying a "superior difference". He concluded:

They think of themselves as outside men; their situation is marginal at least in the sense that it lacks clear structure and agreed definitions of most modern employment. But they do not feel trapped and belittled in a marginal world; they have a sense of belonging to a wider, even transcendent universe of actions, meanings and values. Their home is neither a northern mill town nor a network of artists. It is the whole of humanity. (1977:85)

Musgrove saw artists as embracing a life 'off-centre in a routinized, bureaucratic and industrialised world'. In this 1970's vision, being an artist appealed to some people who wanted to distance themselves from a world of 'Ordinary work "in the system" produced by "cabbages" and pathetic subservience to hidebound convention'. Musgrove contrasts artists with parsons:

The marginality of both was experienced as freedom from structure: Both artists and parsons were quite explicit and often eloquent about the overstructured condition of other men's lives. Both had lost or surrendered half of a life: but the parsons "went public" [whereas], the artists "went private". The parsons insisted that they were still ordinary men; the artists had no doubt whatsoever that they were altogether extraordinary. (1977:66)

This self-concept of the artist as extraordinary, as it is for these artists who were making a living from their art, is familiar. Modjeska chose the artist at the turn of the century because Modersohn-Becker was also extraordinary, a sentinel for the modern woman who would arrive in the Twentieth Century. Musgrove's artists had come through the affluent 1960s standing in contrast to the regulated world or post-war Europe. Artists are seen in this context as liberated from convention. Freedom seems intrinsic to being an artist and to the discussion of artists' lives. Artists, researchers and quite often the general public accept this, but how does it arise?

Transformation through art

Making art involves a process of reflection, on the world, on the self, and on previously constructed reality. The visual artist is in one way abandoning the logical, verbal construction of knowledge and returning to a deeper root of visual experience. If artists are supposed to gain some freedom through their work, it is in this area that investigation must take place.

One explanation is again found in the work of Musgrove (1977:227), who saw that becoming an artist involved a form of transition or transformation from accepted conventions to a new understanding, a new freedom in the world. Mezirow (1991) went further, providing insight to how freedom arises through the explanation of "reflection". 'Reflection is the process of critically assessing the content, process, or premise of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience.' (1991:104-106) Artists are intently active in a process of reflection in order to make works of art.

Mezirow continues:

Reflection involves the critique of assumptions about the content or process, and premise of problem solving. Premises are special cases of assumptions. The critique of premises or presuppositions pertains to problem posing as distinct from problem solving. Problem posing involves making a taken-for-granted situation problematic, raising questions regarding its validity.

With a slightly different angle Getzels and Csizkszentmihalyi (1976) understood Fine Art as a form of 'problem finding' that involves creativity. This is similar to Mezirow's 'problem posing'. In their longitudinal study they followed male fine art students through to careers as artists, concentrating only on those who remained in the field. They profiled the psychological make-up of artists, and also found a correlation between the relatively successful artists and their mother's professional status. Taking the Getzels and Mezirow studies into account, the development of successful artistic career could be seen as transformational learning in adult-hood, which may be resolving influences from child-hood.

Artists continually reflect on the world and their place within it. When they raise questions about the validity of conventions new freedom and new meaning is created. Maxime Greene (1978:4) cites Hampshire, '...he also identifies the human sense of freedom with the "power of reflection and with the self modifying power of thought" '

Reflection, then, sits at the core of the artist's work, and it is this that provides transformation of the artist's reality and in doing so creates freedom. While Mezirow's work is not specifically about artists, but about transformation of perspectives and transformational learning, he sees the major task of adult education as being "emancipation" from earlier childhood socialization to previously learned "realities". This seems to be one of the features of art schools. With mature age students attending art-school and with the graduates in this study, it is possible to look at change in their lives through this kind of transformational learning. It is possible to ask; Are these graduates involved in perspective or schematic transformations?

Mezirow cites Musgrove as evidence for transformational learning in marginality.

Musgrove urges that efforts of adult education focus on people in their twenties and early thirties and that these efforts be essentially in the direction of moral education, "in the sense of affording time, opportunity, and preferably a range of real-life experiences for exploration of the moral universe and one's conception of self." (Mezirow p.177 and Musgrove p.227)

In the life of the artist and the life of the art student we can expect, according to these researchers, to find reflection and transformation and some resultant freedom from conventions that bind other members of society. However, freedom is commonly mooted in the Western world to be a feature of society, and if this is so, why are artists created on the margins and why is the role of artists not recognised earlier, to become a central part of a free society?

The relationship between art, education and adult education

To answer the last question it is necessary to venture into the relationship between art, education, and adult education a little further. An Australian Senate Committee Inquiry into *Arts Education* (1995:33) had some concerns about the relationship between artists and society:

Arts people, whether consciously or not, are willing enough to be seen as 'different' - to assume the mantle of a priestly caste which carries out the activity of 'being creative' on behalf of the community. This is regrettable. It encourages the perception that the arts are divorced from everyday life. It encourages the idea that the artist's vocation is distinctly different from the teacher's - an attitude that has practical disbenefits for arts education....

Here the Committee is summarising one of its concerns arising from its inquiry into Australian arts education held during 1994. It sees public perception and artists' own perceptions of involvement in the arts as being separate or differentiated from other educational activities.

The history of the relationship between art and education, and in particular adult education has an almost cyclic pattern, in which progress is followed by lack of results of any practical reality, which in turn is followed by inertia, followed by fresh progress and an improving valuation of art. While the Senate Committee might seek to engage art with everyday life, there have been many attempts to do just this, largely to no avail.

Van Gent (1999:67-79) speaking in the Dutch context says that; 'Between 1890 and 1910, art and popular education enjoyed a favourable climate. The rise of industry and commerce had led to a multitude of artist commissions and better training for artists.' But from 1926 on, 'With the passage of time, interest in the aesthetic of popular education diminished. Increasingly, the public failed to come. The cultural supply did not meet the needs of the working class, the ideal of a new community appeared to be further away than ever, and the societal struggle became more pragmatic.'

There is, however, a world of difference between educating about art and educating through art. Musgrove (1977:227) made the connection between art, 'a moral universe and one's conception of self'. This is not a new theme. In his first essay Van Gent discussed the historical contribution of art to moral education and cited Sir Herbert Read who in turn draws upon Plato's Republic. Read played an influential role in the curriculum of Western art schools from the 1940s on. Read and Plato's position is specific:

[Plato] said, as the modern psychologist says, that all grace of movement and harmony of living - the moral disposition of the soul itself - are determined by aesthetic feeling: by the recognition of rhythm and harmony. The same qualities, he said, 'enter largely into painting and all similar workmanship, into weaving and embroidery, into architecture, as well as the whole manufacture of utensils in general; nay into the constitution of living bodies, and of all plants; for in all of these things gracefulness or ungracefulness finds place. And the absence of grace, and rhythm, and harmony, is closely allied to an evil style and evil character: whereas their presence is allied to, and expressive of, the opposite character, which is brave and sober minded'. (Read H. 1956:62, citing Plato's Republic III)

Here then is an earlier source of the kind of moral education sought by Musgrove and Mezirow. Dewey likewise saw the importance of art in education:

Art is the living concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature. The intervention of consciousness adds regulation, power of selection, and redisposition. Thus it varies the arts in ways without end. But its intervention also leads in time to the idea of art as a conscious idea - the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity. (1934:25)

However, grand views of the importance of art do not seem to have reached any practical implementation in secondary school curriculums. Gardner frames knowledge in a terms of forms and profiles of intelligence, and sees spatial intelligence which includes the visual realm as largely missing in school:

To begin with these differences [in profiles of intelligence] challenge an education system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. Indeed, as currently constituted, our educational system is heavily biased towards linguistic modes of instruction and assessment and, to a somewhat lesser degree, toward logical quantitative modes as well. (Gardner 1991:12)

Gardner is saying people are different in the way they build knowledge and learn. It provides the opportunity to consider artists as people with specific profiles and learning needs. Getzels (1976) had already provided profiling that showed some similarity between artists and creative scientists, while there were significant differences from other occupations. Returning to the point under consideration, Gardner does not see these needs met in the secondary education system. One is left to ask; What happens to people whose profile is loaded towards the spatial intelligence? Do these people already feel different from people with language and logical orientated intelligence profiles? Has school deprived them of an opportunity to develop much of their potential and apply their intelligence in a visual or spatial way? Could it be that art schools make up for this deficit? Such questions are unlikely to be answered easily, but they can always be kept in mind when considering the motivation that leads people to attend and graduate from an art school.

The quest for more comprehensive arts education is currently under debate in Great Britain. Jones K. (6.4.2000) and other contributors citing Robinson (1999), see British schools as centrally concerned with Maths and English, at a time when the arts should be given greater inclusion. Chris Smith, Secretary of State and Culture on a different tack, takes up Plato's batten with a similar challenge to the arts community, that in some ways echoes the Australian Senate Committee:

I issued a challenge to the arts world to 'change the culture of culture' - to reach out to the 50 per cent of our fellow countrymen and women who never, ever, in the course of a year, go to any kind of arts event. I asked then how do we entice, enable, encourage this unreached half of the population? How do we enable them to come to an experience and understanding of the arts? How do we make the arts more of a natural part of life? (2000:1)

The response from some artists would fit well with the notion of the Senate's "priestly caste", as in this response, not from a visual artist, but from composer, Geoff Hannan:

Those artists who locate themselves on the margins of society, and who have no or few vested interests in the continuation or the development of a status quo, are in the best position to hold up a mirror to society through their art without masking the ugly or unspeakable. These artists are subversives who take nothing for granted. ... I sometimes wonder whether the regular financial support the more influential artists usually go on to receive is the establishment's way of repressing their subversiveness - a danger to the status

quo of the power elite that comprises the establishment - since it is hard, if not impossible, for such artists to remain free from such a political bind. (2000:1)

Two more contrasting views on the place of arts within education and society would be hard to find. Smith in the position most able to control peoples' lives is advocating education associated with freedom. Hannan speaking in the artist's voice is sceptical of government involvement in art (in almost Foucaultian terms). The notion of art being recruited as a tool of political persuasion is also not new, as van Gent documented.

In overview, the emerging picture is one of artists who are free from convention, who from the margins of society are able to hold up a mirror to reflect, not only society, but also on themselves. Artists hold a moral position, which is valued. Contrary to this, it is also generally recognised that art has this role which should be central to education, but which has largely been ignored or diminished in school education. It is as if real artistic development belongs to adults, or has somehow been deliberately left out of school education in the past, despite governments now wanting to school their subjects or citizens in the arts.

Is this the real picture? or is there another dynamic at work in society today? What would a society look like that was really schooled in the arts? Would everyone be artists and free? Where would the margins of society be if one wanted to reflect that society by holding up the mirror?

The Politics of Art Education

With government interested in the arts, and art linked to freedom, it is obvious that discussion of art education cannot be divorced from the political considerations surrounding art education provision.

Van Gent, in his fourth essay on museums as educators, provides two perspectives, one where art is more or less the preserve of the well-educated as seen through an American National Research Center for the Arts study in 1975, the other drawing on Elias, and Bourdieu where:

"the process of civilization" can be regarded as a continuous alternation of lower-class imitation of higher-class behaviour and, as a consequence, new efforts by the elite to obtain more sophisticated means of distinction. The possession of "cultural capital" is an important advantage which only has market value if it remains within the hands of the happy few. (van Gent 1999:93-94)

This is a description of a dynamic role of the arts in society involving a broader elitism than just the "superior difference" of artists. Art is being adopted as a continuing effort to distinguish one group from another, and to retain advantage and power within one group.

Brook (1992:182-183) calls this domination of art by elites, the "Institutional Theory of Art" and sees a possibility of teaching art as technics for manipulating this "process of civilization", much as stockbroking or marketing consultancy might be taught, albeit with limited justification.

This institutional theory becomes very evident in the realm of cultural policy. The importance and value of visual art in cultural policy is graphically demonstrated by the strategies of the "cultural cold war warriors" in their financial support for artists, who served opposing interests of the Central Intelligence Agency and its rival Cominform (Saunders, 1999). It is during the post-war II period that art school culture began to take the shape in which it is present in today's art-schools. The assumptions and premises for current activities rest largely on this foundation, which

if Saunders' research is any thing to go by, is certainly not as firm as it was once thought to be.

Many activities dressed up as 'free and unfettered' public support, the play of market forces in the arts were-- as in the rise of Abstract Expressionism-- actually the work of government agencies, influencing cultural development through covert funding in the 1950s and 1960s:

A terrible vision of the barbarians at the gates of the palace of high art now insinuated its way into the imagination of the cultural elitists. Dwight Macdonald denounced these attacks as "Kulturbolshevismus", and argued that while they were proposed in the name of American democracy, they actually mirrored totalitarian attacks on the arts. The Soviets - and indeed much of Europe - were saying that America was a cultural desert, and the behaviour of the US Congressmen seemed to confirm that. Eager to show the world that here was an art commensurate with America's greatness and freedom, high level strategists found they couldn't publicly support it because of domestic opposition. So what did they do? They turned to the CIA. And the struggle began to assert the merits of Abstract Expressionism against attempts to smear it. (p.257)

Saunders is documenting the Central Intelligence Agency's interest in Abstract Expressionist artists when the State Department withdrew support for the exhibition 'Advancing American Art'. While Read was advocating a role for art as found in Plato's Republic, the CIA through the Council for Cultural Freedom and other conduits, was certainly not seeing art as a form of moral education, nor had it been influenced by art in any such way. This revelation forces a re-examination of the purpose of art and art school education and practices in our current era.

Freedom and the Art School

Governments, institutions, and to a lesser extent artists and prospective students, are stakeholders continually renegotiating the relationship between art and education. Plato's approach engenders a concept of freedom through truth found in experience, and we can see a type of freedom in artists' approaches to life. In the 19th and 20th Centuries this freedom has not been extended to the general population through public school education geared largely to providing a trained and compliant workforce

(Foucault 1975). Could it be that art schools are now one place where education of this type is created?

One of Musgrove's informants held significant concerns about what was happening in the late sixties, which leads to a different perspective on art-schools.

Hippies did artists a great deal of harm. We lost a lot of respect through them. People thought we were the same. Artists are very respectable people. There's very few of us leeching off the state (1977:82-83).

It was at this time in the late 1960s that artists began to lose what might have seemed like a monopoly on freedom, and the escape from convention. Other people, hippies, were escaping 'ordinary work'. Post-modernist thinking was beginning to cut into the fabric of society bringing with a break down of previously held conventions. Normative conditions were changing. It was not only through hippies, art schools were also transformed, both in Europe, and in Australia (Johnston 1995), by a new sense of freedom, arising from the student revolt in Europe in 1968 and later in Australia. It is interesting to ask: How can artist-students find anything to revolt against, if they are already free?

The question points to something contradictory about becoming an artist and learning in an institution. Institutions, Foucault tells us, are a technology for dividing practice. Rabinow (1984:17) interpreting Foucault sees 'the aim of disciplinary technology [schools etc.]... to forge a "docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved". The institution's members (or inmates) are bound by a set of normative conditions intended to govern their behaviour, separate from other institutions. Normative roles are created in order to constrain, not to create freedom. Using this theory, one cannot expect the artist to be afforded much freedom in a State-owned art-school. Therefore, through the lens of this theory, the creation of an arts industry education can be seen as a disciplinary technology. By dividing artists from the population, by place and income, the state, in this theory, is prescribing the limits of art. One can ask if art-schools are an exception to Foucault's position, or whether they operate just as any other institution?

Foucault (1975) Saunders (1999) and van Gent (1997), bring to our attention, a warning against the machinations of 'elites' in the operation and governance of art schools and art education. Art schools exist after all, within policy frame works of government. Should they really be seen as places where education for freedom takes place?

The Professionalisation of Art Education and the creation of Art Industry

In the first half of the 20th. Century art schools were largely independent institutions. During the last half or so of the 20th. Century, art schools became principal players in promoting the uptake of the role of artist, and the casting or re-casting of the artist's profession as an industry. This re-casting involved terms like "exhibiting artist" or "practising artist", which is linked to, or formalised by, a body of artistic knowledge, modified and developed through the creeping credentialism of Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, to the Bachelor of Arts/Visual Arts or similar undergraduate degrees and ending with post-graduate qualifications. In this change, the moral imperative of art, and to a certain extent the transformational practices are diminished in status compared to the rising importance of the academic, commercial or employment roles, that of being a practising artist in the art industry.

Strand (1998:14) documents the recent history of art and design education in Australia:

In the mid sixties most art and design schools were in the technical and further education (TAFE) system and, while they had provided the training for many of Australia's best known artists, their programs were often insular, conservative and provided a relatively narrow range of skill training. During the 1970s a number of multi-disciplinary arts schools were established within the newly set up system of colleges of advanced education ... With the development of the binary system of higher education, many creative arts schools were moved to the colleges of advanced education and consequently degree courses were developed for the first time. Such initiatives sought to place Australian arts in an international context, to increase intellectual and practical rigour, and to broaden the availability of specific subjects and course types.

Johnston (1995:86-89) in her study of the Gippsland School of Art 1971-1995 demonstrates a single case of this change in visual arts education over a 25-year period. The move within visual art education has been one from self-directed learning, to formal university subjects. However, there appears to have been little change in the focus of Fine Art, in its direction towards the creation of careers of exhibiting artists. If anything, the criteria for exhibition and recognition has intensified as visual arts funding has become part of University funding mechanisms. These changes reveal how strongly visual art education has been drawn into the professional and academic pursuits of Universities. It shows an acceptance of increased uniformity in teaching and learning practices, ignoring the different approaches that may be needed to meet Gardner's various 'forms of intelligence'. Art school pedagogy appears to have moved further away from the traditional realm of 'spatial intelligence' and has begun to embrace the logical and verbal paradigm more strongly.

In terms of arts policy development for the visual arts, the Australia Council for the Arts holds a key role, in the development of an 'industry' approach to art. This is most evident in the Australia Council Web publication *Arts Research In Progress, 14th. Edition* (12.1996), in which the introduction states:

The list is confined to research dealing with arts industry and artists, arts funding policy and issues concerned with current arts practice, employment, training, production and consumption.

What this introduction indicates is that from the Australia Council perspective, art worth researching belongs within a context of industry, employment, training, production and consumption. This is the terminology in which art is dealt with on a professional level, and it is quite different from how art was conceived by Read, or Getzels, or even Musgrove's artists. Art as an industrial professional practice is reflected throughout Australia Council policy, and also in the departmental welcome pages of University art schools:

Graduates of the Bachelor of Fine Arts may become practising artists, and/or they may find employment in related fields such as community art, art administration, art criticism and writing, and allied industries such as film, video, multimedia and photography (UNSW, accessed 8.3.2000).

The course of study for the Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) degree is designed to prepare students for professional practice in the visual arts and arts-related fields (University of Newcastle accessed 8.3.2000).

Margaret Seares, Chair of the Australia Council, (1997) summarises *Artswork* research findings in the following address. Unfortunately as is common in much Australian research, visual artists are categorised along with performing artists, and visual arts students along with performing art students, which does not provide a picture of visual arts alone:

"There are about 40,000 practising professional artists working full time or part time in an expanding arts sector. The arts workforce increased by a phenomenal 23 per cent in the late eighties, when the total workforce grew by just 9 per cent.

"Australian enthusiasm for the arts is also reflected in enrolments in arts courses, with a 45 per cent rise in enrolments in the first half of this decade.

"Sadly, artists remain among the most poorly paid professionals in the country despite a level of education nearly double the national average."

"The average income for artists remains at only about \$20,000 and in some arts professions such as dance their average incomes are as low as \$12,000.

In this statement there is an attempt to further professionalise the practise of "artist" even if the profession is betrayed by lack of income. Through providing credentials in the visual arts, art schools play an important role in this process of professionalisation. In this single statement it can be seen at once that the art industry and attendance in art schools is increasing, regardless of the economic prospects for artists. Strand finds that there are over 24,000 visual and performing art students in Australia. If only some of these enter the industry each year, the industry is set to grow at an astronomic rate. For this growth to have meaning however, the market for art would also need to grow at the same rate or faster.

The Australia Council and the Keating government's *Creative Nation* calculated cultural industries to be worth \$13-15 billion annually, a figure regularly used to justify the 'art as industry' concept, however only a very small proportion of this figure is reflected in visual artists' income. Therefore, it is very difficult to accept the concept that art should be seen as an industry in the way that Seares and others portray it. Other studies confirm the bleak position of artists and question what can be

done about the industry, suggesting measures to develop career paths, and improve marketing skills (Swanson & Wise 1995, Quadrant 1997).

It can be seen above that the word "practice" has become unavoidably associated with "artist" as part of the professionalisation/industrialisation process, to the point that the term "practising artist", meaning an industrialised, professionalised artist, has entered common usage in art schools and support mechanisms for artists. The art student is being asked to place their own personal development, what is left of self-directed learning for their own personal interest, into a context of business, the profession and arts industry.

To place this development of art education and professionalisation in a larger context, it is possible to see that while academies of art have existed for hundreds of years, it is in comparatively more recent times that the intervention of the State has become a major influence on art education and also on adult education. Van Gent (1997) sees parallels between the professionalisation of art, the aspirations of the profession's members, with a much later professionalisation in the adult education sector. This professionalisation of both sectors has also contributed to a parting of ways of adult education and art during this Century. The governmental perspective and related professionalisation are now major influences in the provision of visual art education.

Opposing positions

There is a strong contrast between the influences of "the State", the governmental perspective on the role of art in society, with it's almost utilitarian role of the practising artist in industry, and the traditional view of art in art theory of the early Twentieth Century. Where do these perspectives meet? And where are they taking visual art education?

There is very little of the rhetoric of Plato, Dewey or Read, found in the professionalised language of the art industry. The State, through the independent commission of the Australia Council is prescribing the limits of art, and art schools are dividing artists from the population by place (profession and marginality) and

income. A cynical view would be that the State's interest in having more participants engaged in art, is not one of Platonic philosophy, but the converse. The interests of the status quo are advanced by having more people educated to the arts in an appreciative way, and following models and values determined in State influenced art schools. This would be in keeping with a trend of cultural programs that follows the example demonstrated in the promotion of Abstract Expressionism as a representation of American and "Free World" thinking.

The fifth essay of van Gent contemplates the contemporary increasing interest in "culture". In Australia this is exemplified by the 45% increase in art courses. Van Gent sees the Enlightenment as possibly an unfinished project, with Foucault arguing that since the days of the Enlightenment educational agencies aim 'at "positive" effects such as self-restraint and love of work'. Ideological battles over the Welfare State have been superseded by a new interest in culture. Lyotard, in van Gent's eyes, saw the Enlightenment as a failure. 'Ecological disaster and the continuation of world-wide poverty have resulted in an incredulity towards the "meta-narratives" of scientific progress and a just society.' (1997:119) In such a void art begins to find a re-invigorated role. Between the contradictory arguments of Foucault, Lyotard and Habermas, van Gent discovers an opportunity for cultural education consisting of:

lessons in 'beauty' which not only contribute to the enhancement of aesthetic competence, but which also raise for discussion the "truth" of established science and the "justice" of contemporary society'. (1997:120)

This suggests that there is room for moderation of the government and traditional art school perspectives. Governments may become increasingly willing to accept cultural change, and visual art education in some other context than 'art as industry', but such change will need to be negotiated. For me these issues raise a further question; Are art schools are already performing a role in this regard?

Art as research

Art as a form of research is has recently been given new meaning in relation to art education. It has arisen because of the increasing academic role of studio-based art schools, following their inclusion into Universities. Art as research is a key concept within the emerging "academic perspective" of visual art education, and this concept can be expected to provide a major influence on how students in art schools view academic staff and post-graduate study options.

At the National Ideas summit 1990, artist, Lyne Tune described the role of art in this way:

The changing role of art in the last 150 years has made it difficult to assess its value. It now appears to be the instigator of style and content. Original ideas become the source material easily copied in the marketplace. Art is research and its value is parallel to research in the sciences or any other discipline, the results are the enrichment of society.

This proposition of Tune's, demonstrates how the concept is being applied in art practice. The concept of art as research, while challengeable, is an evolving paradigm, strengthened by art schools' inclusion in universities where research is the norm. Strand (1997) specifically examined the difficulties for art departments in universities in accessing research funding. This is perhaps part of that 'unfinished business of the enlightenment'. The argument for art as research contends with the supremacy of science in society, and the funding mechanisms put in place to encourage new discovery. Since art schools are included in universities, and universities conduct research, it follows that there must be research within the visual arts.

Artists notebooks are evidence enough that artists have always conducted research. The evidence can be traced back to at least Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci. The academic perspective however requires the research to find a place within contemporary concepts of research.

Outside of art schools, the discipline of social research is moving towards the concept of art as research. Janesick (1994:210) sees 'the qualitative researcher is much more like an artist at various stages in the design process' and draws upon Dewey:

Dewey sees art as the bridge between experience and the community. In other words art forces us to think about how human beings are related to each other in their respective worlds.

So in contemporary times the work of artists is now being reincorporated into the core business of knowledge construction, coming back in from the margins of society to fulfil a role in Universities. As yet, as Strand (1998:31) says, 'The question of what is research in the creative arts is one that has special significance in Australian universities today but little significance elsewhere'.

The field of the art student and graduate

It can be seen then why the new art school graduate may be 'disheartened' and 'disturbed'. The artist is marginalised in society. Artists gain freedom through reflection and a transformative kind of learning, which brings with it moral development, but which goes largely unacknowledged. In today's society, with its increasingly globalised organisation, focus on a material economy and efficient communications, there are powerful influences at work to create and interpret art in ways that suit elite interests. In the governmental perspective, art is conceived as a profession and an industry. Governments, institutions and art industry agencies, anticipate that art school graduates will practise in this industry, with scant regard for the economics of such enterprise.

All of this is a long way from 'halls and clubs' of the local 'craft exhibitions' and the public perception of artists. No wonder then the new graduate might feel 'stereotyped' and that the 'public and the artist are losing out'; they very well could be. The graduate is caught between the rock of marginalisation, and the hard place of art as industry. Neither bears any relationship, to a Platonic vision of an educated population living in harmony, or a post-modern utopia of an adult education in a completed Enlightenment.

Implicit in the broader educational literature (Gardner and Mezirow offer two examples) is the possibility that people may enter art school because their needs went un-met in school, or alternatively, because as adults they need to develop or transform their perspective of life. It is just as possible, that once inside art-school, these students will also be subject to constraining influences of; what an artist should be, how an artist should behave, what an artist should expect from the world, and what an artist should appreciate. When it comes to understanding the lost tribe of graduates, such influences must be given substantial consideration, because they play a significant role in how the graduates can view their own development and places in society.

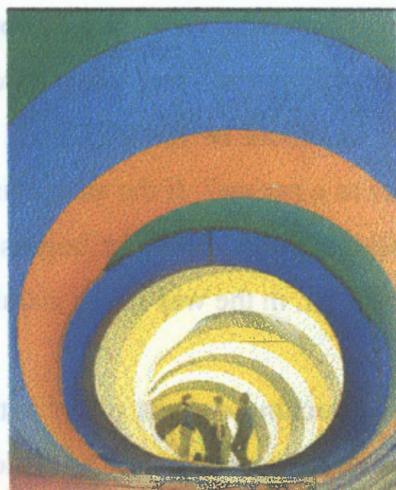
There is a compelling motivation for further professionalisation of the visual arts, because of artist-educators' growing need for recognition and legitimisation of their positions, in competition with other disciplines in higher education.

The notion that artists are different from ordinary people is attractive to some people who seek a kind of freedom not available within conventions of society. These people, in search of freedom, see the world in different ways and need a different education, not readily provided in secondary schools. As their number increases, it becomes pertinent to ask whether an opposing view is more appropriate; Could it be that it is education as a whole that is deficient? that either through school education or later as adult education, everyone should be more exposed to art as part of their general education and development as a person? If the answer is YES then it logically extends from this view that artists are only different because society is not built around moral and aesthetic development, in the way that it should ideally be.

Finally, at present, there is the over-arching context of art within cultural policy, in which society is both reflected in and influenced by the activities of artists and by the promotion of their work. Some specific artists (as in the case of key American Abstract Expressionists) are recruited, in a loose sense, for the purpose of educating or indoctrinating society to values acceptable to ruling elites.

All of the above features are present in the world of tertiary art education, ready to impact upon art students and graduates in their working lives. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the decision to present these particular topics from the literature, was influenced by initial analysis of data gathered from research participants in this study. What becomes interesting is just how these features, identified in the literature, are also manifest in the lives of graduates. In order to learn about these manifestations, and to reveal other impacts not currently represented in the literature, it is necessary to hold the literature in abeyance and proceed to the information provided by the graduates. Then, when their new voices are heard, as they are in Chapter 4, and beyond, it should be possible to make sense of this world of tertiary art education, its popularity in the face of poor employment prospects and all the other features. In this way it will be possible to see and understand the lost tribe of graduates, as their words become visible against this complex world of perceptions about art and its practice.

Figure 3: The researcher's own professional practice as a graduating artist in 1972



The cutting edge?

*Air-supported
'environmental
sculpture,
commissioned by the
Bath International Arts
Festival 1972*

Chapter 3

Methods and order in the research

Introduction

It is necessary at this stage to detail the progress and methodology used in this research project. As I have already mentioned, the presentation of half of the literature in the previous chapter, was influenced by analysis of the data from the research participants, and the other half arose in my initial literature research. This chapter aims to explain this progress of this research project, and trace the movement of ideas, and the formation of knowledge about the influences of art school, as it occurred.

It is important to understand the evolution of the research process, because it is central to a reframing of data and the further consideration of the literature that was necessary in order to tease out the full meaning of the insights gained from interviews with graduates. This process of building up meaning is indicative of a change in my research methodology from its original positivist approach to the adoption a more constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln 1994:110-111).

Normally one might expect a literature review to be conducted at the beginning of a research project, and this was done. However, in the beginning, the literature examined had rested on an assumption that "art as industry" was central to education in the visual arts. Like much of art education, the assumption was framed by the idea

that graduates were either practising artists or alternatively that the graduates had become part of this non-practising group, the lost tribe as I have conceptualised them.

When the data were initially analysed the "art as industry" perspective proved inadequate, because the graduates' motivation for study clearly did not fit within an 'art and industry or economic rationale'. In order to more fully reveal the evolving nature of the project, a change of methodology was required. One of the results of this change was to undertake further reading in the area of adult education, transformational learning, and post modernism. This extension of the research enabled a further re-focusing of data analysis, and the construction of a greater understanding of the perspectives on visual art education influencing the art schooling culture. The research therefore proceeded as something of a journey sandwiched between two bodies of literature, which eventually resulted in further analysis and the presentation of perspectives offered at the end of this thesis. In this later stage, I began to understand my research and make further analysis partly in the light of a critical theory. (Crotty 1998:121) I viewed my initial assumptions as contained within a language of "disempowerment", and my later discoveries as a liberation from this containment.

The nature of the methodological problem

In a traditional research process, it is common to first examine a problem or question and then select or develop a methodology with suitable methods for conducting the research. In this project however, the research was complicated by the nature of the discovery in this difficult area of art education, associated with the ephemeral nature of art. The problem of considering visual art graduates, is also one of considering what graduates themselves see as artists, and what society sees as artists, and finally what art-schools see as artists. This is a very rich mix of potentially problematic material, because people's views change and views are often accommodated differently at different times, so that there is no easy way to go about finding answers. The question "What is art?" is one that has plagued humankind for centuries if not millennia. It was not a question I wanted to engage, and yet, it was always hanging over the project, like the sword of Damocles. In order to undertake the project, I

needed a methodology that would reach into the nature of influences of art education without entering into the deeper, irresolvable, philosophical questions of art.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the research project became more complicated during the analysis of graduate data because of the personal impact that it made on me as an artist/researcher. Michele Fine (1994) is revealing on this issue, raising the relationship between the researcher, or self, and "others" for question. According to Fine (1994) "Othering" is that capacity in research or elsewhere to create categories of participants which are in some way sanitised, presented or marginalised, thereby separating the researcher from the subject. Othering involves representing people in ways that suit particular power relationships, most often in ways that people may not wish to represent themselves.

In this case, I had categories of "others" in the form of artists, or visual art graduates, or as "the lost tribe". The term "artists" was also open to a level of "othering" from within the profession. The term "practising artist" creates by definition the term "non-practising artists". Non-practice and level of practice proved to be a difficult subject for participants to discuss, but it is a subject that is central to any notion of a lost tribe. For me, the existence of the concept of level of practice made it difficult to find a suitable role or place, frequently raising a latent question on the periphery of my thinking; I am an artist/researcher, but is that a practising artist/researcher or a non-practising artist/researcher? Like the participants I was subject to the inference that it was important to practise, and my validity as an artist or even a person came under question in this way.

The research process began with a posture of the researcher in one place (at the end of the microscope) and the "artist-graduate" in the other (as the specimen). Once the data had been subject to some analysis, such a separation of self and other could not be maintained. Although I was a graduate some twenty years prior to these participants, my personal experiences entered into interpretation of what they were saying. Often there were shared experiences, and seeing these experiences in another graduate, or artist, awoke in me new realisations about my own world, which in turn revealed a form of new data about the influence of an art-school education.

As a result of this experience, new theory was being created between the data from the participants and my prior knowledge. In order to develop this theory it was necessary to turn to a further body of literature. At that stage of the research process, the literature I needed was not that of "the practising artist" and art industry, but that which related to transformational learning, adult education and post-modernism. It was in these areas that it was possible to create new perspectives on the activities in tertiary visual art education, because the established perspectives on visual art education, did not permit full discussion of the research data, whereas transformational learning and adult education, in particular, offered a basis for far more revealing discussion.

Exploring through a paradigm shift

In Chapter I, I began with a premise I thought would provide a simple answer to my simple research question. I had a positivist approach and commenced this project with the intent of proving a hypothesis that the majority of visual art graduates, the lost tribe, were actually applying skills and knowledge broadly across the workforce. This premise, however, was to prove, in time, completely insufficient for the purpose of handling the kind of data generated from the research project. In retrospect, I realise now that simple questions and a simple hypothesis were unlikely to provide a sufficient foundation for discussion of a complex area of social activity. I eventually faced a more significant question:

How is one supposed to go in search of lost tribes? The metaphor is useful, because it conjures up an exploration into uncharted territory, which for me, is what this project had become. Undertaking research was a largely new and uncharted activity, and I had decided the best way to begin was, to do some reading, locate the field in the literature, and then to collect some data.

With this hypothesis in the back of my mind, preparation for the project and the collection of the data began. Now, however, at the end of the study, I look back on

those days as somewhat incredible, given the new reality in which I reside, that is as a person, influenced by an art education, who now sees more clearly how art education works upon life after graduation. The research travelled through a paradigm shift, much in the same way that a science-fiction spacecraft might pass through a vortex in hyper-space.

In one sense, this may seem like a somewhat disorderly way to do research, but it proved to be more appropriate, than a traditional approach where data are collected and presented within a pre-existing framework of a positivist research proposal. This was because my posture adopted at the beginning of the research (the researcher in the white lab coat) was not really suitable for the task, and was perhaps largely influenced by the quantitative studies that existed about artists and their occupation.

There is always the possibility that changes of this nature would be necessary in a qualitative research project. Hamilton (1994:61) cites Wolcott (1992): 'beginners are better able to "find their [own] way" in the prosecution of their inquiries' and this was the way I had approached the project. Hamilton also raises a question of whether traditions in the social sciences, 'emerge spontaneously and co-exist alongside each other'(p.62). It seemed to me that in this project, my methods were moving through a number of paradigms, all of which had something of a tradition, but none of which exactly fitted the inquiry I needed to make. I had adopted a preference for undertaking the research in one way, but when it came to the later analysis I found the circumstances required a change. The paradigm shift simply progressed as a logical consequence of an artist-researcher, in this case me, meeting the participants and engaging with the data they provided. So, in this way the methodology evolved as the research progressed. The result of this evolution was to provide richer or more realistic understandings of what was transpiring in the project.

Janesick (1994) provided an insight that described how a qualitative research project might progress. She introduces the metaphor of dance to describe how qualitative research can be choreographed. This kind of research involves various stages, a warm up, a main act, and a cooling off. In this sense qualitative research is seen as an art in

itself. In my project, the approach was very much like that, only rather than dance, I prefer a more familiar visual artist metaphor. It is spatial, concrete and sculptural. It is an exploratory journey into material or space, finding as Michelangelo did, the subject from within nature of the stone. As researcher I had found my topic, a block of stone located in a space of socially constructed reality. The block sat in that space, as a heavy object, described by the dimensions of art as industry, practising and non-practising artists, and artists in society. With my research tools, interviews and data-analysis, I could begin chiselling away at the stone to reveal the art work within.

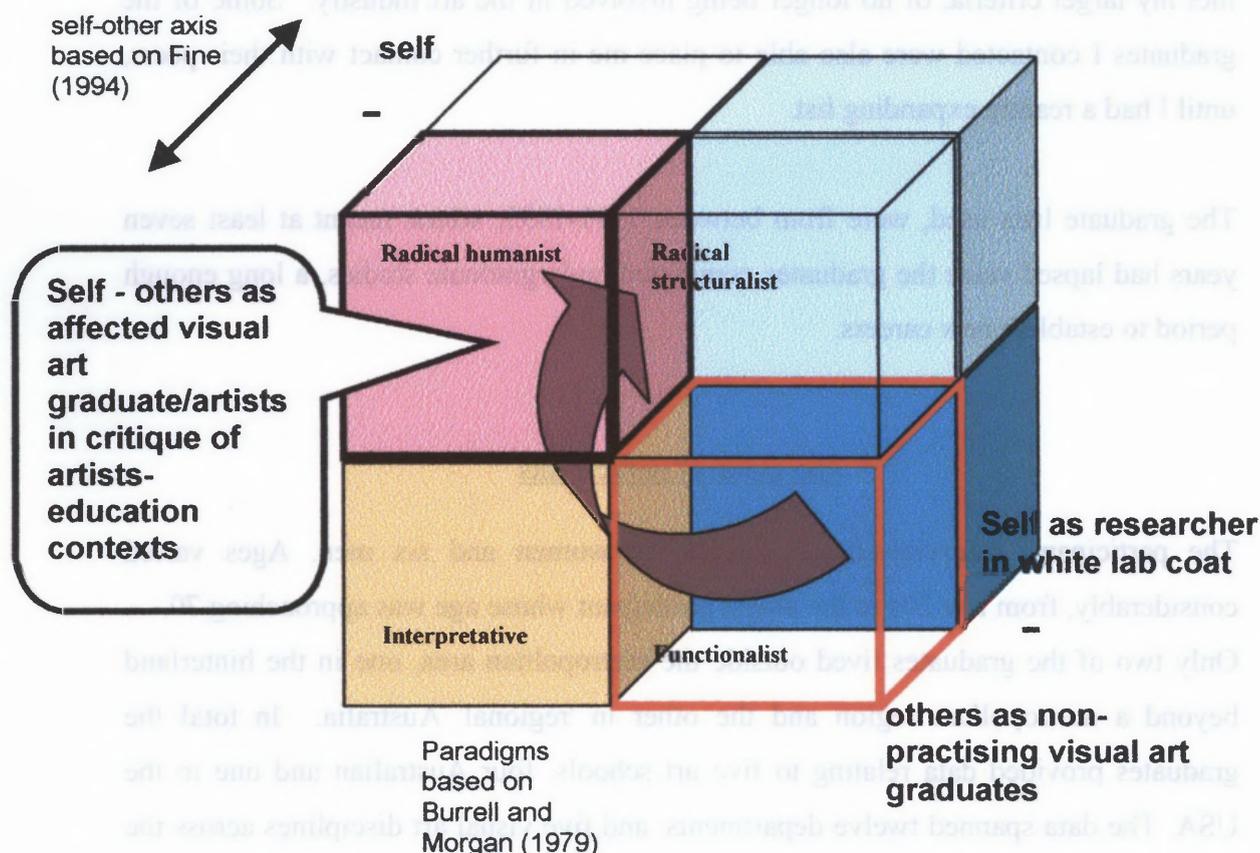
In order to understand how the research progressed through the material, and to find the inherent order, it is necessary to consider the new dimensions that came into play, as a consequence of my engagement with the participants and their data. These new dimensions were the discovery of participants' motivations towards study, their personal transformation through art school, and the baggage they had also acquired by the time of their graduation - the elements of art school culture that lingered on into later life. There was also the revelation on my own involvement, my own baggage as a visual art graduate, and then the gradual peeling back of the layers to reveal the fresh perspectives that became available for use in art education, but which are not so commonly employed. This then was the sculptural process, or dance as Janesick might describe it. In the remainder of this chapter I will describe the progress of the research from its beginning, and then plot the explorations of my journey into these new dimensions. As these explorations were made my methodology made its paradigm shift. This shift has been plotted graphically, against two conventional frameworks for determining research paradigms in figure 4.

Initial preparation

In early 1998 I began the search for lost graduates. My intent was to target graduates who had moved beyond the arts, graduates who were part of the 78% of visual arts graduates claimed in graduate destination surveys (DEET 1995) to have not taken up employment in the arts. I thought one efficient way to find some of these graduates would be to use rapidly expanding World Wide Web. I reasoned that the Web might afford past graduates a way to keep at least a voyeuristic interest in arts practice, even

if they were working in some other field. So I developed some materials for a web-page explaining the project and used discussion-forums (NAVA) and newsgroup posts (*rec.arts.fine*) to call upon past graduates and draw them to a specially prepared Web page (see Appendix 5). I anticipated that even if this method did not contact graduates directly, it might contact some of their peers, who would in turn provide leads to graduates who had moved out of arts-practice. My theory proved wrong, this method resulted in contact, mainly with graduates of other disciplines who had proudly taken up visual art without having gone to art school and who now had careers or interests as artists. Another method of finding lost graduates was needed.

Figure 4 The paradigm shift of the research project methodology



I decided to make contact with a number of major art-schools. This contact confirmed that art-schools were unable to put me in contact with former students, other than those they knew to still be involved in art activities such as graduate run galleries for example. The majority of these graduates had indeed vanished. At this stage I must admit, I treated the situation with a fair degree of suspicion, despite the significant level of help the art-schools were providing. I settled in the end for public documents, freely available, the graduation lists of the major schools. These lists at least gave me the names of the vanished persons.

I then began a correlation of the most unusual names on the lists with names in metropolitan phonebooks. Through this method I managed to contact eight graduates, five of whom were later available for subsequent interview. In addition I discovered three graduates in my local region, one of who was available for an interview and also met my target criteria, of no longer being involved in the art industry. Some of the graduates I contacted were also able to place me in further contact with their peers, until I had a readily expanding list.

The graduate lists used, were from between 1991-1993, which meant at least seven years had lapsed since the graduates completed undergraduate studies, a long enough period to establish new careers.

The group of participants

The participants interviewed, comprised six women and six men. Ages varied considerably, from late 20s to the oldest participant whose age was approaching 70. Only two of the graduates lived outside the metropolitan area, one in the hinterland beyond a metropolitan region and the other in 'regional' Australia. In total the graduates provided data relating to five art schools, four Australian and one in the USA. The data spanned twelve departments, and five visual art disciplines across the range of schools.

While it was not my intention to collect a representative sample of graduates, as one might try to achieve in a quantitative study, the composition of the group of participants did come as something of a surprise. Not only were the group much older than I anticipated, they also had a higher standard of education, and significant work experience prior to their art school attendance. The group included a Doctor of Philosophy, a nurse, mechanical engineer, and landscape architect, among the entry qualifications. Some of the others had also attempted other tertiary study before entry to art school.

Although I made contact with these graduates via a most circuitous route, few of these participants appeared to be as completely removed from the arts, in the way I thought they might. When it came to interview nearly of the participants revealed some continuing connection to art, even if they if they were unlikely to use the word "artist" as a principal occupation in any kind of employment survey. They were also unable to point me in the direction of former colleagues who could fully fulfil the criterion of having moved beyond the arts. This information, or rather the lack there of, together with the method by which the graduates had been discovered, pointed me to the possibility of some discrepancy in the statistical data, or at the very least a misinterpretation of the statistics (DEET 1995, Guthrie 1994, see also Appendix 3).

It is difficult to understand exactly how such discrepancies arise. One area for discrepancy results from the way in which visual art graduates engage in employment/self employment and visual art as a casual or non-income earning activity. Graduates might represent themselves differently at different times. The response to a graduate destination survey may be different from how these graduates might represent themselves to other artists, or to me as an artist/researcher. Graduates may be full-time artists yet also seeking work full-time; they may be part-time employed, and also studying part-time.

The assumption that I would be interviewing people working in areas far removed from the arts was therefore replaced by a growing awareness of the significant "grey area" between working in the arts and working beyond the arts. This marked the

beginning of a paradigm shift, and was important in my developing awareness of the area. I came to understand that the visual art graduate world is not one that can simply be divided into art practice and non-art-practice, and that the kind of questions that one might ask from a positivist perspective, do not necessary get to the heart of the matter of being a visual art graduate.

This lack of simplicity, demonstrated to me how quantitative data can so easily lead to misunderstanding. In acknowledging the grey area between practice and non-practice, I was already beginning to gain an understanding of the centrality of art practice in visual art graduates' valuation of their capacities, activities, and sense of self-worth. From this beginning, I was set on this new direction that would take me further into the territory of the lost tribe, and to the revelation of how I too had, over the years, worked with my own self worth periodically challenged by practice and non-practice in the visual arts.

At this early stage, however, I decided to begin working with the graduates who had been found, largely because it was beginning to look, as if a wholly lost tribe might never be found, if indeed it ever existed in the way that could be conceived from the statistics.

The second of my pre-existing assumptions to fall by the wayside was that these graduates would mainly have entered art-school as school-leavers. Only two of the graduates could be squeezed into the school-leaver category. In addition, I learned from some of the participants that their peers were spread across the age spectrum, from school-leavers through early 20s and 30s, to older group including retirees. One graduate with particular knowledge of the art-school operation (because of involvement in the student union) believed that the younger group accounted for a major part of drop-out rate from art-school. Another graduate estimated that the drop-out rate in painting was as high as 30% during the duration of the course. This was the first indication I received that visual art study was particularly suited to mature adults. Since, at least in one visual art department, there were few school leaver entrants that

completed the course, it is not surprising that the group of graduates I had made contact with were of diverse age and background.

Confidentiality was one of the conditions offered the participants when they were originally contacted and informed about the study. In order to maintain confidentiality, all participants have been assigned pseudonyms. Several participants were prepared to use their real names but in fairness to the remainder it was felt all participants should be treated in the same way.

It is possible, given the uniqueness of artistic careers, that individual readers may identify some characteristics of known artists. I would ask such assumptions be set aside in order to concentrate on the material that is presented, detached from any specific person who may already be known.

The Initial literature search -Finding the field

My initial literature search was conducted to locate the field. The focus of this search was "higher education - visual art" and the "visual arts industry" as indicated through key organisations like the Australia Council for the Arts. Significant to this search were some concerns of an Australian Senate Committee inquiry, in particular, the Committee's view that; 'It is absurd to suggest that the state can calculate the community's 'need' for artists as it may be able to for more definable professions, and fine tune the education system accordingly.' (1995:20) In this statement the Committee is resisting the notion of art as industry, that seemed to be implicit in the DEET submission to this inquiry. This, together with literature from Throsby (1994) and Quadrant (1997) contributed to the progress of the research project as it is reported in Chapter 1: Map and in the Chapter 2 section on professionalisation of art education.

There were a number of qualitative studies located on the topic of art-schools and their culture. Thaller (1993) writing on 'Program and Career Perceptions of Undergraduate Students Majoring in Fine Art' gave insight to the perceptions of college art students in the USA, where the college culture and circumstances led

students to anticipate a difficult time making a living after graduation. Johnston (1995) provided a history of the Gippsland School of Art, Victoria, where the transition from a fairly free environment of student-directed learning during the 1970s to incorporation within University structures and processes is well documented.

This information from the government sector, the visual art industry and art schools framed context of my research project in the early stages. I decided at that stage, to put aside other issues of art theory and sociology of art, in order to focus on the benefits and influences of art education to be found in graduates' lives. There were two exceptions to this rule. The first, Getzels and Csizkszentmihalyi (1976) provided a longitudinal study of successful fine art students, and identified the creativity of fine art as 'problem finding'. The second, Gardner (1991) provided the framework for considering art within a number of forms of intelligence, which I have used for discussion about the level of art in participants' prior education. This literature then formed the background in which my research project commenced.

Clarifying the research problem

Still within the positivist approach at the commencement of data collection, I focused my research on graduates in relation to, but largely outside of, the world of art practice and training they had received. The nature of my problem by this stage was better defined than at the outset, when I knew only that there was a gap in the understanding of the value of visual art education. The research problem at this stage, was to find out how visual art graduates were experiencing art school, framed within this context of art as industry, and professional practice, and how they understood their education in the light of later experience.

A number of questions were formed in the light of my perspective by this time. These were:

- What are some of the long term benefits of art study?
- To what extent was "becoming or making career-artists" a myth in the schools which the graduates attended ?

- How long after graduation are such beliefs maintained ?
- Do graduates consider there are better goals or focuses to which fine art education is or could be directed ?
- How are graduates applying their creativity and problem finding capabilities after leaving the art school ?
- How do graduates reconcile 'being an artist' and making a living ?
- What is involved in stopping being an artist ?
- What do graduates feel about the image of being an artist ?
- Is the image of the artist a help or a hindrance in what they are trying to achieve in their work ?

On the basis of these questions I could define my research process. I determined to interview some graduates, proceeded to create an interview schedule for these interviews.

How and when the data was collected

The data from graduates was collected in face to face interviews. These interviews lasted between 60 minutes and 90 minutes each. The loosely structured interviews took the form of the graduates talking about their lives following some basic probes/questions set out in a guide sheet (Appendix1). The structure of the guide sheet was to encourage the participants to talk openly about their lives leading to art-school attendance, their times in art school and the period since their graduations. From these revelations it was possible to probe deeper into the questions from my above list of sub-research questions.

The first participant (Mary) provided a pilot interview that used a guide sheet with a chronological order, starting with entry into art-school and continuing on to current life and work. This first interview was found to yield information, framed largely from art-school experience. Mary seemed to have re-entered the world of art school in order to tell her story. For the remainder of the interviews the guide sheet was amended to a reverse order of questioning, which encouraged the participants to speak

more widely about their life and work experience, before recalling their time at art school. This significantly improved the amount and quality of data collected about graduates' lives, because by focusing firstly on recent events rather than art school, the participants were not overly encouraged to re-enter their previous art school culture in order to recount their experiences.

Most often the graduates talked widely over a range of topics, often in a different order than on the guide sheet. In the later interviews it was possible to cross-reference some of the topics from other interviews, in this way providing greater understanding of the issues.

After the first interview the remaining data were collected in three batches, in May, July and August 1998. All of the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Twelve interviews were conducted in all. Prior to interviewing, all participants were provided with an explanatory letter about the research and returned a signed consent form as required by the University of New England's Ethics Committee.

How the data was analysed

The intent of using in-depth interviewing was to gather data in the form of comments and explanations from visual art graduates. The first method of analysis used was to categorise or code these comments according to their topics. According to Ely (1997:165) who cites Wolcott, Tesch, Coffey and Atkinson, coding is 'a common starting point for researchers'. I found, as is also common (Ely 1997:164) that this coding analysis began to take shape from the moment I began transcribing the interview tapes. The categories I recognised early on included topics which answered some of my above questions. Once the interviews had been transcribed, in fact even during transcription, additional categories of data were becoming evident. Important among these new categories or concepts were; initial impacts after graduation, disempowerment and moving on, art-school teaching, impacts in the workplace.

From this initial coding it was possible to begin to build theory grounded in the data. This process of theory building is given attention by Rubin & Rubins (1995), and Strauss & Corbin (1994:277) give some warnings provided by in regard of 'risks attending diffusion' and the need to arrive at theoretical coding.

At this stage however, my interest was drawn far more towards the overall perspectives of the graduates, their differing world-views and how these views seemed to impact in their lives. Therefore, I found it necessary to adopt a more holistic approach, concentrating on the events of the graduate lives against the views they held, and the impact that art school had made on them, rather than just attending to the specific aspects of their words in isolation and in relation to my original sub-research questions. This was altogether different from theoretical coding. Treating the material before me in this way, the words of the graduates began to expose influences of the art school in altogether new and different ways, than could be contained within a perspective of people in or out of an industry. For example, I saw that the same School and Department, could effect graduates differently depending on their attitude to being in art school, and the type of respect they held for staff. In this bigger picture I began to see how the idea of 'professional art practice' framed and contained how the graduates saw themselves, and therefore if this container were removed so too the 'disempowerment', of which several of the graduates provided evidence, would also be removed.

The question then arose as to whether there were even more ways of looking at the graduate data outside the frame of "in or outside art practice".

It was at this stage that a far more compelling set of data and theory building began to emerge from my personal engagement with the analysis. Despite my art-school experience being 20 years before, I began to recognise in the graduates' lives, and in the way graduates framed their experience, structures that I also used to explain or justify my career. More than that, I could see in at least three of the graduates, elements of behaviour, which I also adopted in my occasional career role as an artist.

For example, the periodic adoption of the self-description as "artist" and periodic uneasiness about its use, when income and work opportunities dried up.

As researcher I was beginning to climb on and off the dissecting table with my specimen, "the corpse of art education". It was through these realisations that the research paradigm shifted even further.

While there was ample data to make my original positivist case about the benefits of art education being transferred to other areas of work, the research process had revealed that this was a minor influence. More important was the influence of the art-school on what it means to be an artist, or even more what it means to have **once** been an artist. These are the issues surrounding being an artist in society. It was by working through the lives of those who work largely beyond art practice that new insight into the creation of the role of artist in contemporary society was gained.

Return to the literature

A new theoretical framework was needed in order to proceed further. This meant returning to the literature and repositioning the research within an expanded field. Consequently I turned to additional literature relating art to adult education and perspective transformation, and also to post-modern theory to provide a base for further development. This was because I was no longer satisfied in examining the lives of visual art graduates only through the lens of art as industry and in relation to professional art practice. Such a lens did not provide an adequate field of view to make sense of the data I had collected from the participants.

In addition there were also new publications from Saunders (1999), and van Gent (1997, English edition.) giving a new dimension to the institutional theory of art (Brook 1992). Historically elites were always acknowledged for their patronage of artists, but until 1999 the processes by which twentieth century art came to be recognised had not been given so full an exposure, as that provided by Saunders. As art students, these graduates, along with many others would be largely unaware of the context in which art practice and art education had been framed in the post World

WarII period. The new literature enabled me to construct alternative perspectives on visual art education, particularly those relating to adult education, and the recruitment of "culture" by governments.

Further analysis

Once the new literature had been taken into account, a context was created for a fresh evaluation of the data. This context enabled recoding of data, especially in relation to the success (or lack of it) of graduates, or students as they once were, in following their personal interests, and where in fact the art school had performed a role as part of a broader governmental and academic agenda. The data was reconsidered in relation to these new theoretical perspectives, and also in relation to transformational learning in so far as it related to personal benefits gained by the graduates through increased capacity for reflection.

The research paradigm had shifted towards construction but also towards critical inquiry. I had at last discovered the nature of the lost tribe, only to discover we were all swimming for our lives, with various elements of success, depending on the strategies that we used. The graduates who were holding on strongly to the professional practice tenets of the art school were clearly drowning quickly. Those who struck out in new directions were able to survive, sometimes quite successfully, by drawing on their rich personal development that had occurred inside art school. Therefore by applying critical theory to the historical circumstances I began to see how visual art education had come this position where it was drowning its passengers. (Crotty 1998:121 provides a description of critical theory). Furthermore, by using my research data I was able to construct and launch a new understanding of what was really happening; 1) Inside art school, 2) to graduates as they attempted professional practice, and 3) as they later moved on further into the territory of the lost tribe. In this way I had made a full transition not only in my understanding, but also in the foundations upon which my understanding was based. I was slowly but continually finding fresher and firmer ground from which to view the territory of the lost tribe. This ground was formed through the adoption of a more appropriate paradigm in which to base my research. To put a precise label on this paradigm is difficult. The

project lay somewhere between critical theory and constructivism (Guba & Lincoln 1994: 108-111). Such a label depends in part on whose framework and definitions are used. Being inside the frame of the research itself, I do not feel completely competent to discuss its precise location, as if I were an outside observer.

In the end I had arrived at a new set of questions about; what it meant to be artists ? What is an art-school ? In what way can art-schools be viewed other than just for the purpose of educating practising artists?

In these questions lay the seeds for further inquiry, only some of which could be taken up within the limits of this research project. The main goal of the research was largely achieved. By the means outlined in this chapter, I now had an understanding of; how art schools were impacting in the lives of graduates, where the real benefits of an art education lay, and also where some of the pitfalls were, when it came to making the most of an art school education. With these new questions it was now possible to construct a reasonable image of what was happening in art-school that made tertiary art education so attractive. As a result of this project, I now had some examples of how graduates apply themselves after graduation and as a bonus I had unearthed a whole area for further research. This future research concerns the role of art-schools at large, and application of the term "art" or "artist" in society at large.

In this thesis however I now want to present the data, the graduate lives as I found them, and reveal in detail the structures and perspectives, which emerged from the research project. First, it is necessary to gain a picture of the lives of the graduates who had been found, and that is the purpose of the next chapter.