

Chapter 5

Graduate-artists and their learning

In the previous chapter the graduates' comments provided insights to their actions and roles in life, and to their motivation in attending art school in the first place. From these stories it was possible to discover the meaning behind graduation in visual art, becoming a practising artist, and how these graduates negotiated new roles, over time. The stories also spoke about the operation of art schools and the culture in which art schools operate. There are two major features of art school pedagogy/andragogy; one concerns the personal development of the individual, the other the enculturation of the individual into art school culture, which extends on into the world of the practising artist and industry context. These two features of the graduates' education are largely contradictory. One feature is leading to freedom and the other feature to constraint. The feature of training practising artists fits most uncomfortably into the lives of these graduates, whereas there is ample evidence of the value of visual art education in the graduates' transformational learning and personal development. In this chapter I wish to draw together the experience of these graduates, along with my own experience, and demonstrate how these features gain importance in visual art education.

Being a "practising artist"

When most of the twelve graduates graduated from art school they tried to practise as artists. All made some attempt to exhibit, or promote their work, with the intent of making sales. The economics of trying to practice as an artist are illustrated in Alfred's life, when he says:

I thought “ this is going to be really difficult to sell yourself...to galleries...I sold a couple of paintings in 1993 [and] I went and exhibited at the Showground and at Mosman... So it looked as though I could have a future, if I really worked hard.

... I remember spending [32] hours on a couple [of paintings that] subsequently sold for \$300, but then others I spent 20-40 hours on [one] was selling for \$200

The artist's profession is not one where any great amount of money is likely to be made, as is widely known (Throsby 1994, Myer Foundation 1977). For most, a simple business plan would quickly place their position in a fresh perspective. Anna tells us something of the content she gained from her art-school "professional practice":

I must have gotten something to do with the way the art world works. Certainly I got a sense that you some how have to sell yourself. Which is not a thing I'm keen to do at all. ...You need to, well people who are successful, - well this is the way the story went- ' that people who are successful had a good p.r person behind them or they can push themselves.' Perhaps it's not quite as crude as that. It might be more that you need to, you need to know how to do a decent C.V. You need to have good slides of your work, those sort of professional practice things are - I wouldn't have quite realised how important they are - you know if you were going to apply for grants or do anything like that.

The scope of Anna's "professional practice" experience then, dealt with presentation, but did not focus on business planning or development of a marketing plan. Anna is clearly not interested in this aspect of commercial practice. For her, it has little to do with being an artist, just as for Shelley, the marketing professional, artists who 'are making work that's going to get bought, ... are not necessarily making the best work'.

Shelley used the poet Emily Dickinson as an example of how detached from a commercial world an artist can, or should be. Stefan also estimated a "less than 1%" chance of gaining a commission which matched the artistic integrity of the individual artist. We can see from Stefan's and Shelley's views that practising as an artist does not usually exist in a commercial framework. Being a practising artist is about 'communicating' and personal development, what Anna elsewhere called 'the painting search'. Richard tells us that to be an artist you need income from a different source.

Therefore, the artist's profession, as it is today, is unusual in that it does not support the artist economically, in the way other professions do.

These graduates' first attempts to practice as artists involved a self-concept as artist, 'as seen in art-school', conditioned by a set of rules which Richard says are determined through, 'art always being defined by somebody else...somewhere else'. In art-school each graduate formed a concept of what it is to be a practising artist, which is, after all, part of the stated mission of many art-schools. So it is not surprising graduates participated in exhibitions and other presentations in the period directly after graduation. Michael's comments say something of the world of the new graduated artist:

I think a lot of students come out of art-school with a sort of pretentious attitude towards visual arts, I can only really speak of visual arts. They think it's focused on academic qualifications, academic pursuits, and that art should be tied to the academic pursuit. They tend to go to exhibitions which are [by] other people who have been to university, work that's tied to some sort of theory whether the theory be out dated or not, it doesn't really matter as long as it is part of current discourse, and tend not to be interested in galleries where work outside that stream exhibit. So it usually takes a few years before they move out of that stream into the outer areas themselves but I think it's just this academic pretension that are reinforced by people that run the art-schools.

Michael sees this aspect of post art-school culture as a product of the art-school. This exhibition period represents a first stage of the graduate's career. Janet also had this in mind when she said she had 'these incredible notions of how I suppose I was going to go around in my practice'. At the same time, she expected to be earning a living by doing bar work or waiting and she thought: 'glass was always going to be something, esoteric'. This idea of practising as an artist while working in menial jobs, appears to be very common in art-school circles (Thaller 1993, Crebert 1994).

Michael and John also talk about the initial period after art-school as being one where they held 'naive ideas'; the ideas are those of holding exhibitions, selling work, and gaining acceptance as "practising artists". Because there is little possibility for such events to become realised, it is not surprising some graduates look back on this period as being one of 'naivety' or as Janet says one of 'incredible notions'. This also indicates the significant amount of learning and maturation that takes place after

graduation, because the graduates have to change their perspective to one which has greater reality and functionality.

There are also social costs for being seen as anything other than a practising artist. Shelley was 'apologised for' by her artist friend because she described herself as selling office furniture. Mary felt she had "failed" in the presence of her lecturer and peers because she worked in the canteen and didn't make artwork. Over all we can see in the lives of graduates, an awareness of the rules of conduct for "practising artists". These rules are not so much practical, as mythological, and can be summarised as;

1. an intent to work with integrity in art from a personal involvement,
2. avoiding compromise in commercial situations,
3. a preparedness to put art ahead of income.

These rules are implied in the conditions under which graduates try to work as artists after leaving art school. If followed, such mythologically based rules present significant obstacles for graduates, until they move beyond the myth and this period of naivety.

During this period, when it comes to practising, the graduates can place themselves under fairly restrictive regimes of self-censorship. They can become captive of the myth of professional practice, significantly restricting their opportunities for career development, as Michael revealed in this anecdote:

I was working with this woman ... a photographer from Melbourne, and someone actually came up and said "well you're so-and so, I'm a photographer too" and she said,
"Well if you are a photographer why are you working here?" It was in a cafe or something and he said, "because I have to make some money" and she said "well why don't you take photographs?"
"Oh because I'm an artist"
And she said, "Well you're not a photographer then are you. You are a waiter", which is a bit rough, but its sort of - but she's been working for a local newspaper taking photographs of mothers with children to make money, but the whole time she's still working as a photographer, the way she saw it.

This is the kind of situation that can face the graduate who feels restricted by a need to fit in. Contrary to what has been said about artists being "free", the artist-photographer-waiter in this instance is not free, but very much constrained in order to preserve his status as an artist. He is accommodating the myth of the practising artist and trying to fit into the role, while all the time, in the eyes of the Melbourne photographer, failing miserably.

I have claimed that the rules governing "being an artist" are mythical, because in fact artists learn to behave in slightly different ways. There is really a higher set of rules governing what more successful artists really do. Darcy, who most of all can claim the status of the "practising artist", behaves contrary to these mythological rules. He survives, 'pays the rent', by production work, making items, 'pieces that wholesale for under \$50 and can retail for under \$100'. This is of course what Stefan would call 'not the end of the line' work, but it is much more resolved and integrated into Darcy's life as a glassblower, than is demonstrated in Stefan's attitude to being an artist and making wedding videos.

When the graduates went to art school they did so because they were following some theme of personal development, or compulsion to make art, or to explore a fresh lifestyle. However, one of the significant outcomes of art-school for the majority of these graduates is, to wear out that interest and exploratory desire.

John's words give an example of this, when he says: 'I never used those skills once I left college, I kind of taken it as far as I could at the time.' Pressed to explain why this happened he says this:

I think it happens a lot at [art-school], and that is; that students there will produce a piece of work - and there seems to be a degree of pressure that you've got- its got to be strong conceptually, the idea behind it. But generally what happens is that a person will produce a piece of work and then the idea comes. That happened all the time !

John then, came out of art-school with a particular view of what it was to make art. Since he couldn't take this type of activity any further he stopped.

Each of the other graduates who had stopped practising provided a different view to a similar experience; a sense, that as the myth wears away, so too does the ability or motivation to make art. It was difficult for me not to compare these graduates with the many 'hobby artists' I have met over the years. Such artists are not professionally trained, but seem to go on and on producing art-work, over the years. They produce what Keshlin (Chapter 2, p.20) would call 'pretty pictures', without a care whether it is art with a capital "A" or not.

Being "a practising artist" then, is an almost impossible occupation for these visual arts graduates to maintain. So most of graduates become part of the lost tribe, and their art education becomes a source of further change in their lives. The statistics of the lost tribe (DEET 1994) are not a marker that graduates are no longer artists; it is just that graduates' paid employment is likely to be something else. In their own eyes, these graduates have not met the conditions of practising artists, set by the art schools that trained them. The graduates have become something else, for example they are both waiters and artists, restorers and artists, artists and unemployed. This is why the graduation statistics do not adequately reflect the reality of the graduate artist, and the term practising artist can become loaded with unrealistic assumptions.

Reorganising roles and identities

Dorothy and Stefan seemed to cling to the status of artist, seeing "being an artist" as central to their identity, and they have moderated their work-life according to this priority. It is as if they have not found a way past the mythical rules of the practising artist engendered through art school, and they are also resisting a transition away from being an artist to some other kind of identity or role. They return, again and again to a position where they can justify their status as an artist, while never quite managing to retain consistent art practice.

Stefan also struggled with his various 'not the end of the line' roles, while the true artist is under development within. He talks about his 'art in the future' and getting

'through that stage' of life so that life gets more 'valuable' and more valuable art can be produced.

Dorothy 'likes to jump around' to any role which holds the promise of bringing her closer to what she calls the 'Nobel Laureate' role of the artist. When the prospect as an artist recedes, she jumps again to another more promising activity. In doing this it is as if Dorothy is holding tight to the label 'artist' ready to pin it on when the chance arises. Her other work is part-time work that sustains her on the lower levels of her version of Maslow's hierarchy. She clearly sees making art as part of a self-actualisation, even if it takes place in an unsympathetic society. For Dorothy, 'saying you're an artist [is] like being Sir or Lady, it's great for personal self-esteem'.

John applies practical skills from his art-school years, but also does not appear to have made so much of a transformation from the artist:

I haven't practiced for a while ... it becomes a habit, and I've got to reform that habit, and I've got to start thinking about what I want to do with glass, and how I'm going to form it along with ... certain concepts and ideas I have...

It is as if the 'true artist' is temporarily suspended, and strategies are to be put into place to reach back into the position of artist.

Interestingly, John is one of the graduates who claim to fit the 'outsider' role in society, and these graduates seem to hold on tightest to the artist label. There is a fit between -- how they have always seen themselves -- and the kind of artist's role seen in Musgrove's (1977) study of marginality. These graduates can be marginalised not only as artists, but as in Dorothy and Stefan's cases, also through unemployment and dependence on Social Security benefits. These graduates' circumstances correspond to the kind of 'disempowerment' that Richard talked about. The loss of power occurs because these graduates are trying to make real the **myth** of the practising artist.

The desire to remain an artist is also apparent in the way that Michael (in Chapter 4) wanted to reconcile working on restorations with working in the studio, and how he felt about others in the studio, when they got commissions during his absence.

Somehow it is necessary for the graduate to make a further transition and move on, either as an artist, or in some other role or identity. This transitional process gives focus to Richard's comments about 'disempowerment', because without further transition the graduate is stuck, trying to be an artist, or feeling less than an artist, if their role or work does not match the myth.

Janet says: 'I do think if someone's going to be a practising crafts-person or practicing artist they need to address it as a small business because that's what you are ultimately...' This is an important move away from the traditional view of the "practising artist". It comes as a result of Janet's fortunate experience and survival in America.

Drawing on the lives in Chapter 4 as a whole, it becomes clear that a few years after graduation the graduates can be found applying their knowledge and skills in a broader context; The practical skills of the artist, such as painting or picture-framing, applied in other workplaces. There is the artist's critical ability in visual, spatial and aesthetic matters, including drawing activities and conceptual abilities, applied by Richard in urban design, Dorothy in displays, and John in props. Broader problem-finding, problem-analysis and resolution are applied by Richard, Shelley and Christina. These graduates take into their new workplaces a freedom and creativity developed in art-school. To arrive at this point however the initial phase of the "practising artist" has to give way to a time of reconciliation 'outside the stream' and beyond the 'incredible notions'. This transition phase may take anything from a few days under special conditions, such as arrival on a new continent, to many years of resolution or confusion, under less favourable circumstances.

The view of a career as practising artist prevents some graduates from seeing or seeking other possibilities. Janet tells us that graduates have a significant range of skills and attributes they could apply, but that she as a 'slow learner' was not quick to recognise these. Despite this, in America, Janet had to make a quick transition in her thinking. She 'had to come down to tin-tacks' and recognised the ability to apply her

skills more broadly. As she says, she could 'do more than grind-glass'. Darcy and Janet both made these adjustments in order to survive as artists.

Shelley made a transition in the opposite direction. Her art-world shrank to Australian scale, so she entered employment where she could aggregate her sculptural, art and organisational-behaviour knowledge. At first her world shrank further; in the operations division she became 'the mistress of minutia', but the organisation soon recognised her abilities, and she gained a more satisfying marketing position.

It took Richard about four years to reach the stage where he had redefined his roles, and was no longer concerned with being a practising artist, but happy to have found satisfaction in the role of an urban designer. He has come to define art practice as a form of 'pleasure' now and applies knowledge gained at art-school to his new work. He applies a freedom from his old 'constraints', a drawing ability and a new confidence to his new workplace. Likewise Christina was able to move into management and aged-care education through the influence of her additional creativity and 'broader' outlook.

While the graduates move away from "being a practising artist" they also identify steps that must be put in place to resume practice.

The studio featured as a plan in John's and in Dorothy's lives. For them, having a studio is a step in the resumption of practice. John provides the vision:

...to look out there and see my studio and to be an art practitioner I guess. I mean I feel fairly comfortable right now. The only thing that is missing is the art practice.

For Christina, completing her M.Ed. studies was a step before resumption of practice. For Shelley it was more time, and Mary needed the right conditions. Needing to have a studio, or overcoming more immediate priorities are interposed between the graduate and the possibility of future practice. There is an assumption that an artist must have a studio, time and space etc. in order to practice art.

Interestingly, Darcy takes a pride in describing himself in this way, '[I was] the first one who was a professional glass blower who didn't have my own studio. Like I just - I managed to float. I've been pretty stable for the last 4 years'. Again he is exploding the myth, breaking the rules and assumptions about what it takes to be a practising artist. It is possible to take from this that the real impediments to making art lay somewhere in the complex web of influences, of discipline, ideas gained in art school, personal circumstances, and prior experience.

Entering into family life is but one additional impact on the role of artist, an impact the graduates seem least prepared for at art-school. Several of the graduates found partners at art-school, and carry the role of artists into family life, where the role is continually juxtaposed against family demands e.g. The 'big frustrated thing inside' exerting itself over the need to pack baby clothes.

Richard tells us: 'a whole 4 years were spent thinking we really should be artists' and 'to find a place in the world and I wanted to have a family, that meant that everything I'd been taught as an artist was not applicable...' So there were transitions taking place in order to resolve family life as well. In contrast, Darcy and Janet have no children.

Family life, the economic situation and the market for artists come to play upon the 'naive' artist. With a perspective as a qualified and practising artist the graduates still face a transition after art-school, which is as big or bigger than the transformation that took place on entry or during art-school.

In these graduate lives we can see elements of transition away from the "practising artist" at the same time coupled with holding on to a label or idea of practising art in some form. Some graduates have been able to move on, in a fairly complete sense, others have not. From what can be seen in these lives, with all of the factors, coming to bear on the graduates in the years after graduation, new or modified roles are taken up in the first few years after graduation.

There is still an artist within, but only from time to time can the graduate wear the title artist. Resolution of the status of the artist is important to an understanding of the graduates' lives after art-school, because it determines: 1) How they want to be seen, 2) How they see themselves, 3) What they are prepared to do, and 4) What they believe they can do.

Self Revelation

Richard and Christina provide compelling examples what can happen to people who are able to place their learning in some kind of perspective other than being a practising artist. These are the kind of examples I expected to find when I initiated the study. However, I had not foreseen the rest of the baggage, the latching on to the myth of the practising artist, and the concern for the status of being an artist, that is entailed in graduating from art school. Until this baggage was revealed in the lives of these graduates, I had not recognised the struggle that graduates have with the role of artist, even though the very same struggle had been going on in my own life for 25 years.

There is the niggling question, "Am I an artist?" and then when a commission comes in, after a long period outside the field "Am I still up to it?" or when something is made "Is this really art?" Just like Stefan, Dorothy, or Michael there have been times when I have been working in something mundane, when I too, have decided that "enough is enough" in this "not the end of the line job". I too have 'jumped' ship into the insecure role of unemployment, just in order to have the space to redefine my role, to travel, or make art or explore an interesting, if doubtful, business opportunity. The graduates' experiences were all so familiar, but I had never recognised these aspects of my own life before. Could so many events of my own life be traced back to becoming an artist and to my days as an art-student?" It raised the question, is the life of a visual art graduate an exploration of freedom, or really a form of entrapment, containment and 'disempowerment', within false notions of artistry? On further reflection, I feel that it is both; the visual art graduate gains some special freedoms,

but just as easily trades away other opportunities, although it does not necessarily have to be that way.

The art-school and its culture

Before going to art-school there were few considerations for the graduate, as to what work might be carried out, and how they may produce art. It is in art-school that the artist, "the practising artist", in a professional sense is created. It is largely in art-school that the ideas of what the graduate may or may not do, as an artist, are created. Therefore it is worth examining what the graduates have said about their education in art-school. In this way it is possible to understand more about the concept of the "practising artist" and how it arises in art school. It is also possible to take stock of the other features of a visual art education which give graduates their attributes, learning, and practical advantages.

Firstly however there is the myth of the "practising artist" to contend with. It is important to know more about how it arises in art-school.

... it never occurred to me to do anything or seek employment in the art world aside from paint... And that is something I noticed about art-school that there was a sense of superficiality about some of the people I encountered; in gallery managers, in just some people, that I just found quite distasteful. There was just something about an element of the art scene that I really don't like.

Christina prefers the world of nursing that is 'down to earth' and 'up front'. Above she is describing the dislike of a feature of art and art-school culture, a kind of 'superficiality'. Janet also describes the art-school environment as 'unreal' in relation to how artists make their living:

...the people who live there and work there ... it makes me a little mad because it's too easy, and I just feel it's not the real world. It's like floating in these clouds ... and I see the attitude that I had when I came from art-school. They make the same prejudicial assumptions about things, like production work. They don't see why people need to make production work to make a living. To them, to the people who've stayed...and have managed to make a living by staying at the art-school, their work is only ever exhibition work and they may make only 12 pieces a year but they're still artists you know, and they do make beautiful work, but when you're doing a job like working in administration that's not really taking too much, its not really sucking anything

out of you... We live on a much more extreme roller coaster. You know you get money, but then you'll spend a heap of money. So it's just, in terms of financial planning; it's quite different now to compare myself with those peers really.

Earlier in this chapter, Michael indicated the art-school's responsibility for fostering unrealistic expectations in their graduates, the myth and the practices of the profession of practicing artists. But who is attracted to this world and is it so completely unreal?

John described himself as an outsider or loner, finding 'like minds' in art-school. Dorothy also describes herself as an 'outsider in society'. Stefan now sees himself trying to find himself 'in society'. Alfred says as a youth he was 'dissolute', and describes how he was different from his friends in the hours he would spend observing nature. The art-school is appealing to some people who already feel at odds with society, and inside art-school, as John found, there is the possibility of meeting 'like minds'. These are precisely the kind of people described as artists in Chapter 2 as outsiders and extraordinary people (Musgrove 1977).

Inside art-school Alfred found he became a kind of outsider, 'a weirdo' in Anna's weird world:

'cause I was ultra conservative - so to speak - and I - Being Christian it put me off on a limb with a lot of people. So they'd say "Oh you know he's one of those weirdos, one of them." And because I was older, and because I didn't take drugs and I would call into question the values they were [holding].

These comments present a picture of the art-school as a culture of people who see themselves as different. There is a wide variety of backgrounds, as we can see in the twelve graduates, but the art-school is catering for people who are seeking a different lifestyle and a more unconventional role in society. Dorothy called it:

a good way of skilling those people for a general jack of all trades career which probably suits them better. Even if it is not strictly art. It's a thing that there are "different people" in the world.

Stefan told us he wanted '... to see what the big people think about art... to get in those circles, ... to go through'. He now sees himself as one of the 'big people' with 'that qualification' who is making 'social documentary', wedding videos.

Throughout the interviews the culture and benefits of the art-school are referred to in terms of friends, networks, contacts, which are highly valued. Richard talks about arts school art as 'almost a religion'. The art-school is then, a culture or sub-culture, an audience of peers, and role-models. Art school is also a stage, as Anna says, 'a place to go and show them what you can do'.

As art students, these graduates joined a culture, which believed in the importance of following their own ideas with relative freedom. Like other university schools or departments, art-school has its staff, but the teaching role is different, at least at undergraduate level, from what might be found in other kinds of university schools and departments.

A pedagogy or andragogy of freedom in art-schools

Stefan tells us categorically that: 'Obviously art cannot be taught but [it's] something that is common all around in those circles'. In this he echoes Brook (1992:182), 'The mistake of trying to teach Art, instead of Statue-Carving, is a bit like the mistake of trying to teach Knowledge instead of Maths and Physics...'. While the comparison may be debatable, this approach can be used to underpin a pedagogy or andragogy where students are self-directed in their learning and must find ways to extract an education from these "circles". Shelley says in art 'there is no rule about what you look at or what you study [and] which you avoid'. Even in the glass studio John describes the teaching structure as 'informal'. In another glass studio Janet found it likewise:

In the second year we were pretty much all self-directed [in our]study. So we had to put together, at the beginning of every semester, a design proposal, or our work proposals for that semester. ... So its quite interesting so you can come out with a degree at the end of four years and not know anything, if you didn't want to educate yourself about it.

Art education pedagogy is based on a high degree of freedom. A pedagogy suited to the education of artists who are supposed to be free. The visual arts, as far as fine arts

is concerned, was considered to be a discipline of problem finding and creativity by Getzels and Csizkszentmihalyi (1976). This naturally poses an interesting problem when it comes to teaching - How does one teach students to find problems or be creative?

Students are required to present work for assessment at deadlines. In some cases these deadlines are met, and in some cases deadlines are seen as 'weird' or unsympathetic to learning how to paint, as in Anna's view. More conservative learners like Alfred, with 30 years of academic experience, find the creation and bending of the rules or deadlines difficult to understand, as in his complaint:

And the other great inconsistency is they would say, "This is our standard. You must do it" but then they would ignore it. People wouldn't do it, and of course over the three years students became more and more aware of this...

Should this be interpreted as slackness, or as method in an unbounded flexible world of learning?

While a painting skill may be taught, as Alfred might seek to learn, the painting problem and knowledge of the problem, what Anna calls 'the painting search', is being defined by the painter at a personal level. In the area of painting, these are two very different learners, with very different learning needs. Anna says she 'didn't actually need them to teach me what I need to know'. Whereas Alfred thought: 'they didn't actually teach the students to paint...the emphasis was to let you do it your own way.' He had to seek out the teachers in order to receive help.

Mary saw critique as one of the valuable aspects of art school education, but also qualifies her remarks:

One of the most challenging things, going to art school, was that we were forced to look at ourselves and question why did something and why and what does it mean? which is also a bit of bull-shit basically too.

This is a statement about "reflection", but also a statement about art students' ability to fake reflection, making up the reasons for their actions. John put it slightly differently when he talked about the idea coming after the object, when in fact the object was

supposed to be conceptually strong. For all the freedom, there is still art which is acceptable, the kind of work that it took John three years to achieve 'in the hallowed hall' of art-school, and the kind of work that is different from Alfred's later work that 'would be frowned upon' in art-school. This is important, because the very awareness of such art-values go with the graduate into life after art-school and will, for a time at least, determine how they evaluate their later actions.

In Stefan's view the critique is also a valuable part of learning, where the student presents 'a small exhibition' and justifies the work to peers. The making of art is a personal process and involves coming to terms with ego, and through this, personal or spiritual development:

This is the only place where you get, you can actually make your spiritual life public or your feeling public, put in shame through a crit or something or you take part *[in]* and see how other people ... react to it. If you've got a big ego you're going to argue. If you have a nice personality, and you've got some sort of observing, rather a smaller ego, then you're going to be more observing and accepting of peoples' opinion and may be learn more, and take more out of it.

Mary saw this critique process as 'constructive criticism' conducted in a positive light, but also as an opportunity for the art student to 'bullshit' about themselves. Perhaps this gives insight to a possible origin of the 'unreal' mythical world of the art-school. Certainly critique can be seen as a place where reflective learning is fashioned, but it also affords opportunities for fashioning some deceptive skills relating to self-promotion, presenting work that appears to be 'conceptually strong', processes that lead into a culture which Christina has said she found 'superficial'.

Within the art-school culture, the art-school staff not only act to maintain the environment of self-directed learning; in the training of practising artists, an important condition is that the staff are also practising artists. Strand (1998:18-19) outlined the accepted position of staff in art schools:

Many notable names in the Australian arts scene are, or have been, employed by universities and it is in the institution's interests to have staff performing at

a high level both in the classroom or workshop and on the local, national and international stages.

There is a long history of support by educational institutions for artist-academics to maintain and develop their professional competence and knowledge which pre-dates their participation in the present university system ... These conditions reflect a mutual expectation and commitment between the university and the individual to maintain this practice at a high level and to produce original work. Also excellence in teaching in the creative arts requires continuing professional practice.

Strand's position shows staff as belonging to the profession of artists. The argument is that to teach in art-school, first and foremost, one needs to be a "practising artist".

Michael provided an insight to how staff are supposed to be viewed in his criticism of the support given to an honours student:

We had students who; one student who went up and asked if she could have a supervisor. She asked if she could change supervisor because she hadn't seen her supervisor, and she'd been there for 2 years. And the person said " Oh who is your supervisor ? and she replied "You are!"

I think that still happens... And being confronted, lecturers , Heads of Department will go, "What do you want ? Do you want a teacher ? or do you want someone who is out there making work ?" Well you think. "We want both".

The art school model of education is then built in the name of creating or allowing freedom. It relies heavily on self-directed learning, a relatively un-structured learning environment, but more than this, it relies on the creation or finding of role models, who are practising artists.

As the students make contact with staff or historical characters through art theory, role models are formed.

Christina found an influence in the broadening experiences of contact with the work of a film-maker, and this is reflected in the value she places on the broadening influences of art-school. Richard, Shelley and Alfred also valued similar 'broadening' influences of art school although not specifically connected to role models.

For Stefan, the role model influence is that of John Cage, Beuys and Duchamp, strongly evident in his 'art is life, life is art' philosophy. Each of the graduates seems to have acquired some attributes from role models. Dorothy gives an excellent example when asked to talk about creativity:

Fabulous fabulous man, dreadful person, fabulous teacher, he opened up drawing... And that was just brilliant for me, drawing, the way he structured ... I think the way he structured classes can be [creative] and he was very -you know he would tell you all about his life when he was American and you know he was quite a successful artist and stuff like that. But the way he set it up so this privacy in the dark was fabulous and you, you were using such bright colours that they glowed, really bright colours, sort of brighter in the dark, rather than in the light. And um, that just opened up a lot of things to me. So the structure of the classes really, ... the teacher's imagination coming into to classes, even to the extent of light, ... that was one of my best things and I still draw without much light and with pastels and it really is great for colours. So I think that that stimulated my creativity.

Here the teaching and role-modelling go hand in hand. In Darcy's case there was the strong role model in the form of an American glass artist. Contact with the model is first in theory, then later cultivated by contact in the final year of art-school, and then furthered in employment. When Darcy talks about the role model, he does so with great admiration and affection:

Its fantastic that he's gone through this whole evolution now, where he's gone from teacher and a sort of teacher to he's a total friend now "hey Buddy !" every time you answer the phone. And we ride bicycles together.

Janet's revered teacher may not be American, but he was certainly known in America. His name had currency, 'it was an incredible door opener' in America. In this case the teacher is both role model and a form of credential, which Janet can cite in her dealings with the art world. This is the same kind of door Stefan wanted to open to get into the right circles.

There seems therefore to be a strong relationship between the choice of role model and its impact in the life of the graduate.

Michael says that it takes a certain confidence and 'pushiness' to achieve results, and Alfred confirms some younger students wasted their time in the undisciplined environment. Mary also believes she could have made more of her time had she been older when she went to study, but not because of an undisciplined environment, but because she was 'all goer', prepared to uncritically accept 'far too much'. Michael further indicated after his interview that younger students accounted for a large part of dropout from art-school. There is an indication then, that art school education often works best as an adult environment, a form of andragogy rather than pedagogy.

Personal transformation

In all of the above one of re-occurring positive aspects of visual art education is the process of personal transformation and reflection. This process stands in contrast to concerns about being an artist or currency of art school concepts. Mary describes this process and its value:

... it's about that I've actually managed to understand something to actually transfer or yes it's about understanding that I've looked and I've seen where the light is and by just playing with light, and darkness and colour you can create something on a flat - you know - that looks like round I really love that ability to do that, that you can actually make something look round or however it is.

Mary is talking about what it means to make a drawing or artwork. It expresses a capacity to understand the world and create an object about it. But more than that, this is about who Mary is, the "love of ability". In this case there is a satisfaction she gets from being able to represent the form of an object on a flat surface. This process is clearly not part of the process of disempowerment in the art school culture. The process of drawing, closely aligned to experience and "reflection", has all the trademarks of empowering the person through artistic experience.

Richard had described himself as 'a much freer person and less limited by other peoples idea of what [one] should do, or [his] own idea of what [he] should do... more open to change'. This is a strong indication of the kind of personal transformation, resulting through his attendance at art-school, once he had redefined or worked through his problem of being an artist.

Christina created a Bart Simpson doll patient (an installation) as a new way for nurses to role-play new procedures. She had a similar perspective to Richard when it came to the role of art school in her life. ' My education style, or the way I motivate people, was probably helped, by having been through art school, just in terms of I think my vision's a little broader than it would have been without doing that'. Again there is a sense of casting off of constraint or narrowness.

Even in retirement, with considerable life experience, Alfred also found art school provided insight into life. Shelley thought that any arts degree would effect 'the way that I look at the world ... it opens everything up'.

There is then this broadening of understanding about the world and the self in relation to the world, taking place in art school. This is the kind of perspective transformation that Mezirow (1991:106) described in transformational learning in adult education, examples of which he cited in Musgrove's artists. Is it necessary, however, to ask this is part and parcel of being an artist, or an aspect of a particular kind of education that could be far more generally applicable? The answer is probably the latter, but it is clearly one of the positive influences of studying visual art.

Being an artist and being free

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, there are two very evident influences of the graduate's education in art school. One is the uptake of the roles and label of the "practising artist", the other is the broadening of horizons, that is, the freeing from constraints that take place in the art-school environment. There seem to be advantages for those who can deploy this broadening role in other workplaces. Those who stay with the label of artist, have to suffer, enjoy, or overcome the marginalised role that artists are given in society.

When the graduates talk about their experience as practising artists and with art-school's role in the process of encouraging the up-take of the practising artist role,

their words are mixed with reservation, contradictions and misgivings. When the graduate's talk about their learning their comments are quite different, full of positives and strengths. The negative aspects of the interview statements surrounded art-school organisation, the art-world, and difficulty of being a practising artist. The positive statements and benefits of art school education, surround personal development, how they see life, and learning what has been called "personal practical knowledge" (Balatti & Edwards 1998, Butler 1994).

Anna presents perhaps the best example of these contradictions in her valuation of art school and the learning that takes place within:

...as far as the way the art school taught things, I found [it] pretty strange... not what I felt was good practice, and a messy disorganised way of getting people to do art.

At the same time she says; 'I'd probably even go back there ... Probably I'd do some more painting and go for an M.A. or something. Yeah, some people never learn! Interesting isn't it?' This contradiction can be explained, because while the orientation of the art-school and practice is strange, the individual experience can still be rewarding:

And through different people, like it was more an individual thing. Through different people I learned things, like through [a specific teacher] I thought I learnt a lot there.

It is in this 'individual thing' that value was to be found for Anna and for the others.

In the personal and transformative learning experiences these graduates' found real value and gained new freedoms, which were completely at odds with being, or becoming, "a practising artist" and part of art school culture. This was especially so, in the cases of those graduates who felt constrained by the specific values of art gained during their time at art-school. There is really little scope for success in a perspective of being a practising artist.

The assumptions made in art schools about what visual arts graduates are supposed to be and do after graduation are in need of an overhaul. I have never heard anyone say, or even infer, 'I was once an artist' or 'I was once a musician'. There is a tacit assumption that being an artist is like riding a bicycle, once riding is learned it is something never forgotten. However, there is a difference between holding a talent or a set of skills, and practising them professionally.

In chapter 4, examples from Shelley's and Mary's experience showed how opprobrium attaches to the non-practising artist. Non-practice was seen by these two participants, as a personal matter, even a personal failing, as in Mary's case. Let me recall what she said:

I felt that I had failed perhaps that I wasn't actually doing it [but] I also knew that I didn't have it enough in my heart to do it. If I really wanted to do it I'd be doing it... But actually focus and do it ... to be able to make a living from it - seems like you have to have this intensity about you.

Such a belief overlooks what is involved in making private thoughts and actions public, having the result of these actions subjected to public critique. In a society that is so concerned with economics, one level of critique stops at the monetary value of work, how much an artist's work may sell for, or whether or not it sells at all.

In art school a set of values have been established that govern the criteria of being an artist, even if such values are not easily articulated in words. If the graduate chooses to practice, then they and their work are subject to both public and self-criticism. This may well involve not only how the public receives their work or exhibitions, but also whether or not work sells.

Coming through art-school, graduates are somehow expected to keep on 'doing it' even if there is no economic base to support this activity. The visual art graduate can be caught in a dilemma precisely because the art-school perspective of graduate outcomes is so 'ridiculously narrow', to use Richard's words. Graduates are essentially "certified artists", there is no escape from being an artist. The only issue is whether to practise or not, and whether to exhibit or not. The development and

promotion of the term practising artist, conveniently allows for the abandonment of those graduates who do not practise. The lost tribe is in reality the product of this division between practice and non-practice, where the art school can continually be associated with practitioners, and lose connection with the other dimensions of visual art education, that exist beyond popular notions of art as industry. The lost tribe hides the down side of maintaining visual art education as a form of professional education. The alternative perspective is to acknowledge visual art education as an important aspect of adult education and life-long learning.

The hobby artist, can paint or create to whatever standard they have achieved, by whatever criteria they happen to know, and enter such works in the local show. Visual art graduates, like Keshlin in Chapter 2, cannot enjoy such freedom, and are concerned about accepted standards of professional practice, standards which are continually shifting.

When the art student enrolls at art school the original intent is to make some personal discovery, or to take up a new freer lifestyle. This freedom, discovery and development of personal practical knowledge gained during study, contrasts steeply with the formal outcomes of the art-school and the induction into the practising artist's world, governed by the elitist rules of professional conduct. It is well worth asking; How necessary is it for art schools to maintain their current approach of education towards professional practice? Are there better ways to view what art-schools and their graduates do? Whether the work of art schools could be viewed more appropriately in other ways?

To summarise then, in going to art school these graduates expected to undertake some personal development, or enter a freer, less constrained environment. In doing so they discovered the ideas and an identity of the practising artist. After graduation they have either attempted to fulfil this role, or accommodated an unfulfilled, partially fulfilled, or abandoned practising artist role. While the role of the practising artist brings with it constraints, visual art education also provides some major advantages in personal development, which these graduates have applied in later life. The graduates'

experience (which also revealed my own experience) raises questions about visual art education practice and points to the possibility for looking at visual art education in ways other than just the training practising artists.

In the next chapter I will look more closely at the various perspectives taken to construct ideas of tertiary visual art education, with a view to going some way to answering the questions raised in this chapter.

Figure 6: Art in community education

The researcher's role as artist in the community in 1982 was one of my first experiences of the place of art in adult education.



*Community art:
Hildegard the Elephant, Nunawading
North Neighbourhood Centre*

Chapter 6

Once an artist..

Having provided a picture of how visual art education has influenced some visual art graduates, I wish to go further and construct a view of the processes or perspectives which give rise to the current form of tertiary visual art education and its focus on the practising artist. The "theme" or **myth** of the practising artist has a central role in the construction of this graduate world, even though some graduates may no longer see themselves in such a role, and have become full members of the lost tribe. Of the many questions arising about visual art education in this research project, one of the most important is whether or not art schools need to maintain the myth of educating "practising artists"? There are various perspectives about art schools that are largely responsible for the way art schools are conceived and operate today. I want to add another perspective, one of adult education or lifelong learning, which has been left largely unacknowledged, in current art schools. In conclusion to this research project then, I wish to argue that the adoption of an adult education perspective may offer a very useful addition to an over concentration on the concept of the practising artist. First, however, it is necessary to conclude the business of the lost tribe.

Assumptions about the lost tribe of graduates

Throughout this study there has been an underlying assumption that the term 'practising artist' and the professional work of the artist is linked to a world of 'high art', where elitism holds sway. This is the world heralded in the words of van Gent (1997), citing Elias (1969), and Bourdieu (1984), and exposed in Saunder's (1999)

account of the "Cultural Cold War". This is the world primarily responsible for the norms by which these graduates have learned to understand "art practice".

To return yet again to Keshlin (Chapter 2), he is not looking to the world of 'pretty pictures' in the local show, but to the fact that 'Art has been conceptually based for a while'. He has been caught fairly and squarely in the net of institutional 'dividing practice' and an art practice determined by accepted elites.

Likewise Stefan lamented his own non-practice in Chapter 4 when he compared himself with an unqualified person:

He's fantastic, he lives in the village, he's on the dole and he's got his own film festival going ... he chose a way that I didn't choose and I wish I could do it. ... I am the one who could just like that, do it, like that and um, I'm not doing it. I feel sorry about that...

It is possible to almost see in these words a practical demonstration of Foucault's theory of a 'disciplinary technology' controlling 'a docile body' for the purpose of 'transformation and improvement'. A certain docility overcomes the artist-graduate, because in the art-school they have learned to conform to particular normative practices. These practices may be unconventional in regard to other social institutions, but for artists they are absolutely normal. Standards must be maintained and standards are governed.

Art schools may want to reject an analysis that they alone are responsible for fashioning a particular kind of elitist "practising artist". The art-school I attended could certainly make such a rejection. To be fair, my experience was certainly not linked to any form of commercial gallery expectations about art. Never the less, while art-schools' teaching and words may be expressly against any such narrow vision of art, in practice, through role-models and through exposure to major contemporary exhibitions, the art-school culture and its graduates take up a set of elite values, which are easily manipulated by powerful interests.

In the perspective of the art school and its graduating students, professional life will be framed as a practising artist. The hope is, that graduates do not become an artist with dubious practice. If however, they do fail to practice, then (as in Mary's case), it is likely to be seen as personal failing, rather than a failure of context or learning theory. The odds are in favour that the graduates will indeed 'vanish without trace' to become one of the lost tribe. It is a strange mythology, and surely there are other ways to view art schools, artists and their work.

Perspectives on art-schools

A range of perspectives can be constructed from the literature, the graduate data, and the work of this study, with which to view "art-schools" (Figure 7). These perspectives are contained in models that have a history, a voice or location, and some even have a future.

The governmental model

The governmental perspective is given substance from post-modern theory. The history of current art-schools and their foundation is rooted in the 19th.Century, when art was recognised as having a civilising influence over the masses. It was the beginning of an assimilation of the working class to middle class values (largely through museums policy). Art-schools provided an education of middle-class women to a position where they could exert aesthetic influence over husbands and households in the rapidly industrialising society (Bennett 1998:123-129, van Gent 1997:67).

If as Foucault (1975) claims, the purpose of schools are to create compliant docile citizens, then the purpose of art-schools must be to create docile artists. If the purpose is not to contain artists' freedoms within acceptable limits, then it is at least to keep government informed of artists' activities and the location to which the limits have been moved. Through State art galleries, foundations and selected curators, it is possible to influence what is "successful" art and thereby influence aspirant artists. By creating the conditions under which artists can operate, the State names and controls creative processes, which might otherwise find alternative expression.

Figure 7: Perspectives for understanding art schools

	Governmental Model	Graduate's Model	Current Model	Traditional Model	The Academic Model	Commercial Model	Adult Education Model
History	19th. Century museums policy and the foundation of major art-schools	The tradition of freedom in art-schools	Originating in major art-schools, and TAFE in Australia, with University influence	Originating in major art-schools,	The tradition of universities as a seat of learning.	Originates in vocational training for industry	Rests on adult learning theory
perspective	Social Control, normative conditions for artists	Entry to a social group, an peer group involved in the creation of Australian Culture	Creating practising artists, informed about the conditions of the international arts industry	The nurturing of talented individuals to find fulfilment as artists	Division between teaching and research modes, tendency to unitization, formalisation linguistic and logical rationale	Focus on specific skills for which there is a high value demand, targets students who are skills and employment orientated.	Art as a moral form of education. Extending the learner's education through perspective transformation
Voiced by	Post modern theory, Saunders, Bennet, vanGent	The majority of graduates interviewed	Australia Council, and Art schools	Likely to be found in old college prospectuses	Johnston, Strand	KVB, and TAFE prospectuses	The graduate's experience, in light of adult education literature
Accommodated Models		Current	Governmental, Academic and graduate, standard	Governmental, Adult education, graduate	Current, Commercial	Current	Standard, Graduate
Graduate data	Dorothy, John, Stefan, Richard	Most if not all	Most if not all	Mary	Michael, John Richard	Darcy	Most if not all
Future ?	Increased participation in arts	Dependent of changes to the current model	Modified by different perspectives ?		Attention to graduate attributes	Increasing influence in media arts?	Greater recognition?

The governmental model can be seen at work in John's life. He describes himself coming from the 'Western Suburbs' (a working class area). At least for a time, he has been constrained (or perhaps contained) by the conceptual framework of the 'hallowed hall' of art school. Dorothy told us, 'there are different people in the world' who, it can be said, need a role in society. The governmental model works against artists wandering free like loose cannons. It aims to properly channel their energies to provide innovative and civilising forces.

The governmental model also has a future, and it can be found in the words of the Australian Senate Committee, and the British Secretary of State. It is a call for change, for a shedding of the 'mantle of the Priestly Caste' to arrive at a more inclusive commonplace role of art.

The Graduates' Model

As intending art students the graduates saw a prospect of freedom, change of lifestyle, or an unexplored avenue for personal development. Art-school became a time to explore ideas in an unconstrained 'rule free' environment. It was also a place to meet 'like minds' as in John's case, or to reconnect with art as in Dorothy's second stint in art-school. As art students, the graduates were very much under their own governance. Their horizons were broadened in ways they would not otherwise have been, when previously constrained, as some of them were, in conventional workplaces.

Art school is a place to sharpen critical faculties and take charge of one's own life. At the same time, the graduates gain a peer support, or network of friends and useful contacts. In this way the graduates see themselves as becoming part of a special sub-culture in society.

They enter the sub-culture in art school by exploring what they might be capable of, and leave as artists, ready to fashion a career from their own ideas. They are inducted into a world of exhibiting, practising artists, following the examples from art-school staff and colleagues.

For many this perspective changes with time, and lives on as a memory of an important time of life and doubts about the practice of the art-school

The Current Model

This is the perspective of art school promotion and political survival within universities. It is historically grounded in a traditional art-school model, but accommodates or negotiates the governmental and academic models.

From this perspective the core business of the art-school is the education and creation of practising artists in which graduates are given a kick-start through graduate exhibitions. It is responsive, albeit conservatively, to changing ideas of artists in major exhibitions, science and the technologies more generally.

The perspective sees pedagogy grounded in the concept of artistic freedom, but this is increasingly moderated by concepts of art as research, art in relation to social cultural research, post-modernism and the influence of the university, to which the art-school may have been grafted or assimilated since the 1970s.

Art school staff are seen as part of a world of practising artists and students are enjoined to participate in this world. The vision of this world is given substance by the small number of graduates and other exceptional artists who gain high profiles, and sometimes income from their work. This is the world where Michael says art is 'tied to the academic pursuit' within a stream of exhibition which Richard would describe as 'ridiculously narrow'.

The Traditional model

This perspective originates in the nexus between government support for art-schools in the 19th. and first half of the 20th. Century, and the artists who were subsequently recruited to staff them. It is inherently modernist and progressive in outlook.

Pedagogy rests on the idea of nurturing talented individuals in their development as artists. It largely predates the development of mass-culture, but is still very much at the heart of the Current Model, and gives rise to many artists' concepts of an art-school and what artists should be.

Among the graduates interviewed, this perspective was most evident in the approach of Mary and Alfred, in their concern with aesthetics.

This model is differentiated from the Current Model by its greater concern for aesthetics. The perspective does not attempt to accommodate notions of intellectuality and academia. It can be anti-intellectual, in the sense that, using Gardener's terminology, it is about visual/spatial learning and largely dismisses as secondary, the place of the verbal/logical paradigm in art-school.

The perspective is exemplified by the mid-Twentieth Century art educators and theorists like Herbert Read and Gombrich (1950).

The Commercial Model

This is a targeted vocational perspective, increasingly evident in TAFE and exemplified by commercial art schools like KVB in Sydney. It is primarily concerned with marketable skills, used in the applied arts, especially advertising and film industry.

Philosophically it is rooted in behaviourism, and can easily be rested on a utilitarian case that art in the world today is actually that of the electronic media, the advertising industry and entertainment. Beyond the media industries the model informs ideas that "culture" can and is manipulated commercially.

We can place Janet's comments, that art students should attend more to business, in this perspective. The capacity to act in this way is also inherent in Darcy's 'work from 4 p.m. till midnight' and in his attendance in production glass studios.

The Academic Model

This perspective is the result of art-school's inclusion in Universities from the 1970s on. It provides that; art school departments are no different from any other university departments. Art is a subject to be delivered by standard credit point units. Teaching and learning is to also be evaluated in relation to definable attributes.

Universities have at least two clear modes of operation that can loosely be described as teaching at undergraduate level and research at post-graduate level. This perspective will try to see higher art-education in this framework. Art school staff are therefore primarily researchers, responsible for creating and maintaining a body of knowledge in the visual arts. The practising artist in a university is a researcher.

This perspective and its difficulties are articulated by Strand (1998). Johnston (1995) documents a specific transition to this model in the Gippsland School of Art.

This model also has a future. As Universities move towards education with attributes for a broad-based foundation for life-long learning, the academic model begins to accommodate the adult education model (Candy 1994).

The Adult Education Model

This perspective is founded in the concept that art is a method of naming the world and articulating ideas. In this way, art is as powerful, if not more powerful, than the use of words, because as Plato and others have seen, it is grounded in direct experience, and therefore becomes the basis of moral action. Van Gent (1997) documents the history of art as moral education.

To this moral education, is related 'situated freedom', which can arise through 'aesthetic transformation as a "vehicle of recognition," drawing the perceiver away from "the mystifying power of the given" ...[where] the arts ... help open the

situations that require interpretation... help disrupt the walls that obscure the spaces, the spheres of freedom' (Greene 1988:133, Marcuse 1978:72). This is also similar to what Mezirow (1991) saw in 'perspective transformation' in 'transitional learning'.

This is a perspective of "art-schooling" that I am claiming can be found right here in the words and actions of the graduates provided in the data of study. It is created by a view of what has happened to these art students as they have passed through art school and moved on into later life.

Crebert (1994:193-200) found an exemplary model of lifelong-learning development at Edith Cowan University, although the participants were not overtly aware of its presence. As with the graduates in my research project, personal development featured strongly within the university's visual arts courses. Yet again, with Crebert's participants, there remained a focus on the idea that graduate employment might be in the hospitality industry as waiters. There was no clear transformation of the artist, no real review of how concepts of the artist can be changed or abandoned.

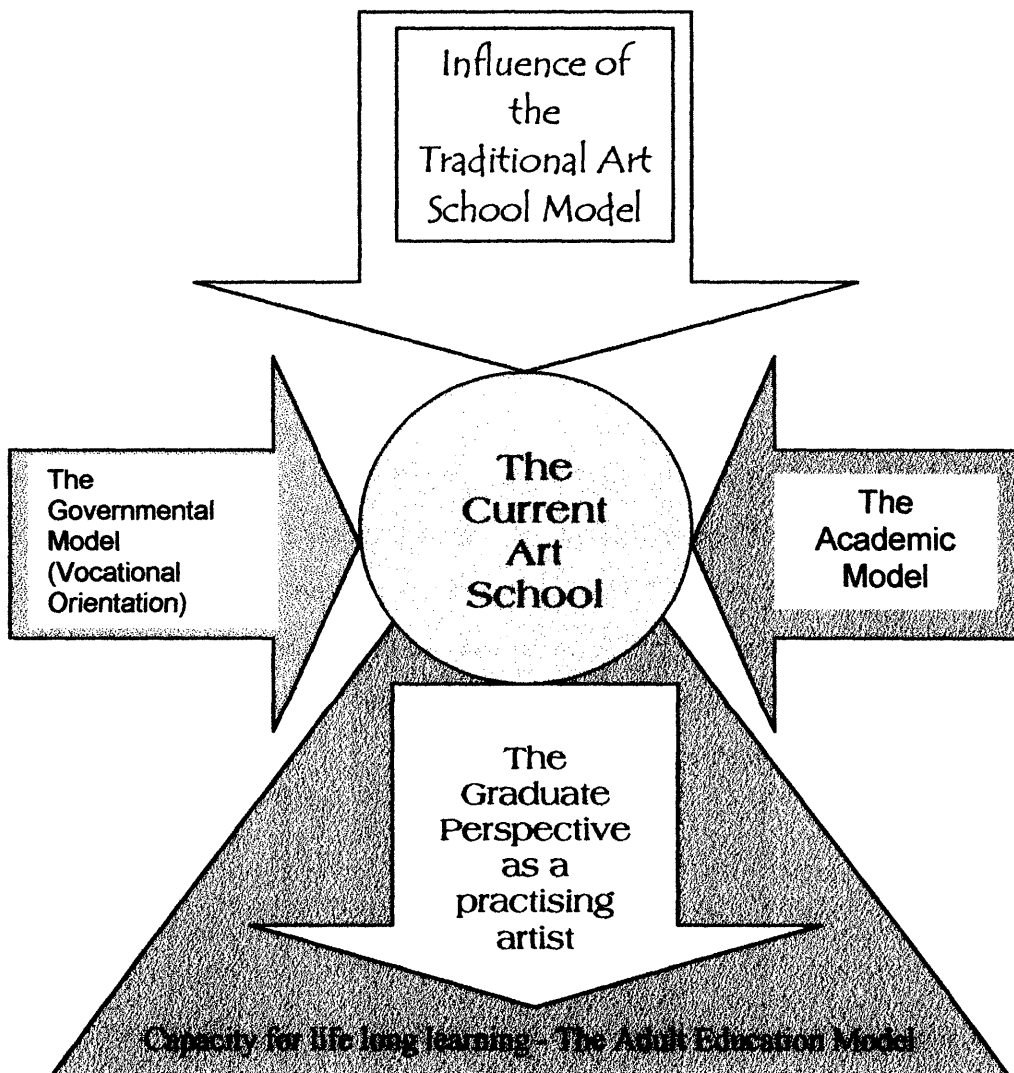
Jones D.(1988) has dealt with the underdeveloped role of art and cultural development within the discipline of Adult Education. In this thesis I have exposed the adult education taking place within tertiary visual art education. It is on this topic, the interplay between the concept of the artist, and the usefulness of the Adult Education perspective in relation to current, governmental, and academic perspectives in art school provision that I wish to conclude.

A lost tribe of possibilities

Of the perspectives provided above, it is possible to ask, which are the most servicable in the longer term? The current perspective presents graduates with the potential of seeing themselves as practising artists, yet for the most part, graduates are unable to sustain the impossible standards (or myth) set by society for the performance of professional practising artists, and thus they 'vanish without trace'.

They have to discover for themselves the capacity for using visual arts as a form of knowledge to advance their own education and identity outside of the role of "practising artist". Alternatively they juggle the role through a series of poorly fitting contexts.

Figure 8: The perspectives of visual art education and their influence through the current art-school model



Transformational learning by these graduates is clearly evident in comparison of their lives before art-school and how they can apply themselves later. In some cases, there are examples of major career shifts and improvements that have come about through spending three to four years in art school. It is not possible to ignore such changes. If the words of the graduates are considered, it can be seen that while they may berate art-school teaching, or the lack of it, while they find the art-school expectations and goals unreal, or incredible in hindsight, the graduates still value the time they spent in art-school. These 12 graduates value the personal development, the friends, contacts and networks that open up to them. In the lives of graduates who made the further transition from having a self-image as a practising artist, the full value of art education is most evident. I can now see by the way graduates hold on to the label "artist", and how I too have at times have held on to the label "artist", that the label is mostly baggage, which gets in the way of acting and being.

These are not Musgrove's (1977) 'extraordinary people' with 'superior difference'. Yes, they can assume all the elitist trappings of 'art-school/art-world culture' from time to time, but they are not intrinsically different from anyone else, even if they may feel it, at certain times in their lives. It was virtually by chance that Alfred first picked up his daughter's paint-brush. It seems that almost anyone might find themselves charting a course towards full-time study in an art school at some point in their life.

Taking into account art school impact in these graduates' lives, "becoming a practising artist" may be a good promotional slogan to both prospective students and sponsoring governments. In reality, however, there are times when the use of such a slogan is almost fraudulent. This should surely be of concern to art-school educators and administrators, especially when the real value of art-schools seems to have been ignored, because of the need to accommodate the perspectives and interests of government and academia.

Two assumptions; that art schools produce practising artists and that artists are part of a continuum of professional art values, currently obscure all the other assumptions and possible models for tertiary visual art education. A "mix and match" of other

available perspectives could generate new possibilities and models of tertiary visual art provision. A tribe of possibilities appears to have gone missing. These possibilities concern; the value of art practice to every-day life, the exercise of freedom in democracy, how individuals achieve the aesthetic values that guide their everyday decisions, and other possibilities, yet to be identified.

The graduates in this study, each had to find a way to deal with the difficult label of "artist". This need not be the case, as there would seem to be plenty of room for art-schools to adopt new perspectives on their roles and functions.

There will always be a need for some artists to 'hold up the mirror to society'. However, the more important role for higher visual art education is to provide visual spatial learning and meet the need of more adults to explore their own freedom through visual art, as a legitimate part of life-long learning, and broader career development.

This then is the journey's end. The lost tribe, or at least some of its constituents, have been found. The need to prove the hypothesis that visual art is a useful form of education, far beyond the obvious vocations skills it engenders, no longer seems especially important. It has been overshadowed by the realisation that visual arts, for an increasing number of people, can be an important part of lifelong learning, with far reaching implications in personal development. For art educators, the evidence strongly suggests, there are new possibilities on the horizon, should they wish to approach their work from new perspectives. Within universities some political and organisational disturbances may be unavoidable in the creation of new models of art education. I hope that through this thesis I have been able to provide at least one fresh perspective, as part of the armoury of art educators in the struggle for increasingly valuable art education provision.

Figure 9: Just a Pretty Picture? The researcher's personal art work

Now I am quite happy to paint in a manner that would have been totally unacceptable during my art school days.



'Oxley'
acrylic on canvas
1998

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Appendices

- Interview Guides
- Graduate Destination Survey Data (DEFTYA)
- Invitation to participants: Letter of consent
- Geocities, Internet Invitation

Appendix 1: Interview Questions 1.

Tell me about how you came to study at art school, and what it was like to study at:

What did you do after leaving college ?

How did that come about?

Why did you decide on that?

Did it involve any major shifts in thinking away from what you had previously mapped out for yourself ?

Did you see yourself as having gained skills in any particular direction ?

What was most influential, the gaining of new skills, attitudes and approaches, contacts ?

So how did things progress ? What happened later ?

Was there ever a departing from art? was it decisive or gradual ? do you do any now ?

In your work could you say you were applying skills and knowledge or ways of working, or orientating yourself towards work that were formed through your experience of college ?

Perhaps.. give some examples?

Could we go into this a little further.....?

In the course of your work, do you think you might have done the job differently, for worse or better had you not been to college ?

When you think back to the experience of college, what were the most special things about the experience ?

How significant do you think your art education has been in preparing you for the life you have had to date ?

Can you identify any changes or additions to art education to make it more useful - - than it has been ?

Do you think society well disposed to artists ?

Does it recognise, and gets the most use out of artistic talents, skills and knowledge that is available ?

In what way could things be different ?

In the light of what you have told me is there anything else you might like to add ?

Are there any important understandings or perspectives on your career that we have

so far not reached through the questions I have asked ? Do you think I should concentrate on some other aspects if I really want to understand arts graduates ?

Appendix 2: Background Questions

Benchmarks

Life's priorities

How important is earning a living ? Was study important to improving your ability to earn ?

What are the most important things in life ?

Tell me about the things that led you to the decision, and ultimately to study fine art.

What did you expect to get out of ?

Did you get what you expected ?

Did expectations change along the way ?

the nature of knowledge gained

the meaning of the education

the profession of the visual artist

- * Is there professional activity divorced from income ?
- * Does the 'artist' role come and go, or has it atrophied completely ?
- * Do practices commence, lapse and at times readopted ?
- * Does a body of professional knowledge remain only partly utilised ?
- * Is there visual knowledge, continually and consistently being applied beyond the arts?

Appendix 3: DEET Graduate Destination Surveys 1993-1994

Table of Graduate Destinations Visual & Performing Arts 1993

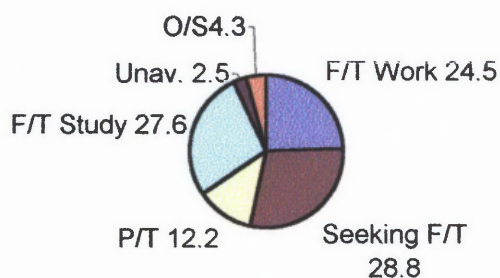
Destinations, 30 April 1993, first degree graduates(%)

	Males	Females	All
Working F/T	28.0	22.9	24.5
Seeking F/T	31.0	27.8	28.8
Part-time Emp.	8.3	13.9	12.2
Study F/T	26.5	28.1	27.6
Unavailable	2.6	2.5	2.5
Overseas	3.5	4.7	4.3
TOTAL	100	100	100
Number	539	1194	1733

Main Occupations (%)

Artist/Related	23.8	21.5	22.4
Teaching	13.8	12.8	13.1
Designer	9.3	14.2	12.5
Sales/Related	8.0	9.9	9.2
Management/Admin.	4.1	7.6	6.3
Clerk	2.6	7.3	5.6
Photographer	6.0	4.4	4.9
All Others	32.4	22.3	26.0
TOTAL	100	100	100
Number	151	274	425

Fig.10: Destinations of first degree graduates, 1993 (%)



Reproduced from the Department of Employment,
Education & Training, Graduate Destination Survey
1993

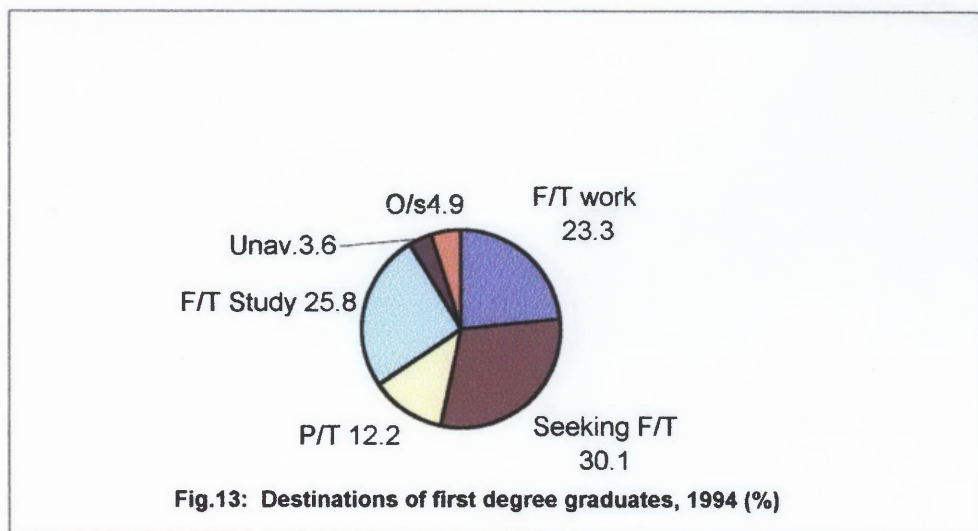
**Table of Graduate Destinations
Visual & Performing Arts 1994**

Destinations, 30 April 1994 (%)

	Males	Females	All
Working F/T	24.1	23.0	23.3
Seeking F/T	30.4	29.9	30.1
Part-time Emp.	10.5	13.0	12.2
Study F/T	26.3	25.6	25.8
Unavailable	2.9	3.9	3.6
Overseas	5.8	4.6	4.9
TOTAL	100	100	100
Number	552	1269	1821

Main Occupations (%)

Designer	25.6	21.2	22.6
Artist/Related	16.6	17.8	17.4
Sales/Related	7.5	9.9	9.2
Management/Admin.	4.6	7.6	6.6
Teaching	6.1	6.8	6.4
Photographer	6.0	6.5	6.4
Clerk	3.8	4.8	4.5
All Others	29.8	25.4	26.9
TOTAL	100	100	100
Number	133	292	425



*Reproduced from the Department of Employment,
Education & Training, Graduate Destination Survey
1994*

Dear

Consent to participate in Visual Art Graduate Research

This letter is to gain your informed consent to participate in the research indicated below. If you agree to participate in the research please sign both copies retain one for your information and return the other to me.

The research project is my study towards a Masters of Education (Adult Education & Training) at the University of New England. Your experience as a graduate of Visual Art could be very helpful to this research. The purpose of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of how visual arts/fine art graduates perceive the impact and influences of their visual art education on their careers and lives, some years after their graduation. A number of other graduates will also be interviewed, this data will then be interpreted and eventually published.

You will be interviewed in order to understand the story of your education, life as it has developed since graduation, how and when you might draw upon that art education, and the opportunities and distractions it may have created for you. The interviewer will seek to understand who you are, what you do, when different events and influences occurred, and how life after graduation has evolved.

More than one interview may be requested. If you consent to be interviewed, you retain the right to withdraw at any stage, and may refuse to participate in any aspect of the research should you find it overly intrusive. Should you at any stage withdraw from the research project you will not be held responsible for any resulting impact or inconvenience to the research project.

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee at the following address:

The Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Services
University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (067) 73 2352 Facsimile (067) 73 3543

The interviews in which you participate will be tape recorded and later transcribed by the interviewer for use in handling and interpreting the results of the data. Raw data collected at the interview will be kept confidential by the researcher. Your identity will not be disclosed in any published results or other materials created by the research, unless you wish it to be so, and give your separate written consent for it to be revealed, after having read all the material which is to be published.

If you have any questions about the research or the process of interviewing please let me know before signing the consent on page 2.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Reader. 5/5/98

Please return one copy to: P.A. Reader, Box 987, Armidale 2350.

Participant's Initial.....

I, have read the information provided on page 1 and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published, provided my name is not used.

.....
Participant or Authorised Representative

Date

.....
Investigator

Date

Participant Name:

Address:

Phone No:

Appendix 5: Geocities: Internet Invitation

Art Students: Where are they now ?



1972



1997

Every year thousands of fine-art/visual arts students graduate from courses around the world.

In Australia, visual arts graduates, on average, remain unemployed longer than other graduates. (physics and mechanical engineering students run a close second and third !). [Grad.Careers Council 1994]

In the longer term however, how do their careers develop ? What lifestyle and professional practice decisions do these former students make ? How useful have they found their studies, and how does their knowledge and experience continue to grow?

If you once completed a fine-art degree or diploma, have you ever wondered what has happened to the other graduates or to your own colleagues? Would you be interested in participating in research, by donating your story to this project ?

This site is a simple little tool, to compare fine art graduate experiences and the benefits gained by once having studied in a studio-based course.

It is part of preliminary research, being undertaken towards a Masters of Education (Adult Education & Training) at the University of New England, Australia by [Paul Reader](#) (above)

How to participate:

1. Simply register your details, [send email](#) with 'subject :fine art participate, and message ' year and place of graduation' and wait for contact.
2. Provide your story straight away, and ultimately compare your experience with that of others in future publications (anonymity provided, if required)
3. You can also [have a look](#) at my story for comparison, and then email me with your contribution, whenever you wish.

or

4. To save time on-line save or print this document for later consideration.
5. If you are part of an alumni or newsgroup, or team researching this topic let me know.

The goal of this research, is to gain insight into what really happens in the lives of the

people who graduate from studio-based fine art courses, especially those who have been out of college for more than five years. I am as much interested in graduate careers that have moved away from fine-art practice, as those who remained as practicing artists.

It may also provide insight into professional practice and career change more generally.

I am open to the site becoming or being used as a kind of online fine-art alumni, where graduates of 5 to 30 years standing can compare experiences, remake old acquaintances, or discuss the changing nature of art-school experience, if the response and demand is great enough.

If you can find the time to contribute to this work, it would be most appreciated. Information can be treated either anonymously or openly in publication. Please indicate your preference when responding.

Thank you for taking the time to visit this site. If you have chosen to participate, I look forward to following up your contact.

Paul Reader

Story Number 1 (sample)

The purpose of this page is to provide a brief example of the initial contributions I am looking for. Its also only fair to tell you something of my story before you volunteer your's. [Top of Page](#)

I am a post-graduate student in the Dept. of Adult Education & Training, at the University of New England, Australia, with research interests in the professional practice of fine-art graduates.

My own career started as a fine-art student at Leeds in the U.K (Graduating in 1972). I began exhibiting in a group show, and gained my first grant from the region's arts association 1970. As a young artist I enjoyed unprecedented exposure, at venues like the ICA in London, and Bath Festival. The British Weekend Telegraph colour supplement, reviewing the work of students at our College, ran the caption "Progressive art or subsidized freakout?" Having described the work and our lives, the Telegraph concluded with another question. "What happens when the kissing has to stop?"

Now 25 years years on I can tell them. It never really has! at least for me. ...

After graduation I went to Hong Kong, and through personal contacts, worked briefly for a television station's art department, HK-TVB and then part-time teaching for the University of Hong Kong's extra-mural art courses. The sense of impermanency that H.K. engendered in those years, led me on to New Zealand and eventually to Australia.

Art was put aside, but I found I could use skills I'd gained in my course, building fibreglass boats and in retail photographic industries. Wherever I was

employed I found myself wanting to innovate, and often branched out, setting up small businesses myself. The desire for newness and new experience however usually led me into new fields, or further travel, long before such enterprises were well established or marketable.

There was a lot of globe-trotting, oscillating between Europe and Australia, periods of reflection and return to the arts. In 1980 I began working in the area of community development with Aboriginal communities, and again within 18 months I had reconceptualized my role. Ever since I've worked pretty much as a consultant in community development, with the environment movement, developmental disabilities, neighbourhood groups and local festivals. I have gradually returned through the community arts and community development projects to build up a reputation (although still limited) in public art-works. Since 1993 I've also filled part-time and temporary visual arts/arts education teaching positions in TAFE and University of New England.

So mine has been a history in and mostly out of art-practice. I feel, the most valuable legacy of studying in a studio-based fine art course, has been an ability to analyze, visualize, imagine new horizons, both for myself and my clients. The down-side has been, lack of income and stability (its taken two marriages and a heap of children, from the second, to slow me down.)

Despite the projects with which I am involved, there is always doubt as to the validity of my actions, the kind of doubt implicit in the Telegraph's original comments. Now as a researcher and adult-educator, I'm beginning to see openings for viewing fine art, or visual arts education, in a completely different light, contributing to society in perhaps a very different way to the stereotypic vision of the artist exhibiting in the gallery, so frequently engendered. This is where I probably need your help and your experience, to build a picture of art education and professional development in a very different way.

If you can spare the time to send your story, or if you prefer, begin by simply commenting on the similarities or differences in your experience, it would be most appreciated. It doesn't have to be a great piece of literature, views, facts, attitudes, and perceptions are what I'm looking for. I'll even take stories on cassette tape, if you like.

Thank you for your interest,

Paul Reader

Fax: +61 2 67 714881 email: preader@metz.une.edu.au

P.O. Box 987, Armidale 2350