

TELLING TALES: Pictograms as a Visual Voice

By

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Abstract

In this critically reflective self-study I have illustrated how my research in the field of Graphic design has been purposeful in creating a visual voice to express myself, improve my practice as an artist, teacher, and visual activist and in turn create an alternate voice for others.

My study includes the conceptualization of the pictographic cards that I have named PicTopics, their value as an educational tool and their pertinence as visual prompts. My research questions have included exploring the role of the PicTopics in communicating a story or message, and how they could be pertinent to my practice as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being. My methodology, under the umbrella of self-study, has explored the living social, educational, and artistic values associated with fun, playing, creativity and wellbeing as a way to improve my practice.

I used the PicTopic in a variety of settings - with the public at an art gallery to record their stories, in the classroom as creative prompts and as a way to inspire and conceptualize the practical artistic component of this study.

I believe that the PicTopics when used as prompts can trigger and cultivate storytelling, enable engagement between people and open communication channels between the educator, and students. The PicTopics have become a thread between my living theories which are linked with my values and beliefs, my practice as an artist and my role as an educator and social transformer.

Declaration

I, Lee Scott, hereby declare that the work in this study is my own. Ideas, images, quotes and references taken from other authors, to the best of my knowledge have been given due credit in this text.

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I am especially grateful for the patience and encouragement of my Supervisors Doctor Joan Conolly and Mr Piers Carey. This dissertation represents the unravelling of me in my endeavour to translate my vision into an appropriate academic text. However, it is also representative of my intellectual and scholarly growth, which has given me new insight into my practice as artist, researcher and teacher and most importantly, a way forward.

To my family, and Rob, thank you for standing by me in my times of abject grumpiness and gloom, and having the foresight to know that it would be successfully completed - one day.

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FOREWORD - Solitude in War and Beauty

Adult Crusade

I have an orange net bag of memories
I survived my laaitie-hood and an adult crusade
with the aid of a pen knife, matches and a pair of takkies
(just in case I had to escape).
I had my place where I would go to hide, if...

If AK's and FN's decided to play adult games in our back yard
- after blood red sunsets, cicada solitariness and hot dusty bleached grasses
went pale -
I thought I had a way out.

Silly really, since in childhood, there is no way out of grown up wars.

Lee Scott (2011)

I was born in the then Rhodesia, in 1964, a year before Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence from Britain in 1965¹. I left with my family to live in South Africa at the age of fourteen, a year before Zimbabwean independence, in 1980, and the end of white minority rule. The Rhodesian childhood years I write of here, are between 1972 and 1979 – between the ages of seven and fifteen years - and thereafter I refer to a few experiences at boarding school, in South Africa, until 1981, until the age of seventeen years.

My childhood, in my mind's eye, is filled with contradictory beauty. I had the privilege of growing up in the bush as my Dad was farming for a large sugar concern. I found immense solace in the bush, in the dry hot dusty nostril

¹ (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/mawere72.16305.html> accessed 19/12/11)

tickling, pale ochre, cicada filled solitariness. The dusty itchy colours of summer were coupled with the most passionate of sunsets and sunrises. It was over forty degrees in the summer months, and in winter it was freezing. Because my brothers and I did not wear shoes, we, in shorts, skinny legs and all, delighted in the sharp frost in the mornings, exclaiming, “The devil is biting our feet”.

I have lived by a couple of sayings since I was a youngster, namely;

‘Early to Bed, Early to Rise,
Makes a Man, Healthy, Wealthy and Wise’
and

‘Red in the Morning, Shepherd’s Warning,
Red at Night, Shepherd’s Delight’.

They are both adages I have long valued.

I was often up and out in the predawn fields with my Dad watching the roaring cane fires being started, the colours shooting high into the sky with tendrils of soot and ash - an African equivalent of snow - flaking gently down into our hair (see Fig.1).

I was an introverted child, not quite fitting in at school and bullied at times. I always felt like an outsider looking in, a peripheral person. Yet my solitariness and my solitude was partly what sustained me.

I realize now that my spiritual self tied in with the land. I was an animist from an early age and still find an incredible sense of wellbeing when in the bush, albeit nowadays in the controlled environments of game parks and nature reserves.

I remember the intense joy of fishing for bream and barbel before the sun had lifted above the trees, escaping quietly (while Mum still slept), through the electric security fencing. The electric three meter high fencing that surrounded the house and garden was turned off at five-thirty in the morning to let the sheep out to go and graze and that was when I made my trips, a can of worms in hand and stick rod. I was about ten years old.



Fig. 1: Dawn Cane Fires (Scott, 2001)

Yet, I had under my bed an old orange bag, and in it I had a knife, matches, my 'takkies', and other items I no longer remember. It was crucial for me to be prepared if we ever came under attack and I had to 'escape'. I had my hiding places in the bush and orchard to go to. I had it all planned out, implausible I realize now through adult eyes, as the fencing that was to keep the 'enemy' out, also trapped me within.

Even at the age of 47 years, I am not comfortable with having my curtains open after sunset, because that's how it was then. I was told that the curtains

were closed so our movements could not be watched by the 'enemy' and therefore we could not be shot at when passing by a window. We travelled in secure convoys when driving to towns that were three hours away, with armoured personnel carriers spaced intermittently every four or five cars. I remember the first time we travelled in convoy and being so terrified and sure we were going to die that I was sobbing in the back of the car. My Mother did not gently console me. I was sharply told to "Stop it!" I realize in retrospect that she was probably fearful and nervous herself to react as she did. I still have this image of a cardboard carton in the middle of the road, with the advertising of 'SURF' washing powder crudely printed on it. The one thing we never did there was drive over the flotsam of cardboard boxes because of the possibility of there being a land mine in it. I still think of these things.

Moving to South Africa from Rhodesia in 1979, at the age of 14 required that I bring my ghosts with me. This has had a lifelong effect on me. At boarding school in Eshowe in Kwa-Zulu Natal, I was welcomed and felt accepted and made firm friends, which had been very hard for me to do in Rhodesia. Yet I was teased by some for being a 'When We', an expression used to classify the colonial nostalgia that Rhodesians were perceived to bring with them. The Rhodesian dirge, I believe went something like this: "When we were in Rhodesia, we had this and this and this. And we had..." (The reader must imagine this being said in a whiney and resentful tone of voice.)

I remember being introduced to a group of students in 1979 when I had just started at Eshowe High School, and I had duly answered the customary question of "Where do you come from?" My reply was mocked with the "Oh, so you are a 'When We'" in a taunting litany by a boy. Everyone laughed and I laughed deprecatingly with them. His mimicking of the way I was supposed to talk, think and be was wounding. It seemed to me, that I, as an ex-Rhodesian, was not being acknowledged as a person yearning for my homeland, but as spoilt, boastful, petty, racist and class conscious. I felt I had been automatically classified as having a lamenting superiority that was

perceived to be used by ex-Rhodesians as a way to lord over others. I found myself being ashamed to be a Rhodesian, and it is only through the self exploration that this study has required, that I have been able to understand in more depth why I have always classified myself as Zimbabwean, rather than ex-Rhodesian.

Despite this introduction to school in South Africa, I was very happy at the school and the friends I made are true friends to this day. In hostel, I remember always being friendly to the newcomers. This was not a conscious act rooted in the realization that I had been an outsider. I just wanted them to be happy at the school like I was. I recognize now that I empathized with the new girls and did not want them to feel ostracized and lonely.

I remember a very telling and embarrassing incident when I was sixteen years old. I was in matric and had gone with a friend to the local hospital to help patients, seeing if they needed anything, a book, a magazine, something from the shop in the hospital. My friend and I were chatting to this young man with a big red beard and long hair lying in his hospital bed. He got onto the subject of favourite places. They were waxing lyrical about the rolling green of the Drakensberg foothills and I blurted out "Oh no, I don't like it there! There is nowhere to hide!" I will never forget their startled faces and the silence that followed.

I have related the above, because in the words of Bronislaw Malinowski "There is no text without context" (1948:104). The crucial incidents of the years from seven to seventeen have etched in me a multitude of contradictions and are the co-creators of the person I am still becoming. I, the artist, researcher, teacher and social being, still draw on my childhood bush and war solitariness, my perceptions of outside-ness, and welcoming boarding school experiences. The symbols and particular images that re-occur in my practice as an artist stem from my childhood and young teenage/adult realities. The fact that I never 'fitted' as a youngster in

Rhodesia, was mocked for being Rhodesian when I arrived in South Africa, and yet was made welcome in boarding school, has sharpened my empathy as a teacher and social being.

My experiences have made me very aware of the privilege I have had of finding my 'voice' and that I have a medium or mediums in which to express myself. Becoming aware that I can express myself through the act of painting and writing has prompted my awareness to explore, create and conceptualize an alternate and inclusional visual voice for others, and hence this study.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE – Once Upon a Time

Storytelling

is relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture.

It is not the same as reading a story aloud

or reciting a piece from memory

or acting out a drama-

though it shares common characteristics with these arts.

The storyteller looks into the eyes of the audience

and together they compose the tale.

The storyteller begins to see and re-create, through voice and gesture,
a series of mental images;

the audience, from the first moment of listening,

squints, stares, smiles, leans forward or falls asleep,

letting the teller know whether to slow down,

speed up, elaborate,

or just finish.

Each listener, as well as each teller, actually composes a unique set of story images
derived from meanings associated with words, gestures, and sounds.

The experience can be profound,

exercising the thinking and touching emotions of both teller and listener.

(The National Council of Teachers of English in support of storytelling in the
academic classroom)¹

1.1 Introduction

The foreword at the beginning of this dissertation provides a context and brief historical background. I wrote it to situate my critically reflective self-study and living theories (Whitehead, 1989)², as well as to lay bare the foundations

¹ www.storyteller.net/articles/160 (Accessed 10/01/2012)

² www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09).

of myself. It was written spontaneously, and, on reflection has given me many clues as to why and how I function and see life as I do. The foreword is a lens through which to read this dissertation.

This study has had a number of purposes. First, it was to improve my practice as an artist, teacher, researcher and social being³, through a critically reflective self study. Second, it was to design and produce a set of pictographic cards for use as creative prompts, which I have named 'PicTopics'⁴. A pictograph or pictogram is described as

a symbol representing a concept, object, activity, place or event through illustration. Pictograms are characterized by their simplified style, which omits all details that are unnecessary to the desired communication⁵.

In my study I have sought to validate the communication design aspect of the cards, their pertinence in the generation of story-telling, and their value both as a creative teaching tool and as 'a visual voice'⁶ to elicit and enable social commentary.

Thirdly, the purpose of this study was to record and reflect on the interactions between the PicTopics, my paintings and other aspects of creative practice, other users of the PicTopics, and my development as an individual, as artist, teacher, and social being⁷. My study is about my ontogenesis, my 'becoming' to know myself and what really matters to me. I am "emphatically and subjectively immersed" (Maree, 2011:33) in my research. I realize that my ontological assumptions are embodied in the values of my practice and the

³ See Appendix B for my definition of 'social being'.

⁴ See Appendix B for an explanation of the term 'PicTopic'.

⁵ http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Info:Main_Page (Accessed 10/11/11).

⁶ See Appendix B for my definition of 'a visual voice'.

⁷ See Appendix B for an explanation my definition of 'social being'.

way I live my life (Whitehead, 2005(b))⁸. The values that I champion are a constant throughout this dissertation and I bring them into the weave repeatedly.

I present in this dissertation evidence of learning engendered by fun and creativity. I bring an autobiographic account of elements of my life story as evidence of my concern of the negative impact exclusion can have on human wellbeing, well-becoming and self worth.

1.2 The Personal context of the Study - Roots and Routes

I studied Fine Arts and currently teach Drawing and Illustration, Two- and Three-dimensional Design and supervise B Tech students in the Department of Fashion and Textiles at the Durban University of Technology.

I come from a very fortuitous teaching history that includes a variety of experiences. My initial training stems from teaching at the Community Arts Center in Durban in the 1980's. The Community Arts Centre in Durban was a place that was open to all races and age groups. I worked there with inspiring role- models and fellow teachers, artists such as Paul Sibisi, Dennis Purvis and Zamuwake Gumede. Mingling with these dynamic and vibrant caring people who were passionate about teaching and learning, taught me so much and so simply. I realize now that I learned by osmosis, and I did not comprehend then the magnitude of the skills bequeathed to me until reflecting on these past events for this self study.

I left the Community Arts Centre in 1987 and spent a year in the United Kingdom, and then returned to South Africa and worked in the Textiles and T-shirt printing industry for three and a half years.

⁸ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/c12805.htm (Accessed 11/01/2010).

In 1991 I was employed by the Graphic Design Department at M.L Sultan Technikon as a part time lecturer. ML Sultan Technikon was the first higher education institution in South Africa to have an open access policy (from 1986 – eight years before the democratic elections in 1994), and accepted students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and schooling systems. Consequently the Department of Graphic Design at ML Sultan Technikon accepted all race groups. I taught the Textile Design students as well as Graphic Design and Fashion as a drawing lecturer. This is pertinent because during the continual critical-reflection for this study, I have realized that working with students of diverse calibres, aptitudes and backgrounds, has required a holistic approach to teaching and has made me a richer and more empathetic teacher.

Through the course of this study, I have realized how large a role being an immigrant has played in the development of my practice. It has been worthwhile ‘uncovering’ or re-remembering certain memories through the creation of written and painted narratives. I am also a member of a group known as Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) (2011-2013), formerly Self-Study for Transformative Higher Educational Studies and Social Action (SeStuTHESA) (2008-2010) within the Durban University of Technology. TES consists of like-minded yet highly individual beings from a variety of programmes and disciplines. The TES forum is a space where researchers aid and confer with one another in finding appropriate ways to address scholarly concerns which leads to alternative and innovative approaches to research. Through continual critical reflection and discussion with peers I have been enabled to see the value in my ideas as an educator and how I can improve my practice as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being.

1.3 Stories as Inspiration

Narrative is retrospective meaning making - the shaping or ordering of past experiences; a way of understanding one's own and other's actions. Narrative is a way of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole and of seeing the consequences of actions and

events over time...narrative also expresses emotions, thoughts, and interpretations...highlights the versions of self, reality and experience of the story teller. (Chase, 2005: 656).

Susan Chase (2005) aptly expresses the importance of stories and storytelling. I am inspired by the strength and conviction that people express when telling me their stories: their determination, their visions, their nostalgia and their hopes, desires and dreams inspire me. I am inspired by people's need to make meaning of their lives. Stories of people's lives, loves, attitudes to family, violence, fear and joy and the very-day-to-day rhythms of life interest and inspire me creatively as an artist and creative person.

At the beginning of this critically reflective self-study, I felt compelled to ask myself: "Why do I want other people's stories?" Robert McKee (1997) summed up the normalcy of wanting to know how people explain their lives and experiences:

Stories are the creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact (McKee, 1997:27).⁹

Storytelling is a form of inclusivity: the narrator is letting me into his/her world and his/her socio-cultural situation. Stories have meaning for me: when I am told a small story in a conversation in a check-out queue that has stalled at the grocery shop, I feel privileged. These conversations might be just that; two strangers talking about their day or empathizing with the other's grumblings, but to me a chat with a stranger is a gift. These small conversational gifts give me insight into the commonalities of human experience, of the cohesiveness or lack thereof in society. If I question why I might feel privileged to be confided in by a stranger who I might never see again, I can reach back in my mind's eye and see the child in me growing up in Rhodesia. I remember my feelings of being an outsider, of not belonging,

⁹ www.storyteller.net/articles/160 (Accessed 1/7/2010)

of always feeling like a person on the periphery, and then going through it all again as an immigrant to South Africa. Thus I value being 'let in' and storytelling is the connection I make to the significance associated with inclusiveness and belonging.

The stories that I am drawn to, am inspired by and with which I resonate have parallels that echo my own life. These stories are often of the desire to escape, of homecoming, spiritual wonderings, identity, belonging and sexuality. The stories are all 'life's experiences' type stories. There is a thread of common experience that links human beings together, and that which is social in our nature determines that we express and share these experiences.

Through the development of my living theories, constructed from experience, observation and generalizations, I have come to realize that I am sensitive to cultural and social contexts. I also understand this awareness incorporates personal knowledge and that I understand the world from my point of view, "as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement responsibly with universal intent" (Polyani, 1958:327).

My wish to 'create a visual voice' for others and myself has been a major factor in this study. I have asked myself why it was important that I find an alternative way for people to voice their thoughts and ideas and tell their stories. I questioned how, why and what has led me to conceptualize the idea of the PicTopics. I believe that playful ways of eliciting the telling of stories are important. Not all human beings are spontaneously oral story-tellers, or able to put pen to paper successfully, or paint a canvas in order to be heard. I came to realize that my interest in finding a way to create a visual voice came from recognizing that I have been an outsider, a loner, have felt inarticulate and have felt the confusion of not belonging and wished for 'a way in'. I have found that I have grown into an embracing person, not in the physical sense, but as a person who welcomes and accepts people's differences.

As a visual activist¹⁰, I believe in the transformative powers of ‘letting it all out’ in ‘telling one’s story’. I believe that the telling of stories makes one feel welcomed and ‘being allowed in’, and is of immense value in the creation and maintenance of balanced, loving and giving communities. I believe that my role as visual activist interfaces with my role as teacher and researcher in higher education.

Boyer (1990:75) asks how the role of the scholar/researcher can be defined in “ways that not only affirm the past but also reflect the present and adequately anticipate the future”. He focuses on the premise that other forms of research and scholarship, namely “teaching, integration and application” must be placed on an equal footing with traditional research designs or models. Finding solutions for pressing global, ecological and sociological issues along with the discovery of new knowledge relies on integration between researchers, teachers, students, and the populace at large. Boyer writes of the need for researchers and teachers to be able to integrate ideas, “connect thoughts to action”, and inspire students in order to transform our world and the depressing issues we face (1990:77).

I believe in the interconnectedness of my practice as artist, researcher, teacher and social being. I believe that how and what I teach matters. I am conscious that teaching drawing is not only about teaching technical skills, but that I, as a teacher and a social being, have the potential to contribute to the transformation of the individual, to contribute to the development of insightful and socially conscious young adults who acknowledge the dire need for social and ecological change.

¹⁰ See Appendix B for an explanation of a ‘visual activist’.

1.4 Deciding on the What, the Why and the How of my Research

When I first decided to study for this M Tech degree, I knew that I wanted it to be about communicating and communication. I knew I wanted it to be about my practice, that it be practice-based and include my paintings and meaning-making through the use of a visual medium. I wanted to emphasize my role as an “active learner” in this study “instead of an expert judging research participants” and that I was interested in writing in a “literary style” (Cresswell, 1998:15). I interpret “literary style” to mean using a story-telling style in the crafting of this dissertation.

I also consciously wanted to use simplified images in my research to find ways to foster the concept and creation of a ‘visual voice’. This idea was inspired by previous favourable comments and interpretations by the public regarding the use of a pictographic style in the depiction of concepts and objects in my paintings.

Reflecting on a number of my paintings done prior to this study, I saw this recognition of objects in pictographic form as the first inklings of creating a visually articulated picture language (see Figure 2). The variety in interpretation of single or multiple images and symbols in my paintings prompted the conceptualization and formulation of creating a ‘visual voice’ in the form of images on cards. This also aided my interest in finding ways to collect people’s stories.

I discuss the history, development, and design uses of pictographs, PicTopic cards and their role in this dissertation in chapter Three.



Fig 2: Title: What a To-Do. (Scott 2007. Painting showing pictographic imagery as story telling prompts. Mixed media on canvas. Size: 160cm x 80cm).

1.5 Purposefulness

At the same time as I developed the idea of the pictographic cards, I felt troubled that something was missing in my conception of finding ways to communicate and collect stories through visual images. So I drew. I drew diagrams of what I wanted to do and why I wanted to do this research and from this activity I realized I was looking for my purpose. I realized that I needed to find out the 'why' behind my wanting to do this research. I critically reflected on my research questions and I asked myself: Why do I want to create pictographic visual prompts to aid in collecting people's stories? Who could or would benefit? How could or would it benefit them? Why did I think it was important?

The first question I asked myself was about personal experiences that might inform my 'purpose' (indicated in the box attached to the diagram, Figure3). Unearthing and remembering past teaching experiences and elements of my childhood, and analyzing why I am the person I am, have essentially informed the backbone of this study. Determining the reasons for this study kept me focused on its pertinent aspects. I have come to realize that the heart of my study is purposefulness: purposefulness in the development of a visual voice, and purposefulness in my personal development as an artist, teacher, researcher and social being.

I became conscious, in this critical reflection process, that my research stretched across a number of programmes, and that although this study was registered in the Graphic Design programme, it could not be only about the development of a product for consumption, that is, the PicTopics. I realized that collecting stories went beyond my personal benefit. I came to see it as a holistic undertaking that would help me improve my practice as a teacher and artist. I realized that this study embraced Fine Arts, Graphic Design and Education, and decided to work across these disciplines to make meaning and find value in my study.

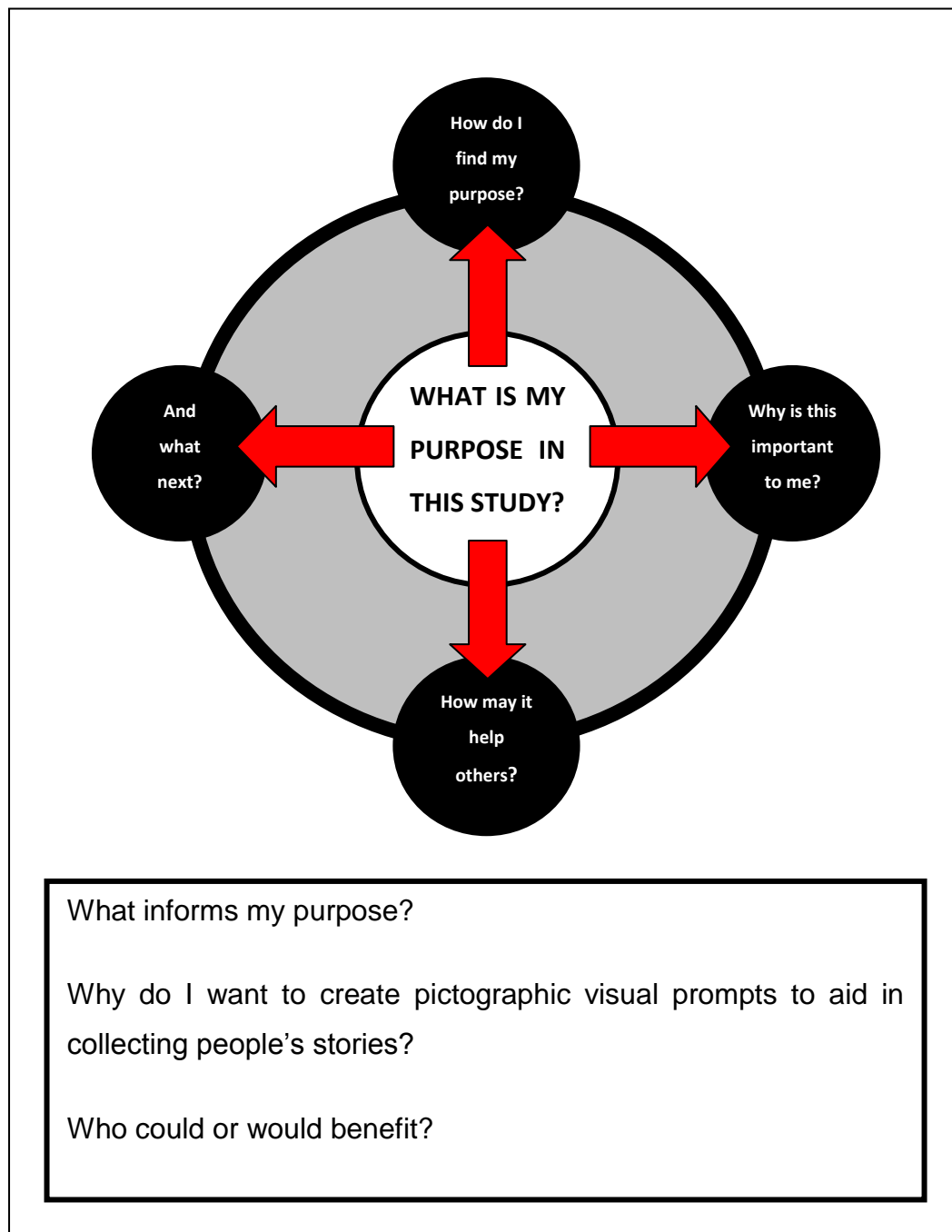


Fig 3: Diagram to illustrate the links between purposefulness, the PicTopics in my study and the reflective questions I asked myself (Scott 2010)

1.6 Formal Research Questions

I asked myself the following research questions:

1. What is the value and role of the PicTopics in generating or communicating a story or message?
2. How are the PicTopics pertinent to my practice as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being?
3. How can I improve my practice in a critically reflective self-study, as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being using the PicTopics?

1.7 The Research Participants

Participants in the study included the public at a gallery where I first had people play with the PicTopics, and the Drama students at DUT.

1.8 The Focus, Scope and Limitations of the Study

The focus of the study has been on my learning through the development of my practice as an artist, researcher, teacher practitioner and social being.

When I use the word 'sign', I am writing of a visual sign or graphic image and I am not implying linguistic associations with the 'sign' as proposed by semiologists/ semioticians such as Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Saunders Pierce (1839-1914) (Crow, 2003). I am intentionally brief when I relate the semiotic associations in the reading of my PicTopics so that I inform my reader that I am aware of the discourse, but have not found it appropriate here to go into depth on semiotics and accompanying philosophies. For reasons of brevity I also do not go into detail about some of the events where the PicTopics were used. All the events that have

transpired can be seen in the diagram illustrating the research procedures and happenings (see Figure 4).

This study is chiefly about the development of my practice as artist, researcher and teacher, and because this is a critically reflective self-study that requires reflection and analysis of my actions and meaning making, I am not analyzing the work of others. I am focusing on certain aspects of my own research such as the development of the PicTopics and their value as creative tools. I focus on the stories of the participants who used the PicTopics and examine the relevance of these cards as visual prompts in my teaching practice. I also explore their importance as a means of enabling social comment and giving people a voice through telling their stories.

I use the word 'educational' in this dissertation as opposed to 'education' because educational refers to all the life experiences from which one learns. 'Educational' includes the notion that I, the educator, am educationally influenced by my actions as educator of others, and simultaneously by the educational influence on me by those I educate, and those who educate around me (Whitehead 2008(a))¹¹. I am also educated by my interaction with the natural and inanimate world. This last is particularly true of me as animist and artist from an early age.

In Chapters Four, Five and Six, where I write about the interventions that have taken place, I include the methods used to gather data, the assessment/evaluation of my evidence through critical reflection, and criteria for rigor and validity. The issues which I have written about and analyzed include my awareness of my individuation in relation to my personal autobiographic history, as well as my understanding and interpretation of various methodological philosophies that have aided the development and analysis of my research. I write about these aspects throughout the study.

¹¹ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/c12805.htm (Accessed 11/01/2010)

1.9 Review of the Literature

It is usual for students to have to write a literature review as part of their thesis. This is normally a chapter appearing early in the thesis, but in some styles of thesis, may appear throughout the work. (Bruce, 1994:144)

Because of the nature of this study, I have adopted the latter approach to the review of literature, identified by Bruce above.

1.10 The Research Proceedings and Events

The diagram (see Figure 4, p.16) represents my research design processes. It indicates how the research flowed and shows some of the offshoot events that have occurred alongside writing this dissertation. The sequence of events unfolded very naturally during the course of this study. Apart from first designing and developing my PicTopics, other aspects of the study fell into place in a serendipitous manner.

The first process as such, was the trying out of the PicTopics to see if they 'worked', to see if they could be used by people to create or prompt stories. The event was held at artSpace Gallery in April 2009. I documented the event on video and then selected certain stories to discuss, based on criteria that I examine more fully in Chapter Four. This video with four other clips from a workshop with drama students and a slide show of the practical exhibition accompanies this dissertation – six in all, on a single DVD.

Following the happening at the artSpace Gallery, and a talk I gave at the Faculty of Arts and Design's Research Day in June 2009, I was invited to facilitate a workshop using the PicTopics with Durban University of Technology (DUT) drama students. This workshop was held in August 2009.

In Chapter Five I write about this drama workshop to provide evidence in the explanation of my educational influence as a teacher. Many of the students' performances contained comment about South African socio-economic

realities. I realized that this was significant, and have reflected critically on the value of the PicTopics in this regard.

The workshop firmly inspired and validated a way forward in my teaching practice. This workshop also affirmed my belief in alternate ways to foster autonomous learning skills in a playful and compassionate way.

In Chapter Six, I describe the series of paintings inspired by the stories told to me at the artSpace Gallery and done for the Professional Practice Course (PPCourse). From September to November 2009, I attended the PPCourse, a forum in which my paintings were critiqued by Brenton Maart, the then curator of the KwaZulu-Natal Society of Arts (KZNSA)¹², Durban, and peers who also attended the course. This experience was pivotal to my intellectual growth, learning and development of self and practice. The paintings I did during the PPCourse, were inspired by the PicTopic stories told to me at the artSpace Gallery earlier in 2009. This experience at the KZNSA set me on the critical path of unravelling the connectedness I feel exists between my childhood experiences, immigration, my need to continually paint/create - to stay sane in a world that is full of conflict - and the necessity to find alternate, empathetic and playful ways to teach. This unravelling took the form of a second body of paintings which are directly related to my Rhodesian childhood. The images of my entire practical component for this study will be included on DVD as reference for the reader. I do not write about every painting, but particular pieces in light of how they confirm and validate my values and beliefs and add to the improvement of my practice.

¹² See Appendix F for the aims and objectives of the organisation.

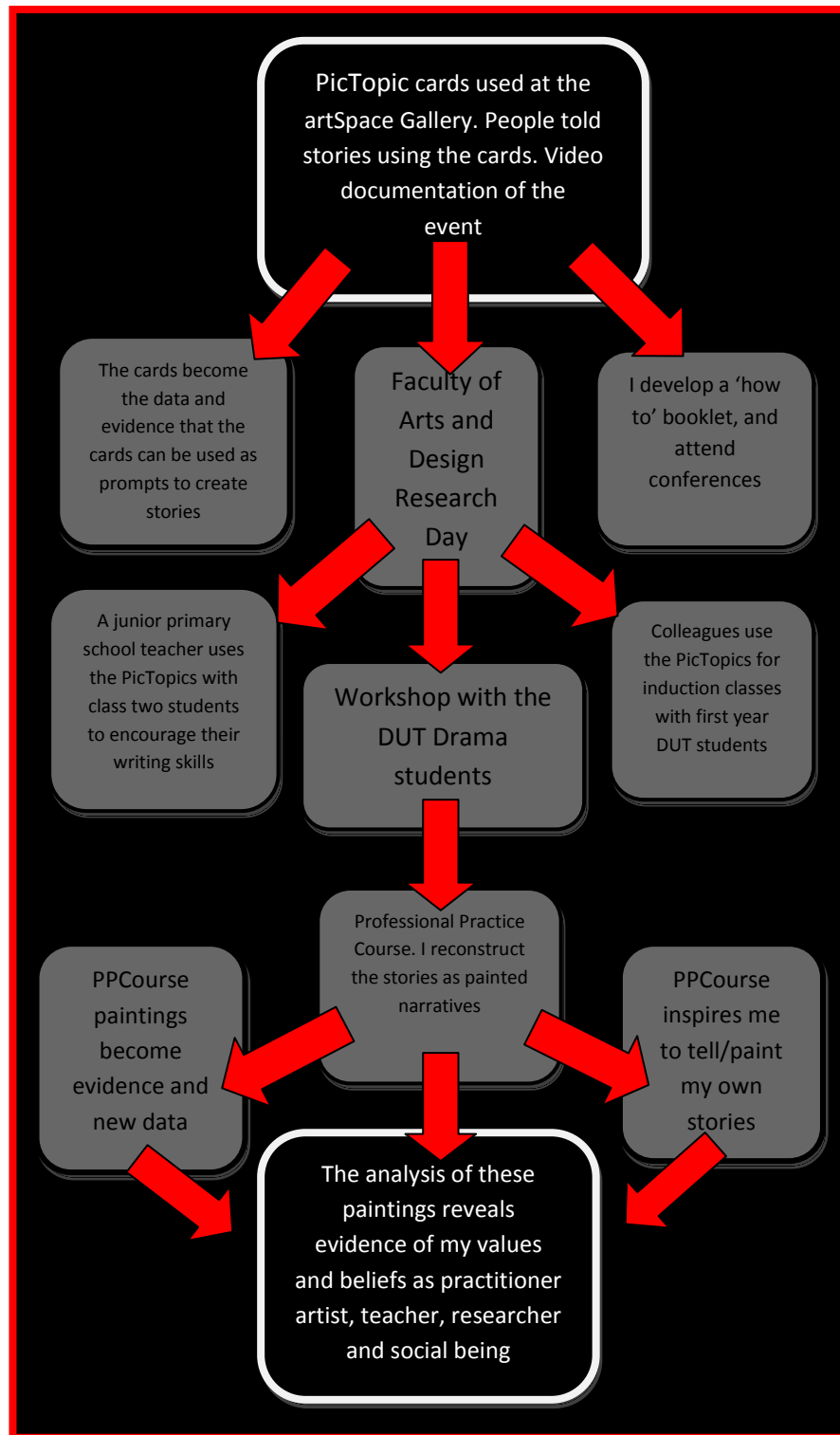


Fig. 4: Diagram to demonstrate the research process and events

1.11 The Value of the Research

I believe that one of the values of this research lies in showing how the development of the PicTopics has inadvertently led me upon a path that has ensured - through critical self-reflection - my intellectual and emotional growth. By examining my practice as an artist, researcher and teacher/practitioner, this study will show the significance of visual images as prompts or triggers to generating story content. It also shows the value of the PicTopic cards in helping to open channels of communication and dialogue between people, and lastly demonstrates the usefulness of the cards as a creative teaching tool.

1.12 My Philosophical Assumptions

My study is a “dense, reflective, (and) collage-like creation” (Guba and Lincoln 1994:278). The density and complexity of this critically reflective self-study has influenced my approach to research design in conducting a qualitative study. I found that the action and methods in this research emerged simultaneously. I recognize that my methodological preferences are ideological (a combination of ideas), and can inter-relate with each other. I find the philosophies and methodologies of “living theories” Whitehead (2008(b))¹³, McNiff’s “action research” (2002)¹⁴, Irwin and Springgay’s (et al) “a/r/tography” (2008)¹⁵ intertwined with a “narrative auto-ethnographic” (Chase, 2005¹⁶ and Ellis, 2004) approach to conducting research the most pertinent. These all inform my inquiry into improving my practice.

¹³ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 25/09/2010).

¹⁴ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009).

¹⁵ www.ecuad.ca/~rbeer/text/pdf/STUDIES%20-%20RICHGATE.pdf (Accessed 03/04/2009).

¹⁶ <http://www.creativityandcognition.com> (Accessed 06/3/2011).

I seek to understand my world as an artist, teacher, researcher and social being. Acknowledging that my own socio-cultural background shapes how I construct, interpret and understand the world, and that I develop “subjective meanings of these experiences”, (Cresswell, 2007:20) leads me to understand that this (in)forms my worldviews. I have many worldviews, certainly not a singular one. I have the worldview of the immigrant, the educationalist, the fine artist, the designer, and the social observer, and these all (in)form who I am and my practice. I also acknowledge that these worldviews contain specific lenses, so that, for example, when I write of my experiences of growing up in the bush, the lens I see through is that of the child. When I teach and see a student struggling to understand me, I understand him or her through the lens of myself as a child because of my learning experiences, and thus I am able to empathize and find the patience to understand others.

I acknowledge that multiple worldviews fundamentally influence how I see the world, and also shape my understanding of how things are connected. I understand that people experience reality in different ways, and that people (including myself) are social beings who create their own meaning to make sense of the world. This recognition led me to understand that whatever the outcomes of my research, it will lead to new understandings, new meanings and ongoing purposefulness.

1.13 Concluding notes

I have found critically reflective self-study to be an evolving, multilayered and inquiring approach to improving my practice. It has been and will continue to be an appropriate approach to improving my practice as an artist, teacher and researcher.

I write in greater detail about my living theories and their relevance to the holistic connectedness of all aspects of the study in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGICAL INVENTIVENESS – Values and Validation

When you do enough research, the story almost writes itself.
Lines of development spring loose and you'll have choices galore.
Robert McKee¹⁷

2.1 Introduction

My study is a qualitative and Arts-Based Research (ABR) critically reflective self-study where subjectivity, changeability and adaptability have been intrinsic elements in the knowledge-generation and meaning-making in the research.

ABR practices are a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation and representation (Leavy, 2009:3).

Acknowledging my subjectivity has been important because my internal processes and empathetic nature have helped me conceptualise the idea of the PicTopic cards as a 'visual voice'. My research revolves around subjectivity: my subjectivity as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being involves noticing and recording how people see, think, and feel about things, and takes into account that they interpret my pictographic images on the cards from their own perspective in the creation of their own narratives. My subjectivity is visually apparent and captured on canvas. The canvases are a subjective explanation of the stories I was told at the artSpace Gallery, and the metamorphosis of my internal meanderings.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005:5) advocate the use of "multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives and observation as a strategy

¹⁷ www.storyteller.net/articles/160 (Accessed 14/01/2012).

that adds vigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth". Their approach advocates the harnessing of the diversity of worldviews explored by differing methodologies. Marion Dadds and Susan Hart in Whitehead (2008(c))¹⁸ on the importance of methodological inventiveness justify why I believe that I cannot situate my study in any one paradigm:

For some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self chosen research focus. We had understood for many years that substantive choice was fundamental to the motivation and effectiveness of practitioner research; that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes (Dadds and Hart, 2001:166).

I have found living theories methodologies (Whitehead(b))¹⁹, a/r/tography (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, and Bickel, 2006),²⁰ narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, Chase 2005²¹) and auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004, de Lange and Grossi, 2009), all have much in common. The authors emphasise the importance of writing in the first person, that the writing should be truthful, and educational, and that the research, apart from improving one's own practice, is concerned with social justice²².

One of Whitehead's tenets is that knowledge should be freely disseminated. At a workshop facilitated by Whitehead in Durban 8th-12th December 2009²³, I

¹⁸ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8/05/2009).

¹⁹ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 25/09/2010).

²⁰ www.ecuad.ca/~rbeer/text/pdf/STUDIES%20-%20RICHGATE.pdf (Accessed 03/04/2009).

²¹ <http://www.creativityandcognition.com> (Accessed 06/3/2011).

²² See Appendix B for an explanation of my definition of social justice

²³ www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwdutpaperAopt.pdf (Accessed 10/01/2012)

heard him speak of giving knowledge away as a 'gift'. He encouragingly invited us to access educational knowledge made public by self-study researchers and offered freely, on the website <http://www.actionresearch.net>. The notion of making public one's "value-laden explanatory principles" that give meaning and purpose to an educator, is seen by Whitehead as making an original contribution to educational knowledge (2010:2).

Whitehead also spoke of the importance - as a teacher - of continually asking oneself "How do I improve what I am doing or how do I improve my practice?" This question is included in my research questions. This question (in)forms my critical reflective self-study and my living theories out of my practice - that my experiences and theories have value, and, as they evolve, they continue to (in)form my practice. Whitehead explains living theory methodology as the "theoretical analysis of the methods appropriate to research" (2008(c):9)²⁴. Whitehead writes that a living educational theory means the "explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the education of social formations" (Whitehead, 2008(b):104)²⁵. I have introduced the notion of 'living social theories' and 'living artistic theories' in this dissertation in addition to Whitehead's living educational theories (1988)²⁶. These concepts shape the 'evidence chapters' of my dissertation and I substantiate my social influence in Chapter Four, my educational influence in Chapter Five, and artistic influence in Chapter Six.

My study is an auto-ethnographic account of my research. 'Auto' refers to the self, 'ethno' to the culture or social group and 'graphy' the art of writing (de Lange and Grossi 2009:189). Auto-ethnography is "exploratory, interpretive

²⁴ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8/05/2009).

²⁵ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 25/09/2010).

²⁶ Whitehead, J. (1988). <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html> (Accessed 08/07/09).

and impressionistic” (de Lange and Grossi 2009:188) and although my study is presented as a personal narrative, it does more than just tell a story. de Lange and Grossi reflect that the genre should “offer valuable insights – important to the teaching profession” (2009:188). This becomes apparent in Chapter Five, where as stated earlier, I write about the drama students using the PicTopics and I stress the value of the act of ‘playing’ as facilitating learning in my teaching process and practice.

Chapters Four and Six contextualize Carolyn Ellis’s description of auto-ethnographic research as connecting story writing and method to the “auto-biographic, and (the) personal to the social and cultural” (2004:xix). Ellis explains that auto-ethnography has elements of “concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self consciousness and introspection, is evocative, vulnerable and therapeutic” (2004:135) all of which I have endeavoured to blend into this study.

I have written in Chapter One that this study acknowledges aspects of various disciplines, and that they are inextricably intertwined and I cannot separate them. I have multi-perspectival points of view or worldviews, and, knowing this, I have dared to take chances, without presuming the outcomes of the adventurous path this study has taken me on.

Self-study in the form of living educational theories, combined with practice-based and practice-led research, and action research has allowed me to explore my own theories and has validated my theories on the importance of creative playfulness.

2.2 Methods of Collection

The methods of collection I have drawn on have included multimedia explanations of my educational influences (Whitehead, 2008(b):103)²⁷. I have used a video camera to document the participants of this study in their interactions with the PicTopic cards, as the video camera is a valuable tool in the critical reflection and analysis of my data. Video technology has unique properties that allow researchers to capture and reflect complex phenomena from a variety of perspectives (Spiers, 2004:1)²⁸.

I have also captured actions and interactions of the participants of this study to show my educational influence and the value of the cards as an educational and social prompt. In the action-reflection cycles or 'zig-zag' of my own research path, I have included the use of the video camera to record informal interviews, observations and critical-reflections.

The PicTopics are pivotal in this study as they are both a methodological tool to gather stories, and evidence. The PicTopics are six centimetres square, and the images on them are black and white in a simple pictographic style. The cards function as creative prompts or triggers, and their impersonal quality allows people to feel comfortable while telling their stories.

2.3 Methodological Framework

I have adapted two frameworks. I have used the methodological action reflection framework of Jack Whitehead in Jean McNiff's "Action research for professional development – Concise advice for new action researchers" (2002)²⁹. This framework requires that I continually evaluate my actions as a

²⁷<http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 25/09/2010).

²⁸http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/pdf/spiersvideo.pdf (Accessed 16/01/2012).

²⁹ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009)

values-driven self-reflective practitioner. This is a framework that encourages a continual cycle of action and reflection. The action-reflection cycles include my asking myself:

- What issue am I interested in researching?
 - Why do I want to research this issue?
 - What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am interested in this issue?
 - What can I do? What will I do?
 - What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am having an influence?
 - How can I explain that influence?
 - How can I ensure that any judgments I might make are reasonably fair and accurate?
 - How will I change my practice in the light of my evaluation?
- (Whitehead, J. in McNiff, 2002:14)³⁰

Along with McNiff and Whitehead's framework I have also adopted and adapted Robert Brown's seven questions (1994:96) as a critical reflective framework (see Figure 5) to test the validity of my claims concerning my social, educational, and artistic development. These are:

³⁰ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 6/09/ 2009)

Question	Word limit
(1) What did you do?	50 words
(2) Why did you do it?	50 words
(3) What happened?	50 words
(4) What do the results mean in theory?	50 words
(5) What do the results mean in practice?	50 words
(6) What is the key benefit for the readers?	25 words
(7) What remains unresolved?	no limit

Fig 5: Brown's table and seven questions that provide a framework for writing (1994:96)

Brown suggests using these questions in scholarly writing as a way to “crystallize original ideas and nail them down in a form that others can understand and appreciate” (1994:93).

In some chapters of this dissertation I have elected to ask questions along these lines as sub-headings and then answer them in the manner of McNiff and Whitehead (2002)³¹, and Brown (1994), but not all my chapters will be structured in this way. Some have sub-headings which indicate the content. I have used this method to contribute to the practice of engaging with critical self-reflection and as a way to direct myself.

2.4 My Conceptual Framework

Play is the highest form of research. (Albert Einstein³²)

My conceptual framework explores the relationship of the values associated with fun, playing, creativity and well-being with my living theories. They are interwoven with my core values which are creativity, playfulness, inclusion,

³¹ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009)

³² http://thinkexist.com/quotes/albert_einstein/ (Accessed 09/01/2012)

integrity and holism (see Figure 6). I believe that fun, playing, creativity and well-being aid in the educational growth of the individual, and seek to show that they are directly related to the evolution of my living educational theories (1988)³³ I have developed in my teaching practice.

2.4.1 What are Living Educational Theories?

Whitehead's philosophy of research enquiry is based on "lived and living experiences because enquiries are grounded in living values and theories" (2008(a):1)³⁴. Whitehead says that living educational theory is a form of

self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in educational contexts in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own educational practices, their understanding of these practices and the situation in which the practices are carried out (2008(c):4-5)³⁵.

Living theory methodology

includes the unique contribution of an individual's methodological inventiveness in the creation of a living theory, rather than referring to some overarching set of principles to which each individual's methodology has to conform (2008(c):9)³⁶.

How do I improve what I am doing? This question is the basis of my methodology. Whitehead explains living theory methodology as the "theoretical analysis of the methods appropriate to research" (2008(c):9)³⁷. Living theory methodology has been an appropriate approach to improving my practice as an artist, teacher and researcher. This form of self-study also acknowledges that I generate my own living theories out of my

³³ Whitehead, J. (1988). <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html> (Accessed 08/07/09).

³⁴ <http://www.actionresearch.net> (Accessed 03/10/2009).

³⁵ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8/05/2009).

³⁶ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8/05/2009).

³⁷ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8/05/2009).

“methodological inventiveness” in improving my practice (Whitehead, 2008(c):9)³⁸. Thus, as my living educational theories evolve, they will continue to (in)form my practice.

2.4.2 What are My Living Educational Theories?

My research is based on my own “lived and living experiences because my enquiries are grounded in my living values and theories” (Whitehead, 2008:103(b))³⁹. My theories are ‘living’ because they continue to evolve and ‘grow’ in their refinement. My explanations of my educational influences in learning are ‘unique’ and according to Whitehead, because they are grounded in my lived experiences, the implications for the analysis of my research data, are also unique (2008(c))⁴⁰. I have come to realise that each of my “lived experiences” has been an element of my learning, and that each of these ‘life encounters’ have value, and these values have (in)formed my living educational theories. I continue to develop and refine in order to improve my practice as artist, researcher, teacher and social being.

A number of what I consider to be my own living educational theories contribute to my practice⁴¹. I believe that my living educational theory is generalised out of my practice as an artist, a teacher and visual activist. I believe there cannot be theory without practice, nor practice without theory: they (in)form each other. In this study, it is my doing and creating that has led to my theorising about what I am doing and creating. For example, I have used playfulness to encourage learning, and in this practice have theorised that playfulness is a ‘soft’ or gentle way to encourage doing and learning.

³⁸ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8/05/2009).

³⁹ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 3 October 2009).

⁴⁰ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8/05/2009).

⁴¹ Unless stated otherwise, when I use the word ‘practice’ on its own, I mean it to include artist/researcher and teacher as a whole. There are times in this text when I am specific in my separation of the practices and I indicate this clearly to avoid confusing the reader

Another living theory I espouse, is that of the act of 'doing' (creating) with well-being. By 'doing', I mean 'getting on with, getting involved in' the task at hand, be it studious or otherwise.

I have found that my 'practice' is tied in with my outlook on life, and directly with my values and my well-being. Linked in with this living theory, I have found in my own social, artistic and teaching practice, that sometimes I must trick my subconscious in a number of ways into revealing my embodied forms of knowledge, to stimulate my creativity, and if I have a block, to find ways to become unstuck or unblocked. Accordingly, I can theorise that by playfully accessing the subconscious, or tricking it by using my PicTopic cards, that playfulness can be a way to encourage creativity and learning in others.

These are my living educational theories because I have formed them through a continual process of experience, critical reflection, analysis and implementation of new ideas and theories in my practice. My learning and present practice, in other words, are explained and evaluated by past practices with the intention of creating a "better future which is not yet in existence" (Whitehead, 1998:4)⁴².

2.4.3 How are my Values and Holism Integrated into my Practice?

I find it is important to reflect, evaluate and intentionally find ways to improve my practice, especially in the light of my values and beliefs. Values are fundamental to living educational theory because education is a value-laden practical activity (Whitehead, 1989: 41-52)⁴³, and when offering an explanation for an individual's educational development these values can be used as reasons for action. A living educational theory is distinguished by a

⁴² www.resources.educ.queensu.ca/ar/sstep2/whitehea.htm (Accessed 08/07/09).

⁴³ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 3 October 2009).

“philosophical understanding of the principles that organize the ‘how’ of the enquiry” (Whitehead, 2008(b):107)⁴⁴.

Jan Smuts defines holism as “enquiring into the whole” and describes it as a “process of creative synthesis” (Smuts, 1927: X). I understand then that the sum of all the parts that make up this study “are not static but dynamic, evolutionary, [and] creative” (Smuts, 1927:89). Everything links to everything else, flows and forms a layered whole which grows and reaches a point where it breaks out of its existing structure into an unstructured state which has within it the elements of a new structure. This is characteristic of the holistic process of the dynamic generation of creativity (Smuts, 1927)⁴⁵.

My practice is multi-layered and every aspect of my emotional and mental makeup is inextricably entwined with my values. These values impact on my practice as an artist /teacher /scholar /mother and friend – all aspects of my life as a social being.

The diagram (Fig: 6, p.32) shows the connections between my values and the holism of the research process, and my teaching, artistic practice and my well-being. My diagram is indicative of an underlying approach to teaching, in that students may also benefit from the holistic approach of my teaching practice. I relate more about this in Chapter Four in the account of the workshop that I facilitated with the DUT drama students.

I ask the reader to read the diagram (Figure 6) as a hologram, to visualize it in three dimensions and realize that all the values amassed in the lower blue box are dynamically linked to inclusion, creativity, playfulness and integrity, and lead to the encompassing values of well-becoming, self-worth, purposefulness, achievement, self satisfaction, harmony and balance. This

⁴⁴ www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09).

⁴⁵ See Appendix B for reasons why I use Smuts’ descriptions of holism in this study.

then ultimately leads to the overall wellness of my being, indicated in the blue box at the top of the model. This model can also be applied in my teaching practice. If I teach with those values in mind it is my hope that students too will have a sense of achievement.

My core values - creativity, playfulness, inclusion, integrity and holism - are interwoven with my living theories. A number of other values fall within the boundaries of what I feel these core values encompass. For instance, with the value 'inclusion', I include the values of open communication, empathy, love, kindness, patience and respect for others. With the value of 'creativity' I associate freedom, passion, and my work ethic (which knits with self-worth, well-being and learning). 'Playfulness' as a value interlinks with fun, well-being and, in turn, creativity. 'Integrity' incorporates encouragement, self-respect, honesty and truthfulness. When I write of one or more of these values and their relevance to my research and practice, I ask the reader to remember that all these values are interlinked, threaded together, and that I am constantly referring to the interplay of an assortment of these values. 'Holism' incorporates a number of values, including animism and eco-awareness. However, the core value of 'holism' ultimately relies on the interconnectedness and dynamism of the value system I uphold.

I believe PicTopic visual prompts can be effective not only as a social tool to develop feelings of well-being and self-confidence, but also as a teaching tool. My living educational theory is that the PicTopics can aid in the holistic educational growth of the student. This thought is embedded in the idea of playing, having fun and being a part of something, be it a classroom game facilitated by a teaching tool like the PicTopics. My theory is based on personal experience that when I, as a student, am having fun, enjoying a lesson and resonating with the teacher, I learn, and I believe that the same is true of others

My research is not just about improving my particular practice as an artist and teacher, but includes understanding the social responsibility that comes

with believing in the betterment of society. My teaching practice embraces inclusion, empathy, and the validation and affirmation of others: it is not just about me. This conceptual expansion of practice as social responsibility needs to be applied and viewed through a holistic lens. My artistic practice operates on the same values, with a bigger emphasis on the freedom of expression, playing, storytelling, social justice and my animism/eco-awareness.

As an artist, I draw continually on the need to create art and to acknowledge the cathartic effect of the act of creating. My doing (creating) art builds up my self-esteem, facilitates getting rid of my 'thought demons' and placates my strong work ethic.⁴⁶ Passion, integrity, soul-sustenance, well-being, survival and lifestyle are words that come to mind to describe the necessity of the creative act to me. This necessary creative instinct is at the centre of my being and my acknowledgement of this centrality that enables me to look at the individual learning needs of students and to look for and find ways to help better their abilities. I believe that through my compassion, empathy, respect and care, I can help people in small ways so that they value themselves more and are able in turn to give back to others for the transformation and well-being of society

⁴⁶ www.reference.com/browse/calvinist+work+ethic (Accessed 10/09/2011)

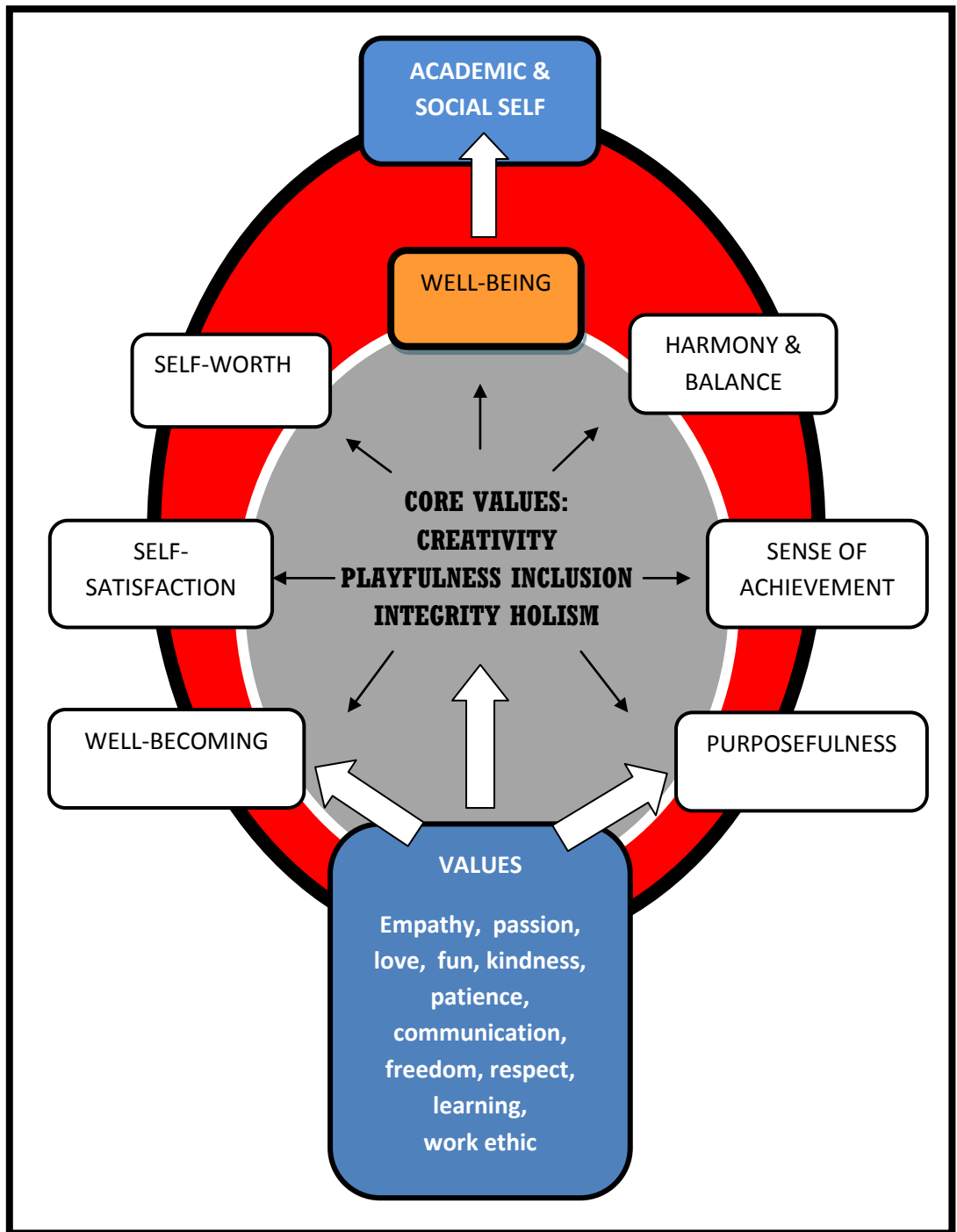


Fig 6: Illustration of my values and holistic approach to my research (Scott 2011).

2.4.4 Why are the Values of Well-being, Playfulness and Creativity Significant in my Practice as a Teacher, Artist and Social Being?

The term 'interplay', used by Nithikul Nimkulrat (2007:1), evokes in me a personal response because it clearly suggests for me what I want to achieve in my research. The emphasis on 'play' and 'inter' is directly linked to the inter-connectivity between myself, my paintings, the cards and the participants that will interpret them. Fig: 7(p.35) illustrates the effect of the interplay between me, the participants of this study, the PicTopics, and the resultant paintings. This interplay demonstrates the holism of this study: as disparate as PicTopics as a teaching tool may seem from paintings which reflect an acknowledgement of my childhood, all the elements of this dissertation are connected, all have fed into, and from, one another.

2.5 A Variety of Methodological Approaches

I have used a variety of methodological approaches and methods in my study and I have explained, defined and demonstrated their relevance in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

My study approach over-all is practice- based, adapting methodological tools to support my over-all choices of methods and methodological explanations. It is my intention to demonstrate in a holistic way how my living educational theories and my educational practice are intertwined.

Leavy (2009), Springay, et al (2008), Whitehead (1989), Schön (1983), and Boyer (1990) all believe in the relevance, importance and value of the link between theory and practice in order to improve one's practice, in the creation of knowledge which ultimately aids in the transformation and betterment of society. The thoughts, theories and philosophies of these practitioner-researchers have inspired me and fundamentally reassured me on the path that my research and study have taken me. They all employ the

cognitive action of critical reflection and self-reflection, which has been imperative and significant in the undertaking of this study.

2.5.1 A/r/tography

A/r/tography (Irwin et al 2006:3)⁴⁷ is an arts and education practice-based research methodology that focuses on the multiple nature of the artist, researcher and teacher, which cannot be separated from each other. I have borrowed the distinctive features of this philosophy, which acknowledges that I cannot separate myself as artist from my practices of researcher and teacher and that they are “in continuous relations” and that “none of these features is privileged over another as they occur simultaneously in and through time and space.” (2006:3)⁴⁸.

2.5.2 Practice-Based and Practice-Led

The principles behind practice-based and practice-led (Candy, 2006)⁴⁹ research have helped to explain my research conceptions. My study can be seen to be practice-based, as I am “undertaking an original investigation to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice, (and) the creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge” (Candy 2006:1)⁵⁰. To me this means that the PicTopics are my creative artefact, which to the best of my knowledge, is an original concept and contributes to knowledge. The conceptual originality is substantiated by my ‘proving’ it to be a useful and creative pedagogical tool that serves to trigger storytelling, storylines for performance genres and an aid to prompt paintings/artwork.

⁴⁷ www.ecuad.ca/~rbeer/text/pdf/STUDIES%20-%20RICHGATE.pdf (Accessed 03/04/2009)

⁴⁸ www.ecuad.ca/~rbeer/text/pdf/STUDIES%20-%20RICHGATE.pdf (Accessed 03/04/2009).

⁴⁹ <http://www.creativityandcognition.com> (Accessed 06/3/2011).

⁵⁰ <http://www.creativityandcognition.com> (Accessed 06/3/2011).

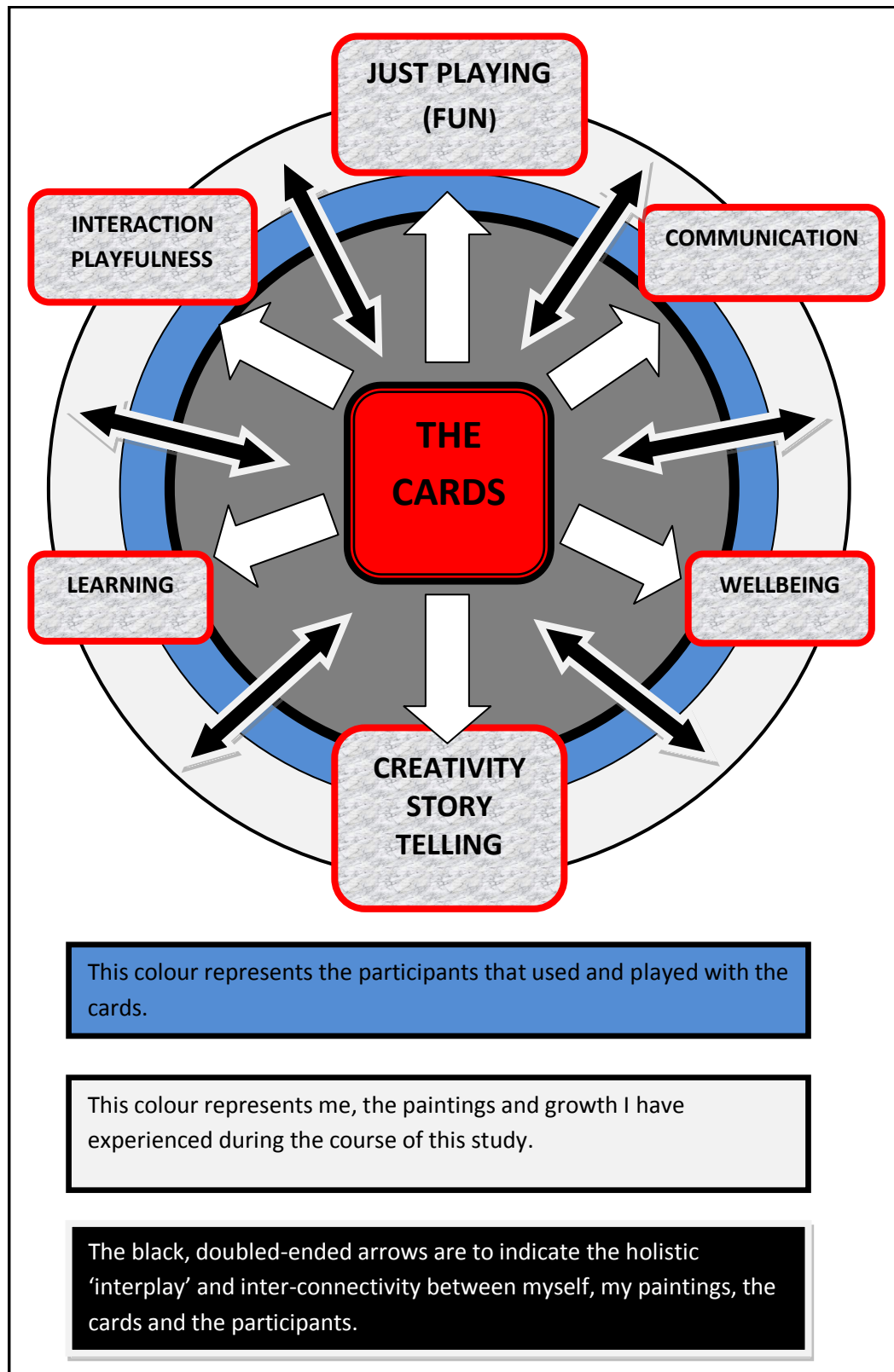


Figure 7: Diagram to demonstrate links between self, paintings, participants and cards (Scott 2010).

My research is also practice-led because it has led primarily to “new understandings about practice” and has “operational significance for my practice” (Candy, 2006:1)⁵¹. The PicTopics have “operational significance” for my practice as a teacher because they are a playful tool that aids me in my teaching, and, I believe, can aid other teacher-practitioners. They facilitate openness and communication between people such as at induction courses, and as I experienced at the artSpace Gallery. The new understandings about practice that I have had affirmed as a teacher are that teaching in a playful, affirming and creative way is beneficial to both myself and students.

I think my understanding of both these research practice bases, in their application to what I have achieved and still can achieve, further defines my belief in the holism and interconnectedness of my practice as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being.

2.5.3 Action Research

Research does not always proceed in a nice neat fashion. McNiff states that “most people experience research as a zig-zag process of continual review and re-adjustment” (McNiff, 2002: 12). The image of ‘zig-zag’ resonated with me (see Figure 8). It is from the word zig-zag that I came to understand that my action-reflection cycles do not spiral at all, but behave in a sense like ants. Ants zig-zag purposefully, always seemingly going off at a tangent, but return to the track, touch feelers with each other, and then meander on. My action research is like one little ant zig-zagging along, stopping, starting, assessing, reflecting, going off again, feelers out, implementing, observing, interacting, noticing change, re-assessing, re-designing and starting off again. I resonate with McNiff’s (2002) explanations of the cognitive steps in the planning of research and see them in the patterns of my story.

⁵¹ <http://www.creativityandcognition.com> (Accessed 06/3/2011).

Action researchers enquire into their own actions. Action research is an enquiry conducted by the self into the self (McNiff, 2002)⁵². I, the practitioner, think about my own life and work, and this involves me asking myself why I do the things I do, and why I am the way that I am.

We review our current practice, identify an aspect we want to investigate; imagine a way forward. Try it out, take stock of what happens, modify what we are doing in the light of what we have found and continue working in this new way. (We) monitor what we do, review, evaluate, modify, act upon and so on (McNiff, 2007:11)⁵³.

My action research 'ant-meander' process is an exploration that seems to have no identifiable ending. According to McNiff "there are no real endings but continual new beginnings" (2002:21)⁵⁴ and therefore, very encouragingly, there will always be new opportunities for researching transformational and creative learning and teaching skills.

To illustrate the action research 'ant-meander' (Figure 8, p.38), my research starts with the conception of the cards at the top of the diagram. It then moves into the first diamond shape, the trying out of the PicTopics at the artSpace Gallery. The next diamond shape represents the talk at the Faculty of Arts and Design Research Day, which led to an invitation to do a workshop with the DUT drama students. This is depicted as a new offshoot to the right, and is discussed in detail in Chapter Five. The model grows new 'arms' as I do more research. A new offshoot coming from this right arm could depict another workshop with students from another discipline. Eventually an interlinking diamond and circle format is created where every join connects and links back to a common starting point.

⁵² <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009)

⁵³ www.jeanmcniff.com/items.asp?id=18 (Accessed 06/10/2009)

⁵⁴ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009)

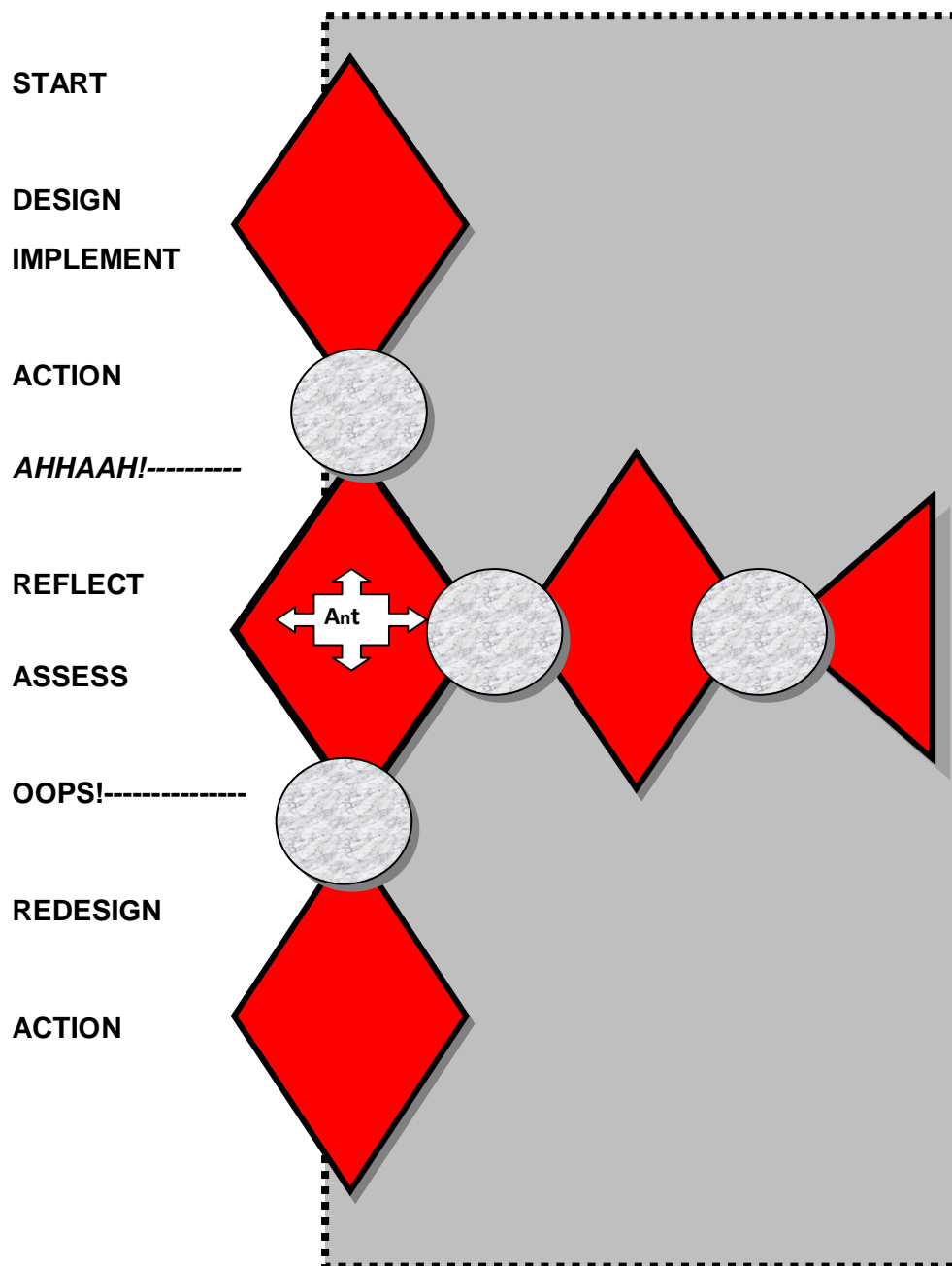


Figure 8: The Ant-Meander action research zig-zag (Scott 2010)

2.5.4 Narrative Enquiry

A particular feature of living educational theory methodologies, narrative enquiry and self-study, is the use of writing in the first person and in an

autobiographical style as I have done in this dissertation. Most quantitative and even some qualitative research tends to be written in the third person and that “creates an impression that the words are written by some unseen observer who is an arm’s length [away] and therefore objective, rather than somebody close by who is presumably subjective” (Brown,1994:105)⁵⁵. Subjectivity is a cornerstone of my research and the narrative or storytelling style includes my point of view, my emotions, my thoughts, my interpretations and reasons why I believe the story is worth telling (Chase, 2005).

Narrative enquiry is a way of understanding and enquiring into experience through “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:20).

Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008:19) write of narrative enquiry as offering researchers a way to think about and share their experiences. Hamilton *et al* refer to Dewey’s (1916, 1922, 1938) emphasis on ‘lived experience’. They recognize that the life experience of the researcher’s knowledge is revealed in the narratives and that research cannot be separated from values or context.

I agree with Chase’s description of narrative in Denzin & Lincoln, (2005: 656) as being “a retrospective meaning-making ... a shaping or ordering of past experiences; a way to understand one’s own and others’ actions and a way to comprehend events into a meaningful whole”.

Just as time, people and place are distinctive features of narrative enquiry, I, as an artist, researcher, teacher, social being and narrative enquirer see “change as part of the process of narrative enquiry” (Clandinin and Hubner (no date))⁵⁶. I have undergone tremendous personal transformation through

⁵⁵ It is interesting and significant to note that Brown was himself an industrial researcher, who insisted that all research should be written in the first person for quality and accountability (Brown, 1994).

⁵⁶ www.mofet.macam.ac.il/amtim/iun/.../NarrativeInquiry.pdf (Accessed 30/9/2011)

the lens of narrative enquiry during this research, and have sought to link the personal and the practical with social, educational, and artistic action. Continual critical self-reflection and the act of writing, have given me insight into a number of changes that have happened within me and in my practice. I have found that narrative enquiry has been, and will continue to be, a valid methodology for conducting research for me.

2.5.5 Reflective Practice

Donald Schön's (1983) theory of reflective practice provides a way of thinking about the nature of the creative-productive process. Schön described reflection as occurring mainly in two ways: reflection *in* action and reflection *on* action. Schön states that "when someone reflects in action, (he) becomes a researcher in the practice context" and does not depend on the "categories of established theory and technique", but constructs new theory (1983:68). Reflection in action facilitates the use of one's tacit knowledge or "knowing in action" that is derived from time, experience and knowledge of how to do a task (1983:54). This kind of knowing or use of tacit knowledge is something I employ in both the act of painting and teaching.

Adapting Brown's framework (1994) has also helped me to step back from my investigation in the critical reflection process, "to look for connections and build bridges between my practice and theory" (Boyer, 1990:16). Ultimately I agree with Boyer's thoughts on scholarship and researching my practice in the betterment of self and society as "engaging in original research" (Brown, 1994:16) and recognising that knowledge is "acquired through research, synthesis, through practice, (and) through teaching" (Brown, 1994:24).

2.6 What Criteria do I use to Judge the Value of my Research?

To test the validity of my claim to know my own educational development, I have adapted and borrowed from Whitehead the criteria for the living

standards of judgment he has developed (1998)⁵⁷. Whitehead suggests such claims be judged by questioning:

- 1) Are the values used to distinguish the claim to knowledge as educational knowledge clearly shown and justified?
- 2) Does the claim contain evidence of a critical accommodation of propositional contributions from the traditional disciplines of education?
- 3) Are the assertions made in the claim clearly justified?
- 4) Is there evidence of an inquiring and critical approach to an educational problem? (Whitehead, 1989:41-52)⁵⁸

One other question Whitehead suggests using in testing the validity of my claim to know my own educational development, is asking myself if my “enquiry has been carried out in a systematic way” (1989:41-52). I can see that my study has not been dependant on a deliberate and systematic enquiry, and so I have not followed this particular standard of judgment as it would have excluded the serendipitous and fortuitous nature of events that have helped develop my study and validate the use of the PicTopics. Instead, I value the systemic nature of my research, which the Encarta dictionary as “relating to or affecting a system as a whole”, and relates to Smuts’ notion of holism. (see p.29)

The criteria (pertinent phrases highlighted in grey) that I have used to judge the quality of my research are:

- 1) How have I been enquiring and critically reflective of my actions in my approach to the improvement of my practice?
- 2) How have I used my values to justify my claims to purposeful educational growth and learning in my practice as an artist, researcher and teacher, and are they clearly discernible in my research?

⁵⁷ www.resources.educ.queensu.ca/ar/sstep2/whitehea.htm (Accessed 08/07/09).

⁵⁸ www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09).

3) How can my claims and assertions to know my educational and artistic development be justified?

Critical self-reflection of all the events and happenings in this study has required that I become self-aware, able to give in-depth descriptions of my tacit understanding and observations, able to critically analyse, evaluate, and finally able to draw conclusions to support my theories and practice.

My “methodological standards of judgment” (Whitehead 2005(b):6)⁵⁹ and criteria for rigor are integral to my beliefs and my values. McNiff and Whitehead (2007:16)⁶⁰ confirms that values and beliefs are an integral part of the driving force connected to research, in that

[a]ction research begins with values and the reasons for our actions are often rooted in our values base... the things that we believe in and that drive our lives (McNiff and Whitehead, 2007:16)⁶¹.

Self-honesty – one of my values – has been integral to my action research and development of my living theories and approach to improving my practice as an artist/researcher/teacher. From Whitehead I examine all that I do in “truthfulness, rightness, and authenticity” (2008(b):108)⁶².

Whitehead (2008(b))⁶³ and McNiff (2002)⁶⁴ also speak of the importance of critical feedback in evaluating the validity of one’s research. I use these criteria, along with peer review to strengthen the comprehensibility and

⁵⁹ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/c12805.htm (Accessed 11/01/2010).

⁶⁰ www.jeanmcniff.com/items.asp?id=18 (Accessed 06/10/2009).

⁶¹ www.jeanmcniff.com/items.asp?id=18 (Accessed 06/10/2009).

⁶² <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 03/10/2009).

⁶³ <http://www.actionresearch.net> (Accessed 03/10/2009).

⁶⁴ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009).

explanations in my research. The endorsement of what I am doing by other people shows that my research has influenced what I am trying to achieve in a fair and positive way, which will validate my claims for social, educational and artistic development. I acknowledge the value of our interactions through my personal critical reflection on their critique recorded in this dissertation.

2.7 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, which I have chosen to call my 'methodological inventiveness', I have described the methodological approach I have taken in this study, and accounted for the ways in which I have validated my study.

In the following chapters, I will account for the evidence and quality of my research in the ways identified above.

CHAPTER THREE

PICTOGRAPHICS – the Origin, Rationale and Development of the PicTopic Cards

The imagery is very much released from reality.
It's not nailed down to the specifics of the words.
They're painting a picture, not telling linear stories.
David Shapiro⁶⁵

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain in brief, the history of the development of pictograms in the twentieth century, and the design elements and communication principles of my PicTopic cards in communicating a message or idea. I also explain the inspiration behind my PicTopics, including the stylistic influences, and the relevance of the style of depiction that has contributed to their design. Lastly, I write of how the PicTopics can aid in the creation of stories.

3.2 The Functional Uses of Pictographic Imagery

3.2.1 The Twentieth Century Pictogram, Origins and Information Design

The system of pictograms developed by Viennese educator and philosopher Otto Neurath (1882-1945)⁶⁶ and illustrator Gerd Arntz, (1900-1988)⁶⁷ was developed as the International System of Typographic Picture Education (ISOTYPE) (Abdulla and Hübner 2006. Lupton, 1989). Through the pictographic system of picture writing, Neurath hoped to establish a “global standard for education and to unite humanity through one ordered,

⁶⁵ thinkexist.com/searchquotation.asp?search=pictures%20as%stories&page=1 (Accessed 20/05/2012)

⁶⁶ Plato.stanford.edu/entries/neurath/#Bioske (Accessed 01/02/2013)

⁶⁷ gerdarntz.org (Accessed 01/02/2013)

universally readable language of vision” (Lupton in Margolin, 1989:145). Pictographs were developed as a way of conveying quantitative information with the intention that “pictorial signs would provide a universal bridge between symbolic, generic language and direct empirical experience” (Lupton, 1989:145).

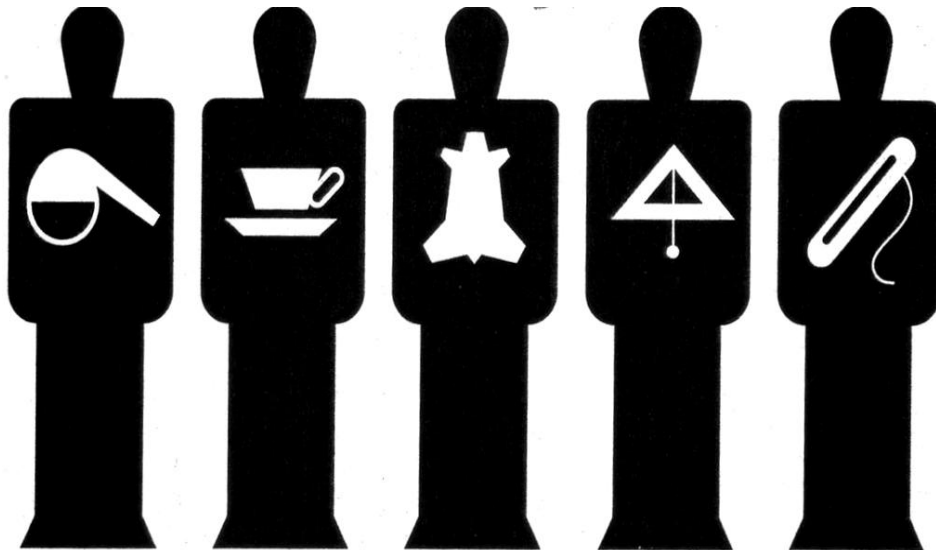


Fig 9: Pictographic image by Gerd Arntz (Abdullah & Hubner, 2006:21)

The simple, recognizable and stylized manner in which images or objects can be depicted, aids in the readability and interpretation of the pictograms.

A pictogram is a pictorial representation, ISOTYPE, an iconic sign which represents complex facts through visual carriers of meaning. Pictograms are used to warn, guide or protect and need to be immediately decipherable (Abdullah and Hubner, 2006:11).

The Modernist philosophy behind the design and function of the pictogram was one of a direct and simply rendered style to convey a message or quantitative information. The modernist approach to design in general focused on the notions of “universality, rationality and the clarity of communication through legibility, neutrality and layout that utilized

asymmetry” (Noble and Bestley, 2005:119). Pictograms as visual communication design are meant to be easily understood, and modernist design movements such as “De Stijl, Constructivism, and the Bauhaus endeavored to celebrate functionalism and rationality under the maxim that ‘form follows function’” (Noble and Bestley, 2003:119).

However Barnard believes that there can be “no neutral, objective conveying of a message” and senders and receivers of a message or sign interpret it according to cultural codes/ norms or context (2005:19). This viewpoint, echoed by Noble and Bestley, contends that design communication is seen as “integral to contemporary culture and that signs are read by audiences from particular cultural perspectives” (2005:121). Similar sentiments are echoed by Mirzoeff (cited by Rose), who notes that post-modernism reflects an “ocularcentric” culture (2001:8) because knowledge about the world is increasingly articulated visually and we interact more and more with totally constructed experiences.

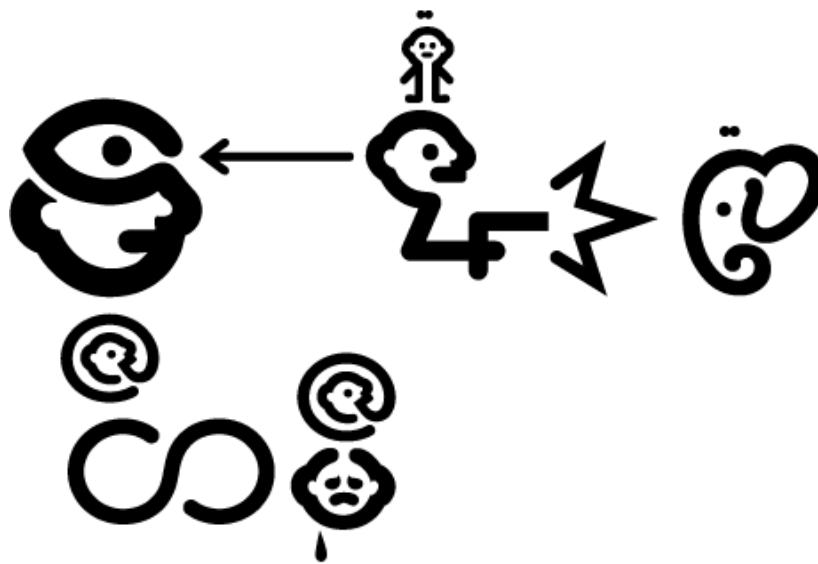
3.2.2 Pictograms for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

The pictographic depiction of information used in information signage, and way-finding is also used in other specialist areas. AAC is an umbrella term that encompasses communication methods used to supplement or replace speech or alliterate writing disabilities⁶⁸. For example pictographic imagery is used for special educational needs, for people with disabilities, such as autism and cerebral palsy, and in the pharmaceutical industry. Pharmaceutical industries use this pictorial language as a way to demonstrate effectively ‘when and how’ to take medication, and it is especially useful to navigate language barriers and low literacy levels (see Figure12, p.49. Dowse and Ehlers 2001)⁶⁹. Another augmented

⁶⁸ <http://aac.unl.edu> (Accessed 03/01/2012)

⁶⁹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11687321> (Accessed 5/0112)

communication system is the Elephant's Memory⁷⁰, a pictorial language consisting of more than a hundred and fifty combinable graphic elements. Timothy Ingen Housz (1994/1996)⁷¹ developed this writing system, which is oriented primarily towards children, as an explorational tool enabling new approaches to the concept of language (see Figure 10). He states the purpose of the Elephant's Memory pictograms as to “develop a visual link between the members of a community, and provide an original material for families and educators to encourage dialogue and creativity”⁷².



“Seeing elephants shot by men makes me cry”

Fig 10: The Elephant's Memory Timothy Ingen Housz⁷³

⁷⁰ www.khm.de/~timot/PageElephant.html (Accessed 05/01/2012)

⁷¹ www.khm.de/~timot/PageElephant.html (Accessed 05/01/2012)

⁷² www.khm.de/~timot/PageElephant.html (Accessed 05/01/2012)

⁷³ www.khm.de/~timot/Sentences.html (Accessed 05/01/2012)



Fig 11: DOT pictograms. Designers Roger Cook, Dan Shanosky.⁷⁴

3.3 The Rationale behind My PicTopic Cards

3.3.1 Inspiration

Visual semiotics and the understanding of how meaning is transferred between the sign (image) and the receiver (person) initially prompted my interest in the idea of using images to create stories (Noble and Bestley 2005). When I first started this study the design work of Sharon Spencer who created a “graphic language of Englishness” inspired me (Noble and Bestley 2005:102) (see Figure 13). It was in fact Spencer’s initial images mimicking the ‘QUERTY’ layout of a computer keyboard that piqued my interest (Noble and Bestley, 2005). Her concept of combining “images to build new signs, just as words are combined to form sentences” got me visualizing the idea of storytelling with images (Noble and Bestley 2005:106). I started off by drawing, collecting and collating images in the method of Spencer that could depict quintessential South African-ness, but soon realized that something was not working for me, something in my conceptualization was lacking. I realized that my idea needed ‘ordinariness’ and familiarity, it needed

⁷⁴ <http://www.aiga.org/symbol-signs/> (Accessed 05/01/2012)

conventional images similar to the everyday pictographic images that are used in street signs and information graphics (Barnard 2005).



Fig 12: Pharmaceutical pictograms ⁷⁵

⁷⁵ <http://www.eprints.ru.ac.za/614/01/pharmaceutical-pictograms> (Accessed 05/01/2012)

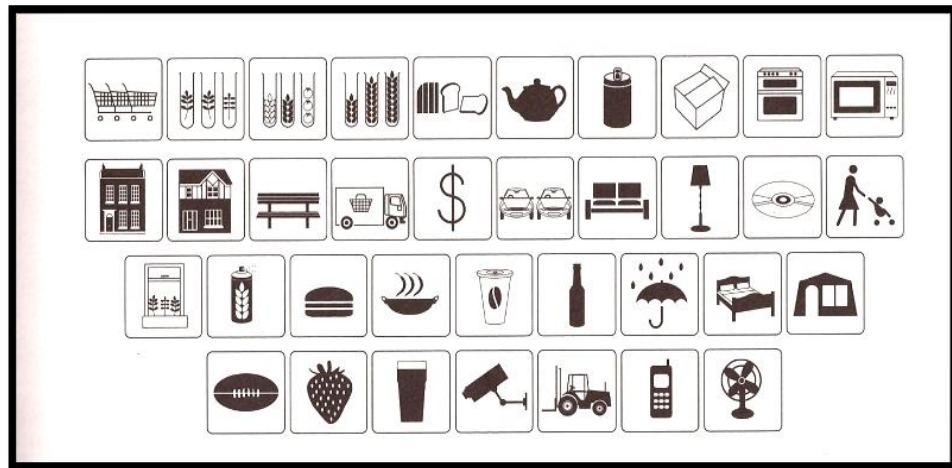


Fig 13: Pictograms by Sharon Spencer (Nobel & Bestley, 2005:111)

I based my new directions on the work of Henry Dreyfuss, (1984), images from the International System of Typographic Picture Education (ISOTYPE) and the American Department of Transport (DOT) style of pictographic imagery (Abdulla and Hübner 2006). The DOT style of pictographic images is mostly used for information design. Examples of this include; the silhouetted image of an airplane to direct one to the airport or the triangular warning sign at the roadside depicting a man digging. I have borrowed from the DOT imagery because they are in the public domain, and can be used by anyone for any purpose, without licensing (see Figure11, p.48).

Pictographic images, when expressly used for information design and when seen as a singular image, for example the image of an airplane on a directional highway sign, is intended to be unemotional, neutral and factual (Lupton in Margolin, 1989:148). No other association is intended to be attached to the image when seeing the sign in that context – it is what it is and its function is solely to indicate the way to an airport. However I think it is fair to say that people in urban areas quickly become acculturated to the reading of pictographic images. Yet, it must not be forgotten that the culture, background and education of the reader, will have a bearing on how the sign

is read. The reading of the image is seen as an “active process, not a one way process with a fixed meaning” (Crow, 2003:36). It is this ‘active process’ in the reading of the PicTopic images, and that people interpret them in accordance with their own experiences, that I believe, contributes to the usefulness of the cards.

3.3.2 Development

I have used a number of designs similar to the images in Figure13 as well as creating my own designs in a similar style to the DOT graphics. The graphic style of depiction of my PicTopics is simplified, yet naturalistic/figurative, conveying the essence of shape and form from the real, and consists of a one colour silhouette. I initially developed a set of over 100 images, but pared them down to keep the pack concise⁷⁶. I silk screened images onto card and then cut them up individually, before I hired and worked with a design student to formalize them. The cards are printed in the negative too, that is, the image is printed in black onto a white background or the reverse, where background is printed in black leaving the image in white. There are no facial features or expressive renderings of the various parts of the body or object. I have maintained a stylistic consistency in the drawing of objects and figures, using the same line weight and boldness of visual form.

3.4 Reading the Cards

Visual aids such as pictograms stimulate the imagination and offer an alternate means of recalling instructions without involving the written word. Research on visual graphics shows that memory systems in the brain favour visual storage, so a graphic message is recalled more effectively than a heard or read one (Dowse and Ehlers, 2004:688)⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ See Appendix D for the set of PicTopics

⁷⁷ [http://eprints.ru.ac.za/137/1/sajsci_v100_n11_a35\[1\]](http://eprints.ru.ac.za/137/1/sajsci_v100_n11_a35[1]) (Accessed 23/09/ 2009)

This quote eloquently sums up for me the value of the PicTopics. The visual images – my PicTopic pictographs – create a short cut for the story teller, so that the story teller is not hindered by the writer's explanations on a page.

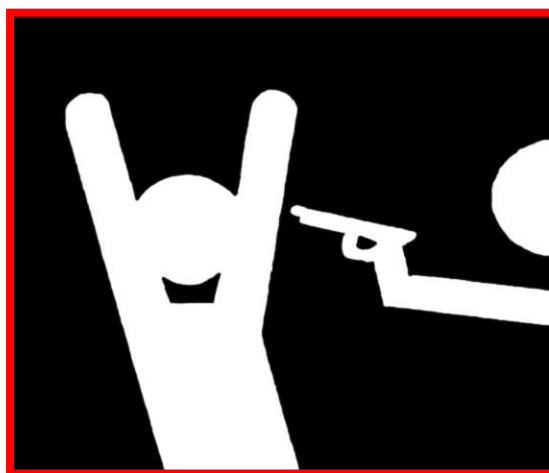


Figure 14: Mugging PicTopic (Scott 2009)

The PicTopics aid the recall of the association that the images prompt, and it is this understanding that validates the multitude of interpretations by the various participants of this study. It is also the reason why people's various interpretations of the cards were always 'right', relevant and meaningful to me. The stories and interpretations of the PicTopic images in the creation of their stories were deeply contextual. This is because visual language is "not transparent and universally understood": people read visual signs from their own socio-cultural perspectives (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996:3). I understand that there are conditions that influence how meaning is made when reading a visual sign, in this case the PicTopics. The influencing conditions are "surroundings, knowledge, culture, social circumstances" (Abdullah and Hübner, 2006).

Readers are required to recognize the abstractions and create their own meaning and narrative or story. The roadwork warning sign, when placed in conjunction with other PicTopics, for example, such as an image of a church,

can create a narrative. The user can imbue the PicTopics with personal meaning from his or her, social, historical and cultural perspective. The PicTopics become prompts or triggers in the creation of a story and could give a researcher insight into how people can create associations. I, for example, could interpret the two PicTopic pictographic images pictured below as: “Oh is it Saturday?” because of the vast number of HIV & AIDS related funerals that take place over the weekend. I acknowledge others might well interpret them differently (see Figure 15).

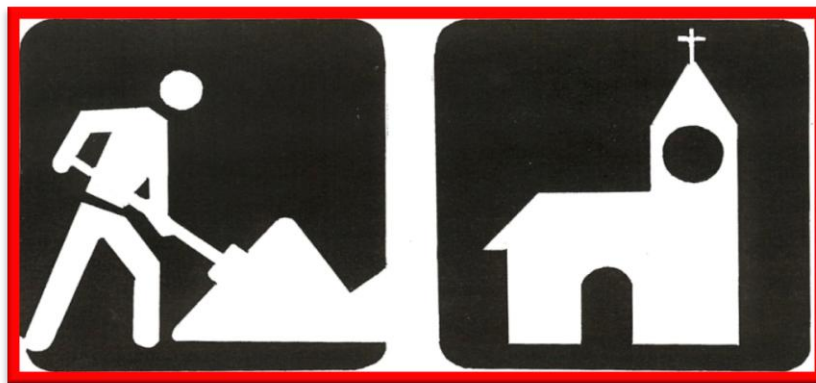


Figure 15: Saturday (Scott 2010)

Take a pictographic image out of its functional situation, (for example, that of signage and information design) and put it with a number of other images portrayed in the same style of depiction and a new message or story can be created. The PicTopic images placed in a vertical sequence in Figure 16 (p.54) are a narrative I have created as an example of how to use this type of visual voice. This story is a synopsis or précis of an airplane hijacking that ended in disaster and was reported on television news services.



Figure16: Vertical Story (Scott 2009).

The PicTopics can function as visual clues to aid the re-construction of experiences. The participants in this study were encouraged to use the PicTopics to create their own meaning in their stories. The PicTopics could be deemed as prompts, or “cultural probes” (Gaver, Dunne and Pacenti, 1991:21). Gaver, et al coined this term to “denote a collection of evocative tasks meant to elicit inspirational responses from people” (1991:21). I have used these ‘cultural probes’ as a means to gather social stories in an informal and playful way.

The fact that the PicTopics I have chosen for this study are unaccompanied by verbal text is intentional, because, as Kress and van Leeuwen point out, “verbal texts or commentaries impose modes of control over meaning” (1996:24) and I am interested in finding alternate ways that allow individuals to make their own meaning from these visual images.

3.5 Concluding Notes

In my use of the PicTopics, I have observed their usefulness as a means of gathering stories because most people find them intelligible and enjoy imbuing them with their own meaning. I think this is because in urban environments we are surrounded by this simple style of representation. We see it in road signage, on bill-boards and magazines. People are able to generate tales from using the PicTopics because of the playfulness of the act. It is a game where no PicTopic image can be interpreted wrongly. Any participant’s interpretation of a symbol or image is just as pertinent as anyone else’s. The act of playing or ‘messaging around’ can generate spontaneous ideas and lead to creativity. Literally they spark the imagination – the PicTopics act as prompts and trigger the imagination.

I have drawn on an acknowledged form of depiction and enjoyed using it to engage with a variety of people in our society in a light hearted and entertaining manner.

CHAPTER FOUR

ARTSPACE GALLERY - Storytelling

In the end all we have...
are stories and methods of finding and using those stories.
Roger C. Shank⁷⁸

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is about the stories people told at the artSpace Gallery. This is a narrative description of the first time I invited people to ‘play’ with the PicTopic cards. The exhibition and interactions were filmed and can be viewed on the DVD provided titled Video 1: ‘Masterful Conversations’.

4.2 artSpace Gallery

This event at the artSpace gallery shows how this action research study (McNiff, 2002)⁷⁹ is practice-led (Schön, 1983; Candy, 2006)⁸⁰, and generates living educational theory aimed at “improving my practice and generating educational knowledge” as teacher, researcher and visual activist (Whitehead, 2008:103(b))⁸¹.

⁷⁸ Tell Me A Story. www.storyteller.net/articles/160 (Accessed 10/01/2012)

⁷⁹ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009).

⁸⁰ <http://www.creativityandcognition.com> (Accessed 06/3/2011).

⁸¹ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/c12805.htm (Accessed 11 January 2010).

4.3 Methods and Methodology

In explanation of the methods I used to gather my data for this chapter, I refer to action reflection cycles (McNiff, 2002)⁸² or my ant-meander. I have identified what I want to investigate and have “imagin(ed) a way forward” (McNiff, 2002:11⁸³). My way forward in this instance was to try out the PicTopics in a public or social space. This involved observing people playing with the PicTopics and documenting the stories they created. In explaining the methodology of my actions I ask myself questions (as sub-headings, referred to in Chapter Three, section 2.3) and then give details of what occurred. In the evaluation of data, the stories, which become my evidence, are a part of the ‘ahhaah!’ in my ant-meander (see Figure 8). The analysis and evaluation of data also takes the form of narrative inquiry because research cannot be separated from values or context (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008). I value the lived experiences of the storytellers as they impart authenticity and plausibility of the PicTopics to the narrative of my learning.

I understand that my “actions embody (my) learning and (my) learning is informed by my reflections on my actions” (McNiff, 2002:11)⁸⁴. In turn, critical reflection of the event as a whole will show my educational influence and justify the claims I make about the values I attach to the PicTopic cards and my practice. By making my research public at the artSpace Gallery, I am in part showing the authenticity of my research (McNiff, 2002⁸⁵; Whitehead, 2008(c))⁸⁶ and validating my ideas.

⁸² <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009).

⁸³ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009).

⁸⁴ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009).

⁸⁵ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009).

⁸⁶ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8 May 2009).

4.4 What did I do and what happened?

I first tried the PicTopics out at the artSpace Gallery in Durban, in April, 2009. I put up an exhibition of a small body of my paintings and painted masonite shapes, which I do not discuss here as they are not relevant to my dissertation. I held this exhibition because I wanted a public forum in which to invite people to play with the PicTopics; to find out if the pictographic images were readable, intelligible and recognizable. I also wanted to know if the PicTopics were user-friendly as creative prompts to tell stories, any stories, be they anecdotal, fictitious, playful or relating to social factors.

I publicly invited the audience at the exhibition to be a part of the experience. They were informed that they, the exhibition viewers, were part of my data gathering experiment. I filmed the exhibition so that I would have a visual record of the stories told on the evening, to show the “lived reality of the evidential base of knowledge claims” (Whitehead, 2005:np(a))⁸⁷. On the video I can be seen inviting the public to experiment with the PicTopic cards. I explained the purpose of my exhibition and asked the public to engage openly with the videographer and myself. Those who stayed and participated did so out of free will, and perhaps some curiosity.

I had a trestle table set up with two sets of cards placed randomly on the surface. I placed a written invitation on the trestle, inviting the public to use the PicTopics to create and tell stories to myself and videographer. I also had a blank paged journal with a pen on the trestle for people to write and draw in. Behind the trestle table on a mounted board I had placed cut-out masonite figures in the universal simplified shapes used to depict male and female ablution facilities. A variety of speech and thought bubbles surrounded the figures with PicTopics already stuck on them. I had created

⁸⁷ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/jwedth.htm (Accessed 6 May 2011)

my own stories on the boards as an indicator of how the PicTopic cards could be used

Vinyl lettering on the board read “What are your thoughts” and, “Tell me a story”, along with an artist’s statement inviting participants to co-create and make stories, and explaining the reasons why their tales were important to me (see Figure17).

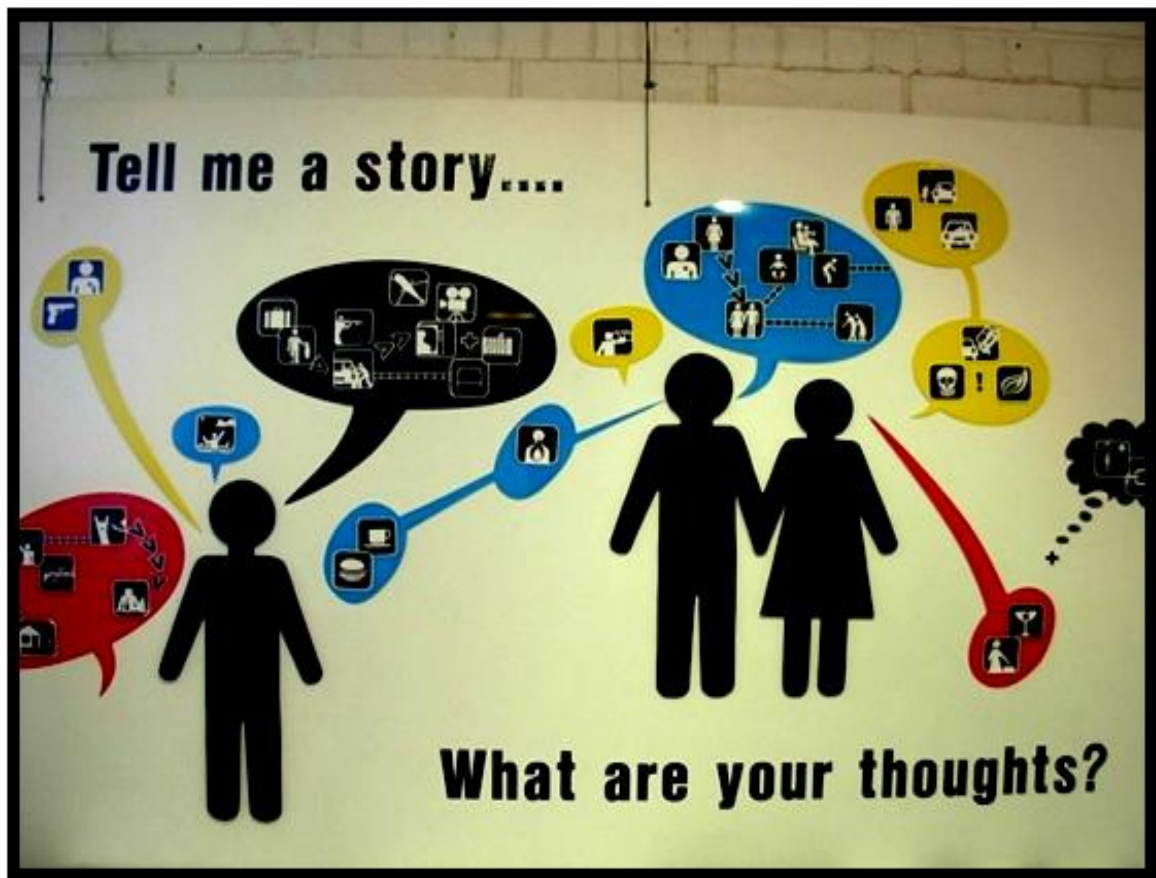


Figure17: Cut outs and speech bubbles used to entice the public to play with the PicTopics. (Scott 2009)

4.5 The Stories Told that Evening.

I observed that by inviting the audience to play with the PicTopics, that people became communicative and engaged with other people around them. In the clip filmed at the artSpace Gallery, the viewer can see the interaction

between individuals: there is camaraderie and a relaxed atmosphere. I am aware that a number of contributing factors should be included, such as that it was at an art gallery and generally speaking, gallery openings are social events and fun to be at. Alcohol, the social lubricant, also contributes to a relaxed and un-inhibiting atmosphere.

However, no matter why or how people might have felt relaxed enough to want to participate, I was genuinely amazed at the variety and types of stories told on that April evening. There were everyday stories of rushing to catch taxis (going to work – forever late), statements about difference (science and fashion), spiritual declarations (peace, hope, joy and material things) and genuinely humorous tales, playful and sometimes silly, but saying so much about the teller of each tale.

I employed the cards as a part of the methodology to gather tales, and yet they are also evidence. The cards, when placed in some sort of sequential order become a kind of “pictorial shorthand” (Kolars, 1969:350). The narratives told and captured on film are evidence that validate my belief that the PicTopics can be used as creative prompts and can help in the development of narrative.

The stories below are selected from sixteen of the stories shown on the clip Video 1: ‘Masterful Conversations’ that accompany this text⁸⁸.

⁸⁸ See appendix A

Story One: Heart Broken

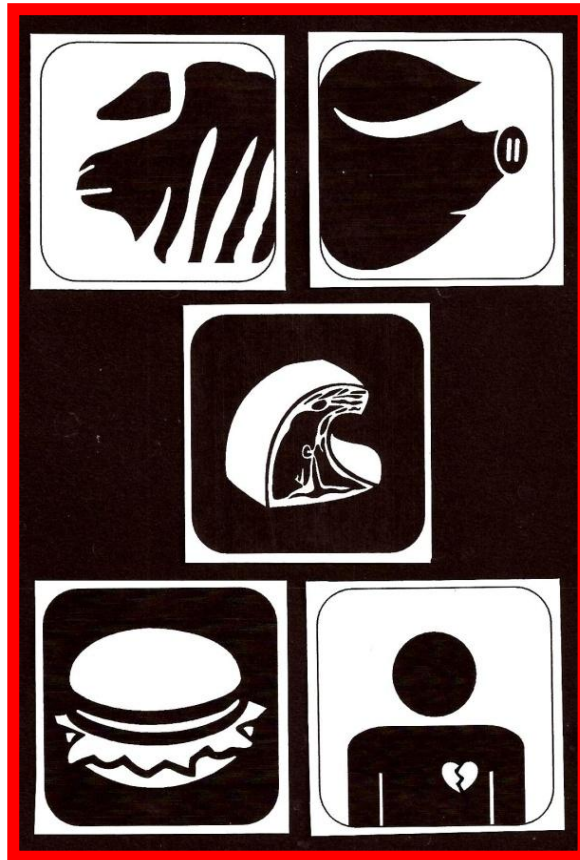


Fig 18: Heart Broken, cards chosen by participant (2009)

One of the first interactions I had with the public was with a young girl. She chose PicTopics with the pictographic representations of a sheep, pig, hamburger, steak and the image of a person with a broken heart. She says on film that the man is heartbroken because the sheep is being put into the hamburger to be eaten. Off camera, she told me she was vegetarian, lived on a farm and that the thought of killing animals for food left her heartbroken (see Figure 18).

Story Two: A equals D

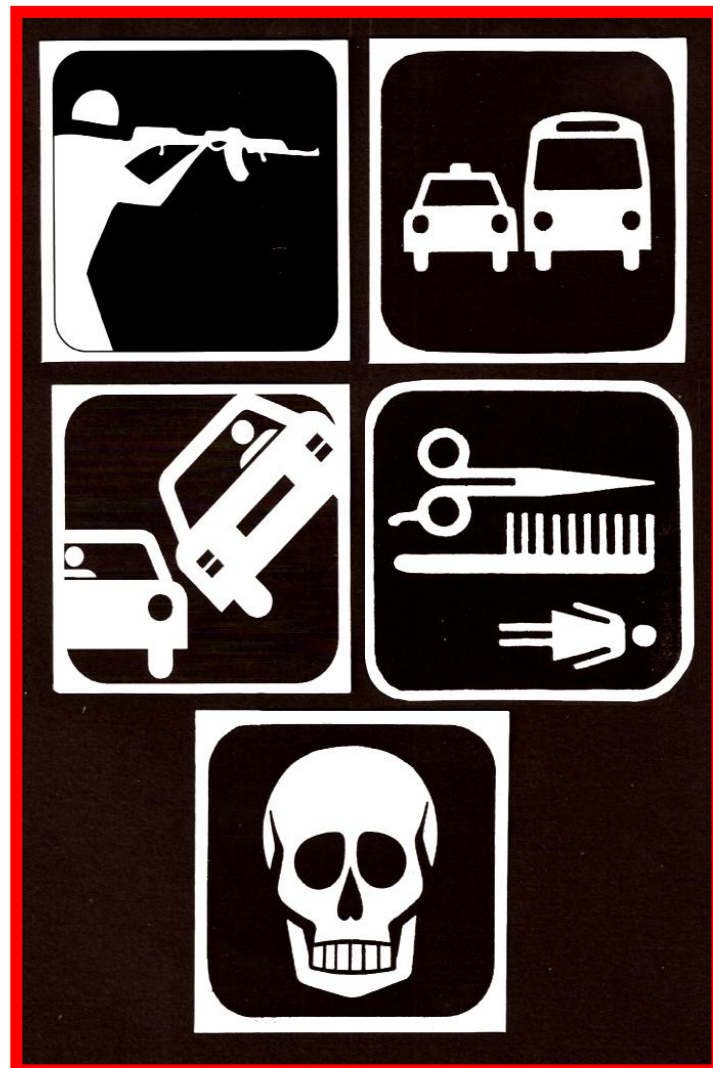


Fig 19: A equals D, cards chosen by participant.(2009)

A young boy chose PicTopic images of a man shooting a rifle, a car and bus alongside each other; a card depicting an accident between two vehicles, a card with the barber shop images of a pair of scissors, a comb and a female figure, and lastly one with the image of a skull on it. He pointed at the PicTopics one by one and explained excitedly “Here is a gun, he shot it and the taxi fell over. Here is another picture of it” (pointing to the accident scene). He then pointed to the barber shop images and skull exclaiming,

“This equals death”. When you watch the film you see that the boy had turned the barbershop card on its side. This causes the sharp scissors to be pointing to the right. He had used the scissors as a directional indicator or as a conjunction to point directly to the skull as the symbol for death and the consequences of the actions of the shooter (see Figure 19).

Story Three: Peace, Hope and Joy

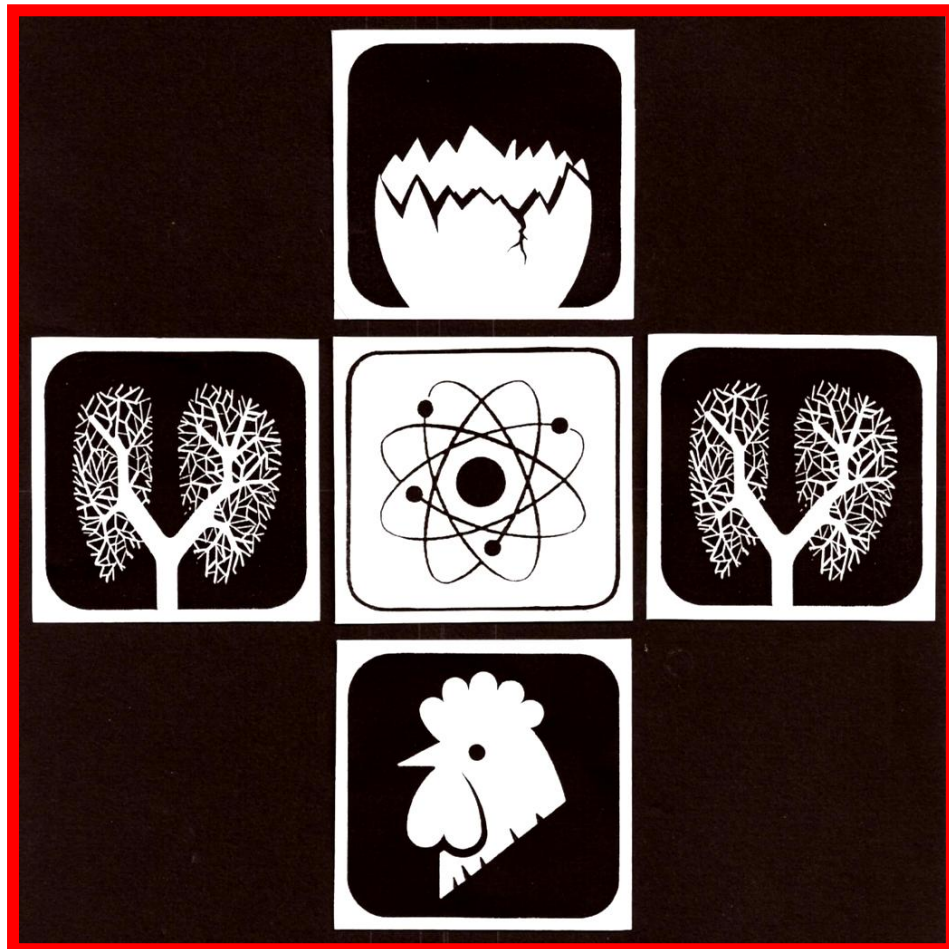


Figure20: Peace, Hope and Joy, cards chosen by participant (2009)

I was interested in the way the participant laid out the five PicTopics in the figure of a cross. Horizontally she used two identical cards of lungs which she saw as trees. The other three cards which she used vertically were of a broken egg shell, a pictographic interpretation of an atom with circulating

electrons, and a rooster. Gesturing at the lung/tree images she said they represented “peace” that both the broken egg and rooster represented “hope” and the atom with circulating electrons represented “joy” (see Figure 20).

Story Four: ‘Kooked’ Man



Figure 21: ‘Kooked’ Man, cards chosen by participant (2009)

This layout was collaboration between two participants. Three PicTopics were laid directly one above the other. The bottom card was of a steering wheel used to represent a gas cooker or burner; the PicTopic above it

depicted a man with internal flames and the apex card was of a pill. I was not privy to the discussion between the two participants but understood the inference to the taking of recreational drugs. The layout and imbuing of the PicTopic images with the participants' own meanings was of value to me (see Figure 21).

Story Five: Science and Fashion

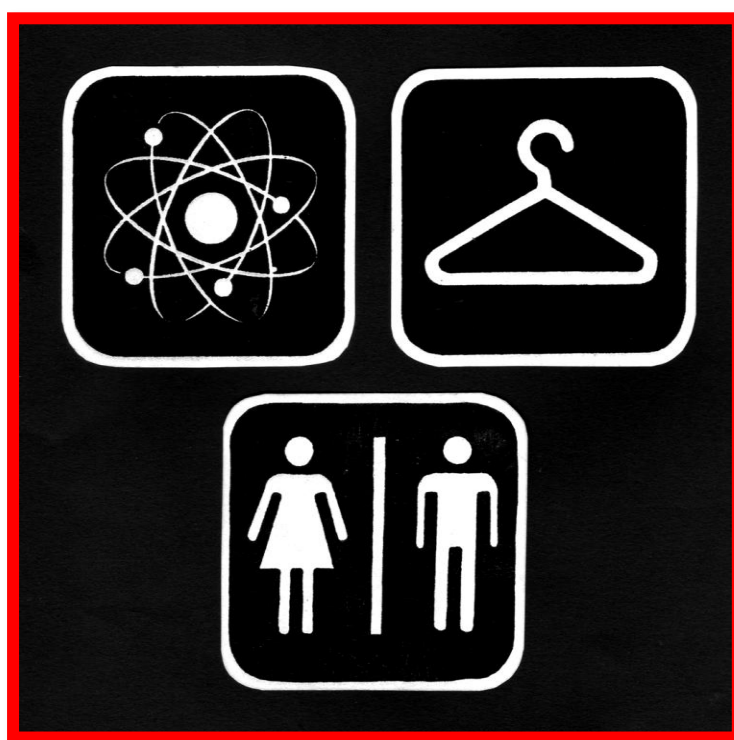


Figure 22: Science and Fashion, cards chosen by participant (2009)

This narrative was written and roughly drawn up in the journal provided. The participant did not want to talk on camera but explained that he taught science and had a love for fashion. He used the PicTopics of a coat hanger and of the atom as an analogy for that which some people could see as opposites, but which he sees as the kind of opposites that go on both sides of the coin. This was his way of describing how two contrasting aspects of his personality could be equated to hard science and frivolity, both practical and

flamboyant. He spoke of what is considered 'normal', and that 'opposites' such as male and female are not a norm in his world view (see Figure 22).

Other stories included a participant choosing two PicTopic cards, that of a leaf or single flame and of a burning man. About her selection she exclaimed to me "Punani is eternal life" (see Figure 23). Another person chose three PicTopics representing stages in his life. His past was represented by the card with the image of a pill on it, his present was of a hair salon / barber image to indicate that he was a hairdresser and his future was represented by the image of an airplane (see Figure 24, p.67). There was a teenage tale of shopping and getting "married on the moon" by two young girls, a hand-drawn story of wishing for love, a story about taxi worries and being late for work. They were all what I might term 'small stories', yet all gem-like in their value to me.



Figure 23: 'Punani' is Eternal Life, cards chosen by participant (2009)

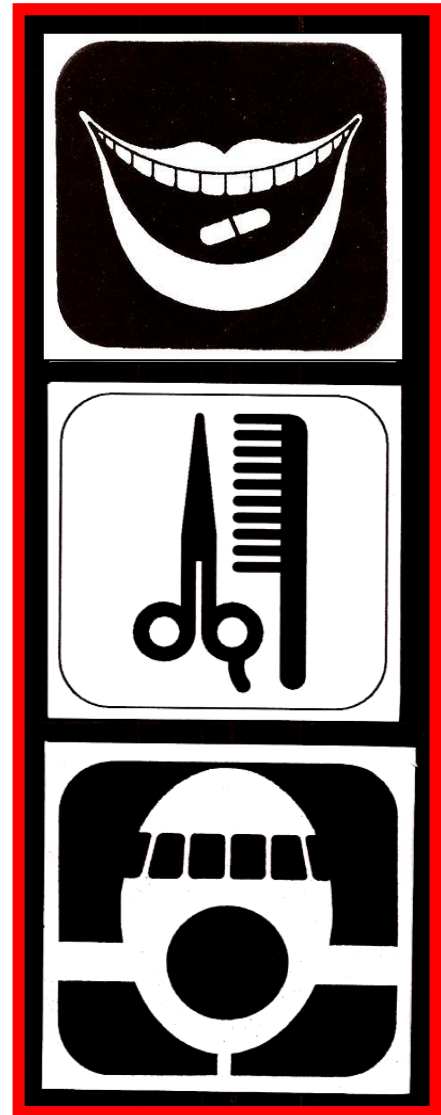


Figure 24: Future cards, chosen by participant (2009)

4.6 Critical Reflections and the Evaluation- What did I Learn? What did this Mean to me?

Labov and Waletzky (cited in Chase, 2005:665), suggests that oral narratives of everyday experiences are as important as full-fledged life histories, written narratives and literary narratives. They identify five features of “rounded” and “full figured” oral narratives:

- ‘orientation’ - which informs listeners about the actors in the scenario, the time, place and situation

- 'complication' - the action part of the narrative
- 'evaluation' - the point of the story
- 'resolution' - the result of the action
- 'coda' which returns the listener to the current moment.

When I was recording these narratives at the artSpace Gallery, I realized that these components were not always present in a defined manner. It appeared to me that the stories told were *précis*-like. The card prompts encouraged the telling of the most pertinent parts of a story, a skeleton that needed to be fleshed out. I suspected that the setting in the gallery was not conducive to elaboration and detail, which was not something that I could 'fix'. This fleshing out in the creation of narratives only became a cohesive reality in the workshop with the drama students, which is presented and analyzed in Chapter Five.

The filmed documentation of the event at the artSpace Gallery was valuable as a primary resource and provided a "first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning (my) topic under investigation"⁸⁹. It provided evidence that the PicTopics could function as creative prompts. That evening encouraged me to believe my assumptions that the cards could be used to trigger the associations in memory, and that prompting the imagination in the creation of stories was worth exploring further. When I watched the video I could see that the PicTopics were successful at getting people to interact with each other; to engage, confer and collaborate, when normally they might not have done so. That evening fostered a new assumption that the PicTopics could be useful in other social settings as an icebreaker between people and as possible creative prompts in an educational environment.

⁸⁹ www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/.../primarysources.html (Accessed 05/01/2012)

In the film made that evening, one can see people using the PicTopic cards to create stories. This constitutes evidence that the PicTopic cards can be used to prompt story telling. Further, the documentary record showed that:

- people were willing to participate;
- people had fun telling their stories;
- the cards can generate or communicate a message;
- the cards act as triggers and help the viewer to create associations and form ideas;
- the cards function as a 'visual voice';
- the majority of the stories told were about day-to-day to realities, what I term 'daily narratives' reflecting what is at the fore of peoples' minds;
- the cards act as triggers and help the viewer create associations and form ideas in aiding the telling of the tale.

One of my original questions was: "What is the role of the PicTopic cards chosen in this study and their pertinence in the role of generating or communicating a message?" The online Encarta Dictionary defines "message" is interpreted in three ways: that of communication, errand and meaning: **Communication** "in speech, writing or signals, usually brief, often left for a recipient that cannot be contacted directly at the time"; **Errand**, the mission of the messenger" and **Meaning**, "a lesson, moral, or important idea communicated for example in a work of art".⁹⁰

What became apparent upon watching and re-watching the video was that two interpretations of message; 'errand' and 'meaning' were present.

⁹⁰ www.dictionarylink.com/ (Accessed 01/11/2010)

The '**errand**' or '**mission**' of the storyteller of 'Peace, Hope and Joy' was to me, a profound reminder of how one can choose to live one's life and the 'moral' of the story is one of purposeful positiveness.

'Science and Fashion' is a strong **meaning**/moral statement about difference and a command by the teller to see through his eyes.

'Heart Broken's message/**mission** was one of awareness and I saw her story as being reflective of her values.

'A equals D' is a horror story. It is about **meaning** and is a horror story because this was a youth's story and yet he knew it so well. It was 'normal' to him; he took pride in telling it. The fact that he was so aware of instances of this type was a reminder how hard it is to shield and protect our young. His story made me sad.

'Kooked Man' is about **meaning** and it reminded me of the 'normalness' in perception of the taking of drugs and the prevalence of it in our society.

4.7 What does this tell me about my Practice? How does my Practice Generate my Theory?

The evening at the artSpace Gallery validated my theory that the PicTopic pictographic cards

- can be key elements in creating dialogue between people who do not know each other;
- can prompt creative responses;
- aid in the creation of narratives, admittedly not fully fledged beginning to end type stories, but certainly the germ of daily narratives.

- can aid in the feeling of well-being and well-becoming (Huxtable, 2009:216)⁹¹.

The visual evidence shows the willingness of people that evening to play with the PicTopics because the exercise was playful. The PicTopics are a subconscious reminder of a game and games are just that, for fun, for pleasure, for a way to connect with one another

4.8 Concluding notes

At this stage I was not able to get feedback on what other images could be added to the set of PicTopics to aid greater conceptual creativity for participants. Nor could I validate whether the PicTopics could be used as prompts in the development of 'whole' stories, that is, with beginnings, middles and ends. I was curious to discover whether the PicTopics could be used as creative prompts in an educational setting such as a tertiary institution or in junior schools.

An opportunity to try out the PicTopics in an educational institution came soon after the gallery happening. In Chapter Five I write of a workshop with Drama students at the Durban University of Technology. At this workshop I was given the opportunity to have these students use the PicTopics in a way that astounded and delighted me, validated my values and beliefs, and allowed me to gain further insight into my own practice.

⁹¹ ejolts.net/node/139 (Accessed 05/02/2010).

CHAPTER FIVE

AT PLAY WITH THE DRAMA STUDENTS

Words of power, whether spoken or written, have one thing in common:
We remember them;
and often we remember spoken words better than written ones -
the words of prayers, curses, proverbs and names of people and places,
the words,
to use that wonderful phrase,
which we learn by heart.
J. Edward Chamberlain (1998:11)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I evaluate and validate the ways that the PicTopics worked in an educational setting, and in ‘what ways they evoked a creative response’ and what I learned in support of my values and betterment of my practice. In so doing I exemplify how I am using the living educational theory methodologies of Jack Whitehead “to improve my practice as a life-affirming practitioner who values in others their individual dynamic and creative energy” (2008(a):14)⁹². I am also looking for evidence of the influence of visual imagery as an effective teaching strategy⁹³, and evidence that ‘playing’ supports learning:

In sum: Play = Learning. As children move from the sandbox to the boardroom, play should be the cornerstone of their education. The research is clear: playful pedagogy supports social-

⁹² <http://www.actionresearch.net> (Accessed 03/10/2009).

⁹³ <http://www.netc.org/focus/strategies/nonl.php> (Accessed 10/01/2012)

emotional and academic strengths while instilling a love of learning (Hirsh-Pasek & Michnick Golinkoff, 2008:4)⁹⁴.

To validate my belief in the PicTopics as a transformative and creative teaching tool, I will critically reflect to what extent these PicTopics, have enabled the drama students to draw upon, and successfully demonstrate their learning.

My naturally evolving question following my 'social influence' PicTopic experience at the artSpace Gallery in 2009, was "Could my PicTopics be used as creative educational prompts in a higher education institution?" My question was answered in 2009.

In June, 2009, at DUT's Faculty of Arts and Design research conference, I showed the filmed footage of people playing with the PicTopics at the artSpace gallery and explained my belief that the PicTopics could be used in different educational situations. I related that the PicTopics could be used by new students to get to know each at induction courses, for creative projects with design students, for the development of creative writing skills and spoke of their potential to be use as a tool for counselling.

One of the outcomes of this 'show and tell' resulted in Lloyd O'Connor a lecturer in the Drama Department of the Durban University of Technology inviting me to conduct a workshop using the PicTopics with the second year drama students, which I facilitated two months later, in August 2009.

In this chapter, I record the events of that workshop, and how the workshop with the drama students led to my realising the higher educational potential of my PicTopics.

⁹⁴ www.child-encyclopedia.com/.../Hirsh-Pasek-Golinkoff-ANGxp.pdf (Accessed 09/01/2012)

5.2 The Pertinence of Playing and Learning

The concept of ‘interplay’ (Nimkulrat, 2007)⁹⁵ in my teaching is about being able to have a connection between imparting what I know in a manner that is playful, uplifting and informative, and using the interconnectivity between the students and myself as an artist, researcher and teacher.

I am far more receptive to learning when I enjoy what I am doing. I believe creativity to be a form of “self-actualisation” (Maslow, 1999:153) and hence hold the value of playing and creativity most dear. I am not claiming that students suddenly become proficient in a subject just because I am ‘nice to them’, but I am aware that how well someone does in a project, is often proportional to how excited, receptive and motivated they are. It is my lived experience that being encouraging, affirming and finding ‘fun’ ways to teach in the class room, is a part in a myriad of factors contributing to creativity and well-being.

5.3 What is my Educational Aim in this Chapter?

Because I am not a drama lecturer, it was not my aim to establish the standard of the students’ performances as dramatic art. To my educational and non-drama specialist sensibilities, all the storied performances by the drama students were creative and wonderful. For a dramatic art perspective, I have relied on the comments of the drama teacher, Lloyd O’Connor, to provide an evaluation of the PicTopics as a teaching tool to evoke a creative dramatic art response.

In this chapter, I aim to show

- The value of the PicTopics as triggers that can be used to prompt creative responses in an educational setting.

⁹⁵ jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/58/83 (Accessed 12/02/2010)

- How ‘playing’ can unlock and / or release tacit knowledge.

5.4 What Research Methodologies and Methods did I use?

The methodological lenses through which I conducted this workshop were living educational theories methodologies (Whitehead 1988)⁹⁶, action research (McNiff 2002)⁹⁷ and narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin 1999).

The analysis and evaluation of my data also takes the form of narrative inquiry because research cannot be separated from values or context (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008). Connelly and Clandinin (1999) summarise the issue as follows:

Narrative researchers are concerned with the representation of experience, causality, temporality and the difference between the experience of time and the telling of time, narrative form, integrity of the whole in a research document, the invitational quality of a research text, its authenticity, adequacy and plausibility. Currently in narrative inquiry, it is important for each researcher to set forth the criteria that govern the study and by which it may be judged (1999:139).

For a methodological tool, I refer to Whitehead and McNiff’s action research planner that I introduced in Chapter Two as a way to interrogate my practice. They suggest the following:

- Why do I want to research this issue?
- What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am interested in this issue?
- What can I do? What will I do?
- What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am having an influence?
- How can I explain that influence?

⁹⁶ www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09).

⁹⁷ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009)

- How can I ensure that any judgments I might make are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How will I change my practice in the light of my evaluation?

(Whitehead, J cited in McNiff, 2002:14)⁹⁸

From these prompting questions I asked myself more specific questions:

- How do I know that these visual prompts ‘work’ and how will I evaluate the effectiveness of the PicTopics as a teaching tool?
- In what ways will these PicTopic visual prompts ‘work’ in a different educational setting?
- In what ways will the PicTopics evoke a creative response to the task at hand?
- What will I learn from this experience and how will this improve my practice?

5.5 How did I Gather my Data and select my Evidence?

I planned and facilitated a workshop using the PicTopics as creative prompts, and then collected the data through observation, non-structured interviews (conversations), a questionnaire (completed by the students at the end of the workshop), and feedback from both Lloyd O’Connor via e-mail correspondence, and from the filmed recording of the workshop. I realized I would need an ‘artefact’ to evaluate and analyze for evidence of the educational effectiveness of the PicTopics, viz., that the PicTopics were ‘working’ and ‘evoking a creative response’, thus filming the storied performances was essential for critical reflection and analysis.

⁹⁸ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 6/09/ 2009)

Once I had collected the data, I used my living standards of judgment informed by my living educational values to select evidence of the educational influence of the PicTopics from the data provided in the film footage (Whitehead, 2008(b))⁹⁹. I elaborate on this process in section 5.6.3.

5.6 What Tools did I Use to Evaluate the Educational Effectiveness of the PicTopics?

5.6.1 Critical Reflection

The evaluative tools which I used included the Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CCFOs)¹⁰⁰, the critical reflections of Lloyd O'Connor and the second year drama students and my own critical reflections (Schön, 1983) related to my living educational values (Whitehead, 2009)¹⁰¹.

The process of critical reflection is an integral part of my practice (Schön, 1983). Reflection in an everyday sense is a 'looking back' on experiences, so as to learn from them. Critical reflection is the process of analysing, reconsidering and questioning experiences within a broad context of issues. Steps in the critical reflective process are:

observation, comprehensive descriptions of what one is in the process of researching, analysing and making meaning from what has been observed, and then adding depth and breadth to the meanings by relating both the personal and professional into a comprehensive whole (2010, no author)¹⁰².

⁹⁹ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 25/09/2010).

¹⁰⁰ The Critical Cross-Field Outcomes are the unit standards set in the South African National Qualifications Framework by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

¹⁰¹ <http://www.actionresearch.net> (Accessed 26/02/2011).

¹⁰² www.une.edu.au/tlc/alo/critical1.htm (Accessed 1/1/2012)

When I reflected critically on this workshop, I focused on the capacities revealed in the students' responses and analysed these in terms of the Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CCFOs). The CCFOs identified by the South African Department of Education, underpin the learning outcomes that are integrated and assessed in every programme of study from Grade R to PhD. (Government Gazette, 1997:46)¹⁰³. Although these CCFOs are no longer officially used as a tool in the assessment of student learning, I have found them invaluable as a yardstick to measure and validate the effectiveness of the PicTopics.

5.6.2 The Twelve Critical Cross-Field Outcomes:

- 1. Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made;**
- 2. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community;**
- 3. Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively;**
- 4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;**
- 5. Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion;**
6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others;
- 7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation;**
8. Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;

¹⁰³ www.saqsa.org.za/docs/misc/tor_ccfo.pdf (Accessed 05/06/2010).

9. Participate as responsible citizens in the life of the local, national and global communities;

10. Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;

11. Explore education and career opportunities;

12. Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

From the **twelve CCFOs** I identified **seven** (highlighted grey and in bold – No's **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 & 10**) that were demonstrated in the responses of the students to the PicTopic cards even though the students were unaware that the CCFOs were among the tools of measurement of the effectiveness of the PicTopics as creative prompts.

5.6.3 How did I Evaluate the Educational Effectiveness of the PicTopics?

The sources of the data were the following:

- the responses of the students to the PicTopics during the workshop against the Critical Cross-Field Outcomes.
- Lloyd O'Connor's comments.
- the students' comments.
- the educational influence of the PicTopics in relation to my living standards of judgment informed by my living educational values.

I analysed this data to generate evidence of the educational effectiveness of the PicTopics.

5.7 What Did I Do?

In this section I describe what I did, and the way the workshop progressed. Although all the performances were filmed, I focus on only those which I feel demonstrate my beliefs in respect of the educational effectiveness of the PicTopics.

The workshop was approximately five hours long and was held in one of the practice rooms in the Drama Department. The performances included dance,

singing and poetry, in the genres of comedy, romance and social commentary about addiction and crime. Ethnicity was not one of the measures used to weigh the usefulness or accessibility and educational effectiveness of the PicTopics, but for the record the thirty six students I worked with on that day closely represented the current South African national racial and cultural demographic.

At the beginning of the workshop I stated the purpose of the workshop and negotiated issues around ethics. I told the students that I would be filming both their preparations and their final performances. I also told them that I would be talking with them while they were rehearsing, and would distribute a questionnaire at the end of the workshop. I explained that the questionnaire was for them to give feedback to help me evaluate the usefulness of the PicTopics. The students agreed to being filmed and to fill out the questionnaires, which would be anonymous. All signed consent forms.

I then introduced the students to the concept of the PicTopics by showing them how they could be used, and spoke of previous stories that had been told with the PicTopics. I explained my love of stories and how important it was that they created their own. I also explained that they would work in groups, be given a random selection of about ten PicTopics to create their stories in performance. I reminded them that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' ways to interpret the images on the PicTopics and no preferred performance.

5.8 What Happened and What evidence do I have of the Educational influence of the PicTopics?

I ask the reader to watch the short clips in conjunction with my comments, my evaluation and my analysis of how the PicTopics contributed to the students' performances.

The first clip is titled Video 2: 'Telling Tales, one small story'. The second and third clips are a collage of the students discussing the cards, rehearsing, telling me their thoughts about the PicTopics and are titled: Video 3: 'Conversing and Rehearsing' and Video 4: 'Chatting with the Students'. The fifth video clip titled 'You are a Failure' is taken from parts of a performance that affected me deeply. In all three clips, I looked to see if and how the students demonstrated their competence in the seven CCFOs. As I reflected on the filmed record of the workshop, I noted the evidence of how my standards of judgment, (in)formed by my educational values, were continually validated by the visual instances of embodied 'play', 'fun', 'well-being' and 'creativity'.

From the beginning of the workshop, in the film clips I could see the members of the teams sitting huddled together either on the floor or on chairs around the large practice room, going through the various PicTopics. Initially, they laid out the PicTopics on the floor and examined, affirmed, discarded and shuffled them to create new sequences (CCFOs 2, 4, 5). I watched them discussing and interpreting the images, deciding on their meaning and deciding which images would be relevant in the creation of their story. The room reverberated with loud voices and laughter, with students vying to get their thoughts included. As I was filming, I watched the group dynamics with interest and noted much gesticulating, and raised voices between individuals in their groups (CCFOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) (Video 3: Rehearsing and Conversing).

As their ideas developed, each group found its own corner, empty room, vacant corridor or verandah in and around the drama department where they could work at their performed stories. The noise levels got really loud, with bursts of enchanting singing, foot stomping dance movements, and laughter. The space was buzzing with energy and excitement.

They worked in groups on their own for about an hour or so, and then I moved from group to group engaging with them. (Video 3: Rehearsing and Conversing)

The students also applied their evaluative skills and problem solving skills (CCFOs 1, 3 & 5). In the workshop and in the video clip, I watched them and listened to them discussing each PicTopic debating if it would have value in the conceptualizing of their story. They did this by laying all the PicTopics out on the floor or on tables and going through a process of elimination (Figure 24). Sometimes there was mild arguing and animated hand gesticulation. The students interpreted, critically analyzed and evaluated the images on the PicTopics (CCFO 4). They abandoned some PicTopics, then regrouped others and changed the associations that developed by putting various PicTopic cards together (CCFOs 1, 4 & 5).

As they talked and planned their stories, the students, were getting consensus from each other about what the story should be, who should do what and the type of performance that would best suit their narrative. They identified and solved problems, problems that that included dealing with the dynamics of a group and having to be sensitive and inclusive of each other (CCFOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 & 7). They resolved problems in a critical and creative way. This demonstrated their understanding of the task put to them. These actions are visually recorded and demonstrate that the students were communicating effectively (CCFO 4). They agreed to specific roles they were assigned in order that the resulting performance 'worked'. This 'working it out' together was verification that they were employing both their tacit knowledge as well as the skills imparted and absorbed as students in a formal setting (CCFOs 1 & 2).

During the workshop, I asked how they were progressing. I asked if the PicTopic cards were useful as creative prompts and in what ways they were able to create stories or narratives from the random set of PicTopics, given to

them. I also asked about the comprehensibility of PicTopic images, what other kinds of PicTopic images they felt could be added to the collection, what shortcomings there were, and so on. This was not a structured interviewing process, but rather a conversation. I kept it casual and affirming.

The question which the students asked most was about the legitimacy of their interpretation of the PicTopic images. I reminded them that whatever they read into the PicTopics was 'correct' and that there were no 'wrong' answers or responses. (Video 3 and 4: Conversing and Rehearsing, Chatting with the Students) At the end of the workshop, there were seven performances between fifteen and twenty minutes long.

Once the performances started, I was amazed and intrigued by so many things. I noted that the performances were constructed in a story-telling structure with a beginning, middle and an end. I was aware both when watching the performances and reflecting about them later that in all their expressions – both audible and visible, whether serious or humorous - they were all attuned to their value systems. Their externalization of internalized values comes though in the types of narratives developed. In one of the performances, through dance and poetry, the students presented their 'green' or environmental values and their awareness of global ecological concerns (CCFOs 7, 10). The types of performances that were produced such as 'You are a Failure' (Video 5), showed me that the students are attuned to, and can interrogate social realities.

I also took note of the students' emotional responses, the group dynamics and the interpretation of the images in the creation of their stories. I observed how excited and galvanized they were and the levels of confidence they exhibited. I considered the high level of cohesiveness and organization of the groups remarkable considering the short time they had to put together and rehearse their pieces. I was amazed at the variety of types of performance and the fact that simple images had prompted individualistic interpretations.

Before each group performed, the students held up the PicTopics they had chosen to focus and create their performed stories, and explained their story briefly (Figure 25).



Figure 25: Laying out the PicTopics, in Video 3: ‘Rehearsing and Conversing’. (Scott 2009 visual)

The exuberance of the group can be seen in the main clip (Video 2: Telling Tales, one small story), and shows the mood and energy of the actual workshop, the “life affirming energy” about which Jack Whitehead (2008:1 (b))¹⁰⁴ often talks and writes. This life affirming energy can be seen in the dynamics of the students’ interactions with each other, in their movements and voices that cannot be effectively recorded in scribal alphabetic writing alone. The video clip effectively records the joy and confidence that emerged during the workshop.

¹⁰⁴ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 25/09/2010).

The students interpreted the PicTopics in much more than a purely functional way to create a story. They went further and contextualized and interpreted the PicTopics in a variety of ways, as can be seen in the video clips. For example, there is an instance at the beginning of the clip Video 2: 'Telling Tales, one small story', when two male students while rehearsing, are explaining the story on which their performance is based. One of the two students in the clip held up the three PicTopics that they had selected (Figure 26). Then, one at a time, he explained, on behalf of the group, that they would be using the PicTopics with the image of a man and woman to talk about the union of men and women, as a metaphor for marriage. The image on this card is conventionally used to indicate the whereabouts of toilet facilities. The next PicTopic card he held up was of a fishing hook which the group interpreted to represent the meeting up or 'hooking' up of the man and woman. The last card he held was that of a flaming silhouetted figure, which he said represented the passion that is ignited between the two people (Figure 27).



Figure 26: A student holding up PicTopics in explanation of the story he and his group had created in Video 2: 'Telling Tales – one small story' (Scott 2009 visual).

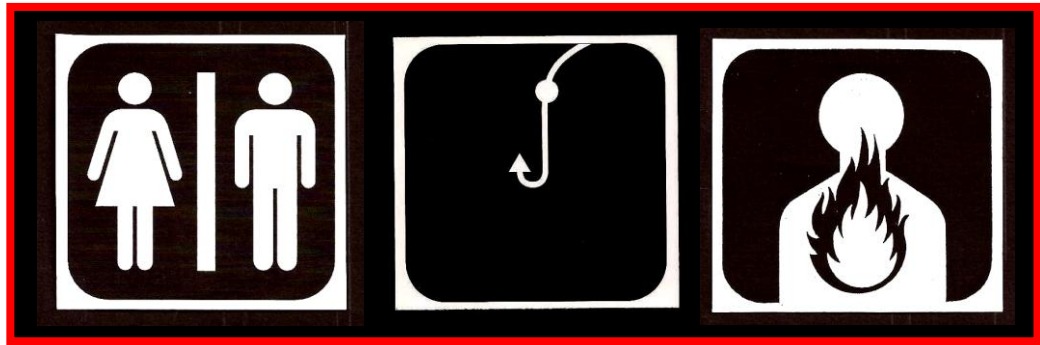


Figure 27: Three PicTopics used by the drama students to create a performance in Video 2: “Telling Tales - one small story”. (Images: Dreyfuss 1972, Scott 2009, Evamy 2003)



Figure 28: Student indicating a PicTopic image of a lung that was used as a symbol for a tree and nature (Scott 2009 visual).

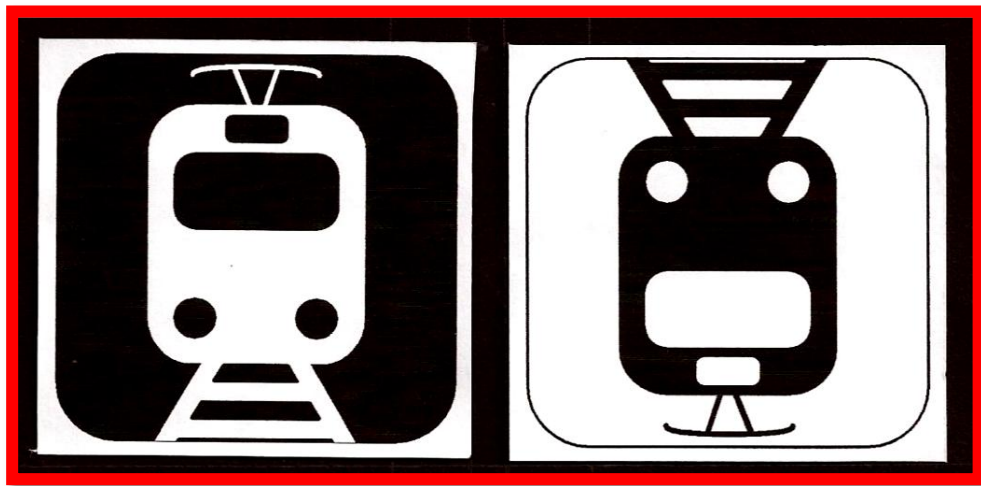


Figure 29: PicTopic image interpreted as a train, robot or television set, seen in Video 4: 'Chatting with the Students' (Scott 2009 visual)

Other associations made with the PicTopics were: the image of a train that could be read as either a robot or a television set and an image of lungs read as a symbol for trees and nature (see Figure 28 and 29).

In the clip Video 5: 'You are a Failure' I observed a particular example of 'resonance'. This piece, which is eight minutes long, 'hurts' me to watch. This piece reminds me that people have choices in life, and that we, myself included, do not always make the right choices and that there are consequences to those choices. In this clip, I observed the discipline of the students to stay in character, which I imagine would be a consequence of both their innate dramatic ability and their training, and which is critical to dramatic art. As I observed the main character in this performance, (in the clip I have close-ups of him) I felt the intensity of his despair, so convincing was his performance to me. During this young man's performance, I noticed that the rest of the students - the audience - were absolutely still. There was no snickering, shuffling of feet, twitching, whispered conversations - it was deeply quiet. This showed how commanding his performance was.



Figure 30: Image from Video 5: 'You are a Failure' (Scott 2009 visual)

5.9 What Evidence do I have of my Educational Values and Living Educational Theories?

5.9.1 Lloyd O'Connor's Comments.

Lloyd O'Connor provided critically reflective feedback on the workshop. Lloyd's comments helped me to validate my theories about the positive benefits of the PicTopic cards in the learning and teaching of dramatic art. I asked Lloyd to respond to the following:

"I would like to know how successful/effective (or not) you felt the PicTopic cards were at prompting the visual expression of what the students have been learning in the program.

What do you think of the playfulness of the PicTopic visual prompts and it being a kind of a game to help the students to be creative in the design of their performances?

What do you think about the 'independence' of expression that the students exhibited? Was it a good thing?

Please advise of any other insights that you have.

Thank you, I appreciate you giving me feedback on the workshop."

I have highlighted key words to refer to further on in the evaluation and validation of the cards as a useful teaching tool.

Lloyd replied as follows:

"The pictographic cards were an excellent source of inspiration for the students. The students, without realizing, were engaging in a sophisticated process that was not only a creative process but also a performative one as well.

The element of 'play' is very evident and immediate especially when viewing the footage taken of the class. The students manipulated the cards to suit their needs and to the needs of what they were creating.

The students engaged with a number of narratives through the cards that evolved from purely a visual narrative through to a performance narrative.

The question of 'autonomy' in a creative process is important because I suppose it is as much about the students' sense of agency and that they own the process.

Although some cards did have symbols on them that were perhaps less open to manipulation than others, the students became interlocutors with each other and with the cards, each member of each group was able to read meaning from the cards and use it to contribute to the end performance.

The cards are an incredibly useful tool and I would very much like a set to do further performance work with students.”

(Lloyd O’Connor, personal communication, September 23, 2010)

5.9.2 The Students’ Comments

The students responded in writing. Only one individual responded to the third question, and the last question was largely ignored or answered very vaguely. I have recorded a synthesis of their responses to capture the tone of the feedback.

The students were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Did you find the pictographic cards useful as creative prompts? If so, why and how were they useful?
2. If not, what, in your opinion could be done to make them more ‘user’ friendly?
3. What other images would you like to see on the cards?

Once again I have highlighted key words to refer to further on in the evaluation and validation of the cards as a useful teaching tool.

The students’ responded as follows:

1. “Yes, I did find [the cards] useful; actually it helped us to create scenes as a group to portray. The fact [is] that we got ideas from it and came up with something solid and useful.”
2. “They [the cards] made us co-ordinate our creativity.”
3. “They [the cards] prompt one to use a visual stimulus to engage our imaginations. They did challenge us to expand on our spontaneous imaginary thinking.”
4. “People came up with beautiful stories and personally it activated my creative skills.”

5. "They helped me think on the spot and helped me have a creative mind, in so we were able to create a picture out of our bodies, speech and mind."
6. "I didn't see the point of the whole task; we looked at the picture and made a story that was boring."
7. "The cards didn't give us much (sic) options to be creative."

5.9.3 My Evaluation of Lloyd's and the Students' Comments

Below, I present key words and phrases from Lloyd's feedback as validation of the usefulness of the PicTopic cards:

1. "excellent source of inspiration",
2. "engaging",
3. "sophisticated process",
4. "creative process",
5. "play is very evident and immediate",
6. "manipulated the cards to suit their needs",
7. "evolved from purely a visual narrative through to a performance narrative",
8. "narratives through the cards",
9. "'autonomy' in a creative process is important",
10. "they own the process",
11. "the students became interlocutors with each other and with the cards",
12. "was able to read meaning from the cards",
13. "incredibly useful tool, would very much like a set" (of cards).

I particularly value Lloyd's appreciation and validation of the PicTopics, as he assessed their usefulness in terms of what he observed in the performances of the students related to the higher education outcomes required of drama students. For instance, from my conversation with Lloyd, I realised that the students had recalled and applied specific screen/script writing skills learnt in the drama studies course. They comprehended the brief or aim of the workshop and recalled facts on how to develop a concept and then as a group, choreographed their narrative and transformed it into a visual representation (CCFOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10).

I present key words and phrases from the students' feedback as validation of the usefulness of the PicTopic cards from the perspective of higher education students whose mandate is to prepare themselves for a particular industry – the entertainment industry. I have deliberately included both positive and negative comments. The 11 positives outnumber the 2 negatives.

Positives:

1. "cards useful",
2. "helped us to create scenes as a group",
3. "we got ideas from it",
4. "came up with something solid and useful",
5. "co-ordinate our creativity",
6. "prompt one to use a visual stimulus to engage our imaginations",
7. "challenge us to expand on our spontaneous imaginary thinking",
8. "beautiful stories",
9. "activated my creative skills",
10. "helped me think on the spot",
11. "we were able to create a picture out of our bodies, speech and mind".

Negatives :

1. "I didn't see the point of the whole task; we looked at the picture and made a story that was boring".
2. "The cards didn't give us much (sic) options to be creative".

The last two comments of the students are a clear example of why a follow-up session with the individuals would have been beneficial to my research and to expand my personal learning.

I regard this feedback from higher education practitioners – the educator and the students – as validation of the educational usefulness PicTopics, specifically in higher education. In addition, I felt validated as a creative being

that others could see the educational potential of the cards I had conceptualised, and invited me to work with them.

5.10 Critical Reflections about the Educational Influence of the use of the PicTopics on others and myself.

5.10.1 What does this Experience Tell me about my Practice which Generates my Theory?

By asking myself this question I answered the questions put forward in 5.4 and I learned that:

1. I should have had someone film me in action while I was introducing myself, delivering my brief and throughout the workshop. Such a record would have been very useful, but at the time, I did not think it was important. I was focused on what the students were going to do. I now realize that if I am to improve my practice as a teacher, I must focus on my “life-affirming and loving dynamic energy” that Jack Whitehead talks of (2008(b):13(b))¹⁰⁵. The lack of record of me ‘teaching’ was a significant shortcoming as I have no record which I can critically examine to assess how I conducted myself. In future, I will have someone capture my ‘performance’ for critical self-reflection.
2. I should have made it possible for me to engage the students and have personal one-on-one interactions with those who expressed dissatisfaction. Because the questionnaires were anonymous, and because the workshop was in a sense, a testing out of the PicTopic cards, (a pilot study) one-on-one interactions did not take place. I have taken this into account and at future workshops I intend to ask

¹⁰⁵ <http://ejolts.net/node/80> (Accessed 25/09/2010).

individuals or groups for their permission to have one-on-one feedback.

3. I would also have liked to know how they went about deciding what images to use and the actual processes that were involved in the creation of their performance.
4. The video clip of the performance is a visible and audible validation that the drama students were able to make the conceptual connections between the PicTopics and their personal experiences and conceive and perform dramatised stories which evidenced 'play', 'fun', 'well-being' and creativity'.
5. The conversational style of my writing (de Lange & Rossi, 2009) has allowed me to reflect deeply, and to remember forgotten impressions and nuances' from the workshop.
6. After the workshop, Lloyd told me that he was interested to see how many of the performance types he had spoken of in lectures prior to the workshop were used by the students in their performed stories. This conversation with Lloyd has led me to reflect on how the PicTopics could be useful as an assessment tool.
7. Lloyd and I also spoke about what could be done in future workshops – reflection for action. We discussed the value of the filming the students in action in the workshop, and then letting them watch their performances. This would provide them with an opportunity to critically reflect and self assess their performances.
8. In Chapter Three, on reflecting and validating the social usefulness of the cards, I noticed that the stories that were told at artSpace did not always have a formulaic 'beginning, middle and end'. I was concerned that the simplicity of the cards might not prompt that deeper embellishment in the creation of stories and pleasingly found the stories as performances more fleshed out. As cited by Chase (2005:665), I re-iterate Labov and Waletzky's five features that make an oral narrative "rounded" and "full figured":

‘orientation’ - which informs listeners about the actors in the scenario, the time, place and situation

‘complication’ - the action part of the narrative

‘evaluation’ - the point of the story

‘resolution’ - the result of the action and

‘coda’ which returns the listener to the current moment.

These features were there to a degree. However, in my observations I note that not every performance fulfilled these characteristics entirely. I think there are many explanations for this and again, because of the brevity of this study I do not go into details here.

9. The creation of stories, the telling and listening to of stories are invaluable to me as an artist/teacher/social being and are tied in with my desire to understand people and have insight into their commonalities and differences.
10. The students at my workshop brought their own interpretations to “bear on an image’s meaning and effect” (Rose: 2001). In other words, they interpreted the images from their own socio-cultural contexts and embodied and tacit knowledge/memory. This is because the cards function as (subliminal) prompts for the conception of creative undertakings, which in this case were dramatised stories.
11. Using the PicTopics as a simple and playful visual methodology is one way to encourage students to become immersed in their learning tasks.
12. The video clips provide evidence of visual representations of communication and high levels of organization within the groups. The dynamics of the students’ interactions with each other, in their movements and voices, cannot be recorded on paper but are recorded on video for viewing, analysis, and interpretation.
13. When viewing the filmed record of the workshop, I looked for, evidence of the core values I espouse as my living standards of

judgment (Whitehead, 2005(b))¹⁰⁶. I found my core values, - 'fun', 'creativity', 'well-being' and 'play' - in the students' enthusiastic, dynamic and passionate expression of their stories.

14. The variety of types of stories and performances indicates the usefulness of cards in stimulating the imagination.
15. I believe that the students were enticed by the freedom of 'playing', to create something of their own. I believe that this autonomy motivated them to be creative in which confirms my living educational theory that humans learn best when 'playing'.
16. The students' stories gave me insights into their socio-cultural experiences and worlds that I am not a part of. The performances mirrored social realities and I learnt from the students how connected they are to many social and environmental concerns.
17. The performances validated the students' "knowing in action" (Schön, 1983:51) and expressed their "embodied" (Whitehead, 2010:1) and "tacit knowledge" of performance (Polanyi, 1966:7).
18. Filming the students in action helped to improve my critical reflective capacities and practice because I was able to review the performances at leisure and "reflect on action on my discoveries and limitations" (Schön, 1983:56). This then led to meta-reflections on ways to improve the overall design of my visual prompts as creative educational tools. By reflecting on action and on my knowing in practice, I am continuing to improve my living theories of what, how and why I do as I do (Schön, 1983).
19. Reflecting on the work while watching the movie clips, provides insight into the ebullience of the performers. Their 'knowing' in action was made manifest in this playful creative workshop (Schön, 1983:54).

¹⁰⁶ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/c12805.htm (Accessed 11/01/2010).

20. When I came to reflecting and analysing the clips for the evidence, I realised that there were aspects of the workshop and performances that I could not adequately translate into writing. Leavy citing Saldaña writes of how “performance exists in the moment (and) is temporal, ephemeral and immediate” (1999:135). Leavy writes of the difficulty of demonstrating ‘resonance’ in writing, which is the effect of an event/work of art, (in this case the performances) beyond the immediate or surface meaning (Leavy, 2009). Conolly explains that the para-linguistic elements of a performance cannot be recorded in scribal alphabetic writing because such writing :

does not record the dynamic vitality of the performance as an indivisible whole manifest in: the kinaesthetic features, i.e. movement and gesture; the spatial features, i.e. line, form, shape; the paralinguistic and non-verbal aural features, i.e. non-verbal sounds, pitch, inflection, timbre, emphasis, vocal modulation; the temporal features, i.e. pace, pause; the interactive features, i.e. the responses of the audience (Conolly, 2002:156-178).

5.11 Concluding notes

The events of the workshop with the drama students indicated to me that the PicTopics could prompt the creation of well-rounded stories.

Reflecting upon what happened at the workshop I can see that I demonstrated how my living standards of judgment, (in)formed by my educational values, were continually validated by the students’ evident ‘play’, ‘fun’, ‘well-being’ and creativity’ – my core educational values. My theories about the interconnectivity between play, creativity and well-being in a teaching and learning environment, are validated by the responses of the students’ to the PicTopics.

I experienced the validation of my practice as an educator, in that someone other than myself could see the potential of the cards and invited me to work

with their students. I have learnt or had reinforced, that my living educational theories inform and are informed by my educational values.

The students used the PicTopics in the creation of their performed stories in ways that astounded me, delighted me, validated my values and beliefs in my living educational theories and allowed me to gain further insight into my practice as an artist-teacher and social being.

My experience with the drama students suggests strongly that playful ways to release deep learning are pertinent. Upon reflection I realize that if I did not have particular beliefs and values, I never would have thought of the simple idea of creating the PicTopics to prompt people to tell me their stories.

CHAPTER SIX

PAINTED STORIES - Making my Stories Purposeful

Stories set the inner life into motion,
and this is particularly important
where the inner life is frightened, wedged, or cornered.
Story greases the hoists and pulleys,
it causes adrenaline to surge, and for our trouble,
shows us the way out, down, or up,
cuts for us fine wide doors in previously blank walls,
openings that lead to the dreamland,
that lead to love and learning,
that lead us back to our own real lives as knowing wildish women.
Clarissa Pinkola Estes¹⁰⁷

6.1 Introduction

My early influences in art stemmed from a Social Realist tradition (Heller and Williams, 1982:18). I have always needed to reflect critically on my observations of life and make social comment. I believe that this basic humanism has prompted my practice over the years and is still evident in the paintings I write about in this chapter. In my mind's eye as I flit through a slideshow of the paintings, titled Video 6: 'Telling Tales', I have done in the course of this study, I see a density in the work, and I am reminded of Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) analogy of researcher as bricoleur. I see my paintings as a bricolage of all the reflecting, learning and growth I have experienced during the course of this study.

I hung a far larger body of work in my exhibition - which was the practical component for this masters study - than is discussed in this chapter. I write about two bodies of work only because they are directly linked with the PicTopic cards and are the most pertinent visual indicators of my values,

¹⁰⁷ www.storyteller.net/articles/160 (Accessed 14/01/2012)

personal growth and professional development as an artist, teacher, researcher and social being.

In the first part of the chapter I write about a group of paintings which express my responses – my interpretations and emotional connections - to the stories told by participants playing with the PicTopics at the artSpace gallery (Chapter Four). These paintings were created as a component of a three month Professional Practice Course (PP Course) conducted by Brenton Maart at the Kwa-Zulu Natal Society of Arts (KZNSA)¹⁰⁸ in 2009. I decided to enrol for this course with ten other artists because I had been working in isolation and thought this would be a practical forum in which I could receive weekly critiques on the paintings as they developed. Consequently, through the discussions and critiquing of the various paintings in progress, I was encouraged to choose cards for myself and create a painting as my own story. This painting, “Self Portrait as story teller – my cards” (see Figure 49), was the piece that prompted the correlating body of work that I discuss in this chapter.

These corresponding paintings reflect my experiences and perceptions of my childhood, their effect on my adult self and my individuation. I had initially chosen particular PicTopics as symbols of self. The analysis and deep reflection on the origins of my PicTopic choices has (in)formed the second body of paintings.

I believe the stories that I record and reflect upon in this chapter are not only my stories but are also universal stories that reflect society. I gather the stories of others because I believe that telling stories can be an improving social process. While I try never to speak for other people, I re-tell stories about social realities, threaded throughout our daily lives, so that others can possibly benefit.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix F.

6.2 Critical Reflection as an Aid to 'Practice makes Perfect'

The PicTopics have inadvertently led me to new understandings about myself as an artist-practitioner. I have used the PicTopics as creative prompts and this triggered much introspection on my part. I write in this chapter of the 'unravelling' of my purposefulness and paintings in the explanation of 'what' I have painted, 'why' I have painted the pieces and 'how' I have created the work. The cards have prompted reflection to the extent that I am able to make mental connections in understanding exactly how and why the whole of me, from childhood to continually evolving adulthood, is all a part of my educational influence as artist, researcher, teacher and social being. All are integral and cannot be separated.

Tacit knowledge or "knowing", as Schön (1983:54) terms it, is the sometimes intuitive "recognition and judgments we take spontaneously during the action of performance" or what I term 'in the act of doing'. Tacit knowing is not a conscious remembering of what one has learnt. I tap into tacit knowing, when I am painting. I cannot remember fixed events or lessons, for example, where I have been taught how to mix and create colours, or how to decide where, what and how to make a mark, or what makes that mark-making relevant or technically 'good'. I rely on my tacit knowledge. I understand that my knowledge is visceral, and embodied in my being by years of practice. It is most importantly consolidated and rectified by my ability to critically reflect, analyse, adjust and implement.

While reflection *in* action happens during the event, reflection *on* action requires looking back after the event, in the "relative tranquillity of a post-mortem" and exploring the "lived through" experience of one's research (Schön, 1983:61). Reflecting on my actions – be it thinking about how I conducted a lesson in the relative quiet of my office or returning to a painting I am working on to examine and critique it with a fresh eye – happens after the action or event. This type of critical reflection enables me to improve my

lesson plan or solve technical issues in a painting, in the continuation of improving my practice as a teacher and artist.

Schön (1983:69) advocates an epistemology of practice which “places technical problem solving” (which I interpret and adapt in my practice) within a broader context of reflective inquiry to show how reflection in action may be rigorous in its own right and may link the art of practice to the uniqueness of research. Critically reflecting on my practice as a way to improve it is pertinent to my study and has required that I employ core skills in the process of reflection, namely self awareness, description, critical analysis, evaluation, and synthesis (Atkins and Murphy, 1994).

6.3 From artSpace to new space

In this chapter there is ‘re-storying’ taking place. In no particular order, I record the PicTopics the story tellers chose at the artSpace gathering, and the stories that they told associated with these PicTopics. In no particular order I describe the painting, explain why I chose to paint my response to each chosen story, and relate the retold story to my values. Each re-storying also includes a visual of the PicTopics chosen, and another visual of the relevant painting.

The ten paintings are the physical manifestation of my direct response to, and analysis of, the stories I received as gifts at artSpace (Chapter Four). In the interpreting of the stories I chose, and later upon deep reflection on my choices of stories to paint, I became doubly aware of factors within my psyche that I believe compelled me to tell those particular stories.

I realise too that these choices link with my living values. My living values (which I think lend themselves to notions of social justice), my social realist leanings and humanism have become my “living theories” to account for why

I do the things I do, and do them in the way that I do them. From Whitehead (2005:14)¹⁰⁹ I have learned that “individuals can create their own living educational theories as explanations for their educational influences in their own learning” and that the visual record of my practice is “value-laden” (2008(d):14)¹¹⁰. I explain the work presented in this chapter as value-laden because I think my values that encompass a genuine caring for people and the environment, unconsciously, came through by my choosing particular stories to re-create as paintings. I acknowledge that I cannot presume to speak for anyone else, so the painted reconstructions told here are mine. I was inspired by the story tellers’ ideas and so have borrowed from them to piece together the next part of the visual chain that allows human voices to be heard.

Whitehead’s (2008(c):1)¹¹¹ words “I feel privileged when individuals share stories that reveal the values and understandings they use to give meaning and purpose to their lives”, resonate with me. The tales I have gathered reflect the day-to-day-ness on the one hand, of people’s lives, the rituals of those realities and, on the other hand, the emotions that surface through the telling and the painting of the stories. There are stories of love and romance, of heartbreak, confusion, questioning of identity, religious faith, addiction and loss, adventures and prodigal home-comings. The stories told to me, which I retell on canvas, reveal people’s values, values I can relate to, because they are also in a sense my stories and my values. I identify with the daily grumblings about the crime rate in our (on the whole) ‘mellow’ Durban. I can laugh with someone who thought their car keys were stolen at a party, only to find out they had been picked up mistakenly ... and so on.

¹⁰⁹ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/c12805.htm (Accessed 11 January 2010).

¹¹⁰ www.jackwhitehead.com/monday/c12805.htm (Accessed 11 January 2010).

¹¹¹ <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwLTM080508.pdf> (Accessed 8 May 2009).

Stylistically, these paintings are largely naturalistic and linked through the deliberate selection of colours and pictographic motifs. The mix of media includes oil paint and spray paint onto canvas stretchers and super-wood cut-outs.

A friend asked me “Can you attach your values to your paintings?” It really got me thinking, because my first reaction was “How is that possible?” I initially could not see the ‘values’ that I have spoken of, in my paintings, although I realize that there is tremendous ‘value’ in the releasing of blockages and emotions through the act of painting. Also I paint to release concerns which express themselves through visual symbols. I give a visual voice to my concerns and emotions and on that level, there is certainly ‘value’ in the act of painting for me. I was concerned that a number of paintings seemed to negate the ‘values’ that I have espoused throughout this dissertation. It was only gradually that I came to recognise the value of the releasing and voicing of concerns and making social comment as being linked to the value I attach to ‘creativity’ and ‘doing’. This cognitive leap enabled me to recognise the stepping-stone path of my values throughout the body of my work.

6.4 The Professional Practice Course paintings - Ten Stories

I have selected ten paintings to write about from a body of fifteen pieces that I completed during the PP course. I selected these pieces because I believe they are pertinent to this study as they provide evidence of my translation of the stories told to me with the PicTopics, and involve self-reflection and analysis of both painting techniques and my action research interventions. However, I am not going into depth about the processes involved in producing the paintings: this chapter is not about how I started a painting, the colours I chose, what areas I chose to repaint, why I needed to make changes, how and when I knew it was finished, etcetera. This chapter is primarily about the stories told to me, the stories I chose to retell as paintings

and what I have learnt in the process of my critical reflection and analysis. The reader must also know that the unconscious or instinctive act of ‘having’ to put certain images or symbols together without planning a painting to the ninth degree, or knowing why they have to go together - but knowing it is right - is also a part of my creative and cathartic process.

6.4.1 *The Paintings - Story One: Looking at Life*

This painting is in oil paint on canvas board (see Figures 31 and 32). The storyteller chose three PicTopics, that of ‘an atom and revolving electrons’, ‘a coat hanger’ and the image of two figures to indicate ‘male and female toilets’. This story as narrated in Chapter Four was a strong statement challenging societal definitions of self and how people relate to accepted norms. It is about the story teller’s acknowledgement and acceptance of his difference.

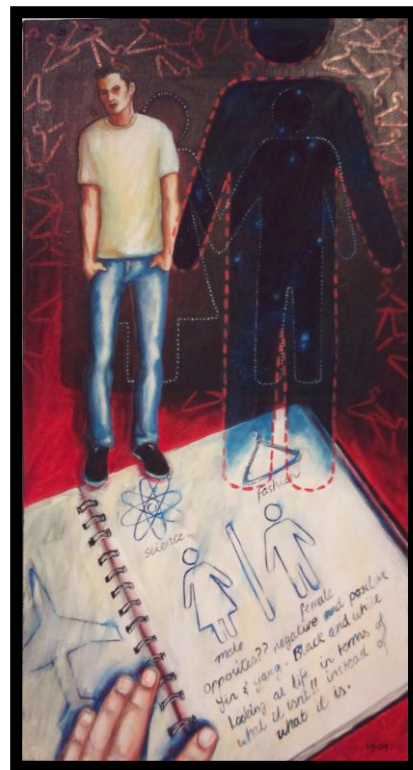
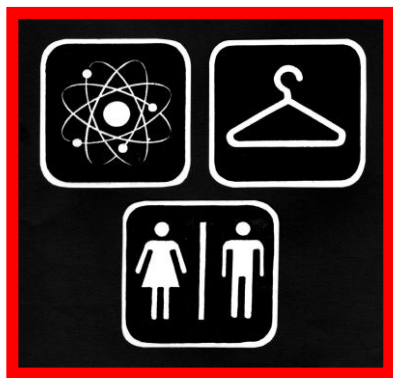


Fig 31: PicTopics chosen to represent science, fashion and opposites in the painting ‘Looking at Life...’

Fig 32: ‘Looking at Life...’ (Scott 2009, oil on canvas board, size: 95cmx52cm)

The story teller said he was a science teacher with a love of fashion, which might have seemed odd. He suggested that opposites create balance in society: “yin and yang, black and white? Looking at life in terms of what it isn’t instead of what it is”. The ‘opposites’ for him are indicative of a barrier that conventional society puts in place to keep him ‘an other’, and he challenges the concept that what is conventional and the norm for one, has to be applicable to all.

I have often felt that I am what I term a ‘peripheral’ person, always on the outside of the group, only looking in. Even when invited in to be a part of the group, I have often still felt like an ‘outsider’, which is someone defined as

“a person not belonging to a particular group, set, party, etc.:
Society often regards the artist as an outsider.”¹¹²

This connection with the ‘outsider’ led me to create this piece, and reflects the value I attach to inclusion and my empathy towards others’ feelings of being ‘outside’ of societal norms.

6.4.2 Story Two: Future

The painting is in oil paint with gold foil. The wording and blue pictographic figures in the background have been spray-painted using handmade stencils. The closely packed blue figures represent claustrophobia and monotony, while the gold foil represents the value of looking forward, of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak.

The story teller in this instance was a young man who held up three PicTopics, that of a ‘smiling mouth imbibing a pill’, the next of ‘a pair of scissors and comb’ and lastly of ‘a Boeing airplane’. Holding them up one by one he said simply “This is my past, this is my present and this is my future”.

¹¹² Dictionary.com (Accessed 19/10/2011)

I responded strongly to his choice of PicTopics with my own feelings of claustrophobia, of wanting to escape the pressures of life and wishing I was somewhere else. This painting reflects the negation of these feelings, because this painting is about well being, about recognising the necessity of finding balance and harmony in order to function effectively in society, about being 'somewhere else'. I associate "Future" with determination to change one's life, and experience new adventures (see Figs. 33 & 34).

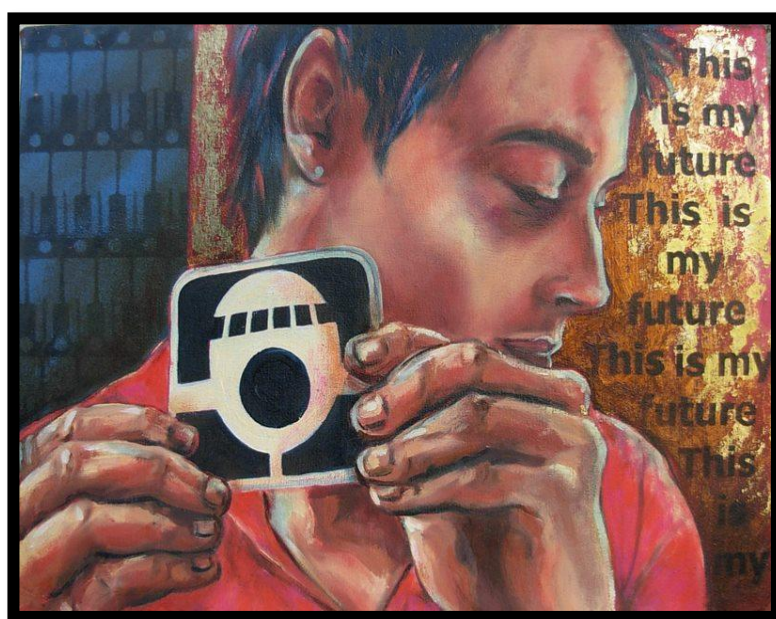
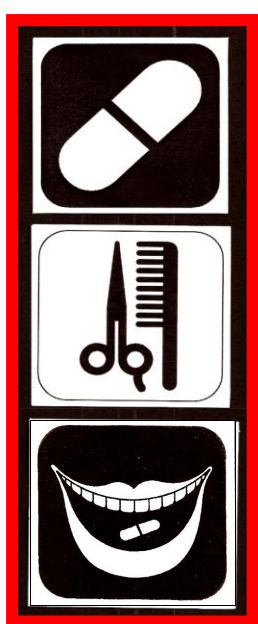


Fig 33: PicTopic cards used to represent past, present and future

Fig 34: 'Future'. (Scott 2009, mixed media on canvas, size: 40cm x 55cm)

6.4.3 Story Three: Can we take these things?

I chose to paint this story because it reminded me of my own questioning of the eternal unknown, my desire for spiritual reconciliation and a need to be comforted and the value for myself in a belief system. The story teller's PicTopics were of a fishing hook, a airplane, a telephone, cup and saucer, skeletal hand and a small cross shape.

This story teller had laid the PicTopics she had chosen on the trestle surface and in telling her tale to the videographer pointed out her hand drawn story in a sketchbook journal I had placed on the table with all the PicTopics (see Figure 35 & 36). She said that she loves her rooibos tea and is hooked on flying overseas and chatting to her friends, but she worried saying, “These things, can we take them to heaven with us?”

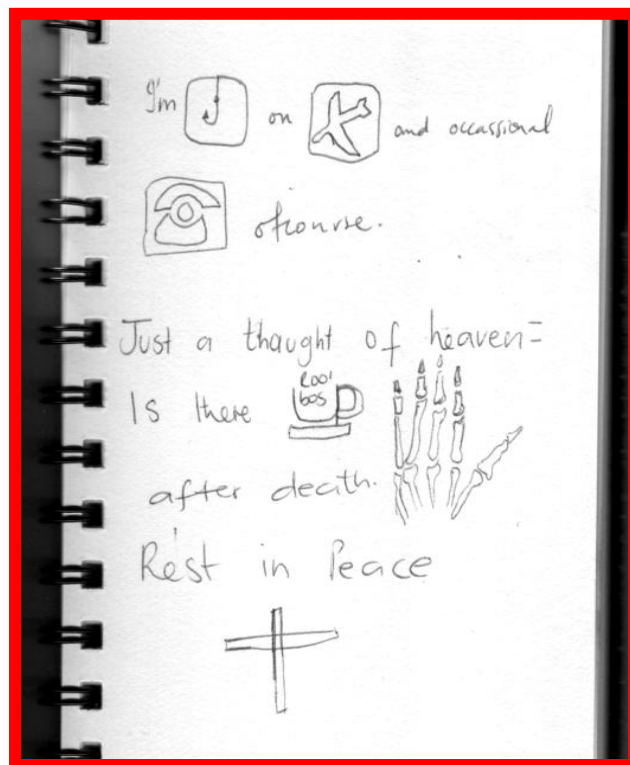


Fig 35: The hand-drawn presentation of the cards chosen by the participant

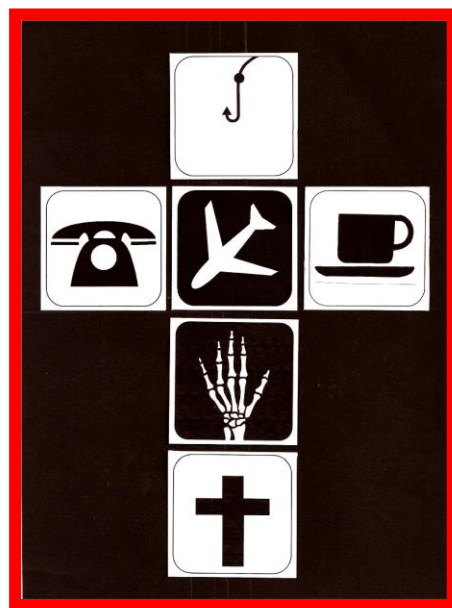


Figure 36: PicTopics chosen by the story teller of 'Can we take these things...?'

Figure 37: 'Can we take these things...?' (Scott 2009, oil paint on canvas, size: 95cm x 32cm)

The portrait I have created is not of her, but is taken from a photographic image of a model in a fashion magazine, interpreted to help create the mood

in the painting. I have purposely used this format to heighten the divide between the worldly and the spiritual. The PicTopics are represented in the painting and laid out in the shape of a Christian cross. I added to the composition the image of the priest reading a bible and an '!' exclamation mark to indicate an urgency in my/her spiritual questioning. The Mother Mary image expresses visually my wish and hope for comfort and mothering. This painting reflects my valuing empathy and respect - my respect for her religious values and my empathy concerning questions that cannot really be answered (see Figs. 35 & 37).

6.4.4 Story Four: Rarity-Heartbroken

'Rarity - Heartbroken' (Figure 38) was told to me by a young girl who was unhappy about the slaughter of animals for food. The PicTopics she chose included pictographs of 'a sheep', 'a pig', 'a steak', 'a hamburger' and 'a figure with a broken heart' (see Figure 39).

This painting is of mixed media, mostly in oil paint with the floral images spray-painted onto the walls of the box room depicted.

When re-telling this story in my painting, I chose to paint a beast with a fierce glint in its eye that the photographer had somehow captured. I focused on the fierce glint in its eye, but painted it roped, and 'boxed in' by floral walls, implying a deceit, a pretence of tameness in contradiction with my dearly-held values of freedom, inclusion and self-worth. I also included story cards portrayed being thrown away as a negation of their worth, implying the low worth of the small beast with the fierce glint in its eye.

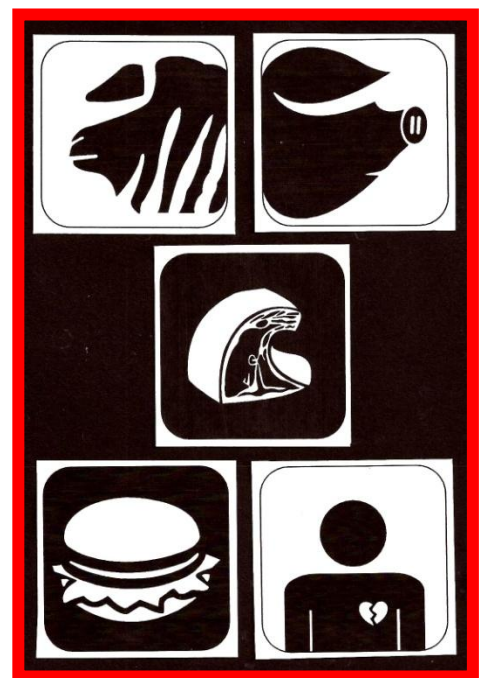
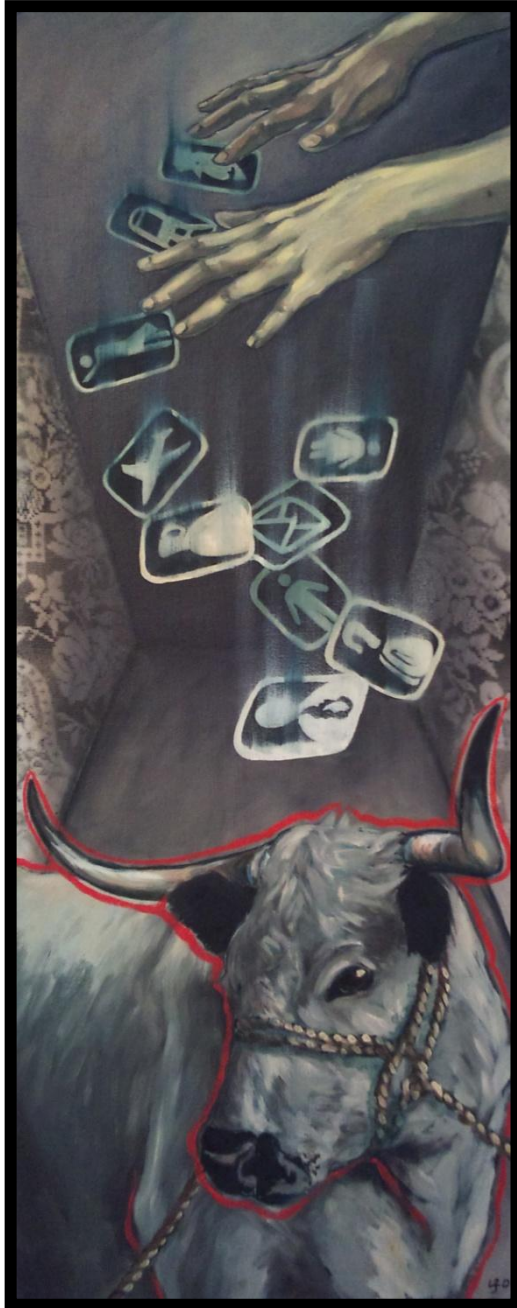


Fig 38: 'Rarity – Heartbroken'. (Scott 2009, oil and spraypaint on canvas, size: 100cm x 40cm)

Fig 39: PicTopics chosen for 'Rarity-Heartbroken'.

It was only much later that I read the accompanying article and learned that this beast was one of the last of a breed which had roamed the forests of England two thousand years ago. It is a small animal producing little beef, and it now considered of no worth, but still best known for its feisty temperament,

When I read the article long after I had completed the painting, I marvelled at the aptness of the imagery I had so intuitively chosen when painting this story.

6.4.5 Story Five: *A equals D.*



Fig 40: 'A = D'. (Scott 2009, oil paint, spray paint on canvas, size: 40cm x 55cm)



Fig 41: 'A = D' PicTopics

As related in Chapter Three, this young boy chose PicTopics of 'a man shooting a rifle', 'a car and bus alongside each other', a card depicting 'an accident between two vehicles', a card with the 'barber shop images of a pair of scissors (which he used as a sign to indicate direction), a comb and a female figure', and lastly a PicTopic with the image of a skull on it. He spoke of a man shooting at vehicles on the road and the resultant accident. He said: "Accident equals death". I marvelled at his inventiveness in taking the image of the scissors and using it as a directional arrow (see Figure 41).

I chose to paint this story because first, it concerned me that this young person chose to tell such a horrific story: maybe he had seen something on the news. However when you watch the filmed record of this story, this boy is very excited to be telling his tale, and has a huge grin on his face: perhaps he

was just pleased to be filmed. Second, I painted it because of my own concerns, my own feelings of bewilderment at the violence in our society and its depiction on a daily basis in our media.

The painting is mostly in oil paint - again - including the gold foil – with the hand cut stencils of the lettering and scissor images spray painted on (Figure 40).

The value I attached to this story was initially about creativity, the boy's naïve adaptation of the scissors as a directional indicator or demonstrative adjective. However, upon deeper reflection and recognising the pattern of my choices of subject matter throughout this study, I realize that holistically the value is tied into one of wishing for greater respect between people.

6.4.6 Story Six: Coming Home

I met a photographer at the artSpace exhibition who had 'come back home'. She had left South Africa 'to escape the violence' and to find 'greener pastures' in Europe. But having got to Europe, she found that her heart needed to be back in her homeland, so she returned, still wary, yet armed with her camera and a different attitude. The PicTopics she chose were of 'a flying Boeing', 'a mugging', 'the nose end of a grounded Boeing', 'a suitcase', 'a house' and 'a pistol' (see Figure 42).

The painting depicts me holding up a PicTopic I chose as a subconscious response to her story. When I reflected on my choice to hold up that particular PicTopic, the pistol, I considered this choice very telling. "Why," I asked myself after painting the piece, "did I not focus on any other of the PicTopics as a symbol for coming home?" I then remembered, that at the time that I was doing this series of paintings, I had witnessed a number of violent incidents in my street. A semi-detached house diagonally opposite mine was operating as a brothel, and the behaviour of the young girls was really rough. They frequently attacked each other, ripping their clothes off so that they were half-naked. Periodically they would smash quart beer bottles

to use as weapons, and there would be blood everywhere. There were often people watching and they would laugh until a police van came along and the girls were unceremoniously shoved into the back of the van and carted off – only to be back the next day. On two occasions I had been woken up late at night to anguished screaming. My heart pounding, I had rushed onto my balcony to witness women being severely beaten by men and even though I phoned the police, they never came. So the perpetrators loped off into the night - silently - and the women themselves moved off just as silently, so accepting, leaving the taste of abject horror and fear in my mouth.



Fig 42: 'Coming Home' PicTopics



Fig 43: 'Coming home'. (Scott 2009, oil on canvas, size: 60cm x 100cm)

I do not think I can attach values to these memories and I do not want to. The painting is in oils and I chose to show the cards as moving through the space to indicate the progression of time. I think so often that people are held to ransom by the fear or trauma of violence. With the sequence of the PicTopics ending with the pistol and my eye catching that of the viewer, it was not my intention to indicate that the pistol is my personal symbol of power, but to engage and say "Now What? Where to from here?"

6.4.7 Story Seven: Peace, Love and Harmony

At the artSpace gallery that evening in 2009, I noticed very few people strayed from a linear layout. Their stories were generally laid out in the western scribal convention of 'left to right'. Then I came upon the layout in the shape of a cross as described in Chapter Three. This person shared one of the few optimistic 'tellings' that evening. I was reminded of a fortune teller (see Figure 45). She saw the birth and growth of new beginnings in her reading. She chose two PicTopics depicting 'lungs' which she laid down

horizontally with the pictogram of 'the atom and electrons' between the two and 'a hatched egg' above and 'a rooster' placed vertically below.

Her optimistic story of new beginnings as related in Chapter Three and her optimism about new beginnings was what drew me to paint this piece (Figure 44). The painting is in oils with the flowers, plane and dashes created with the aid of spray paint and stencils. In the background I have painted water, a plane and a Venus figure and silhouetted man. Water is an age old symbol of rebirth, the plane of forward movement for one's future visions; the voluptuous Venus figure is symbolic of the strength of woman and that of being cared for by higher powers. The dash outline of the PicTopic pictographic woman has a severed leg and I reflect upon the instinctive process I wrote of earlier in the chapter. I do not remember severing her leg and can read it now as a wounded symbol representing myself. The man with his hands raised is about giving in to things that I cannot control. He symbolises my fears.

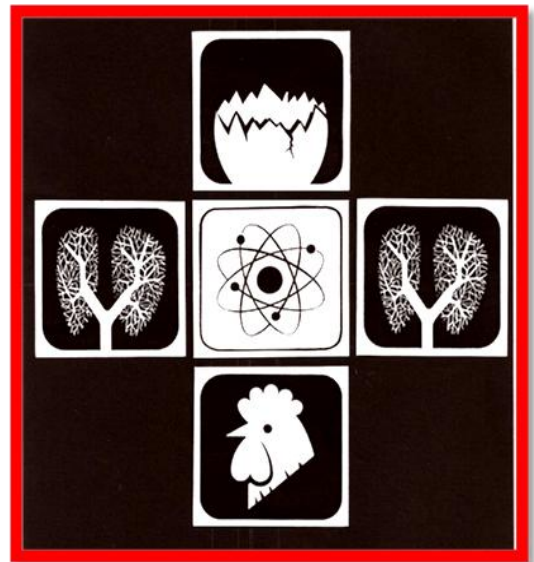
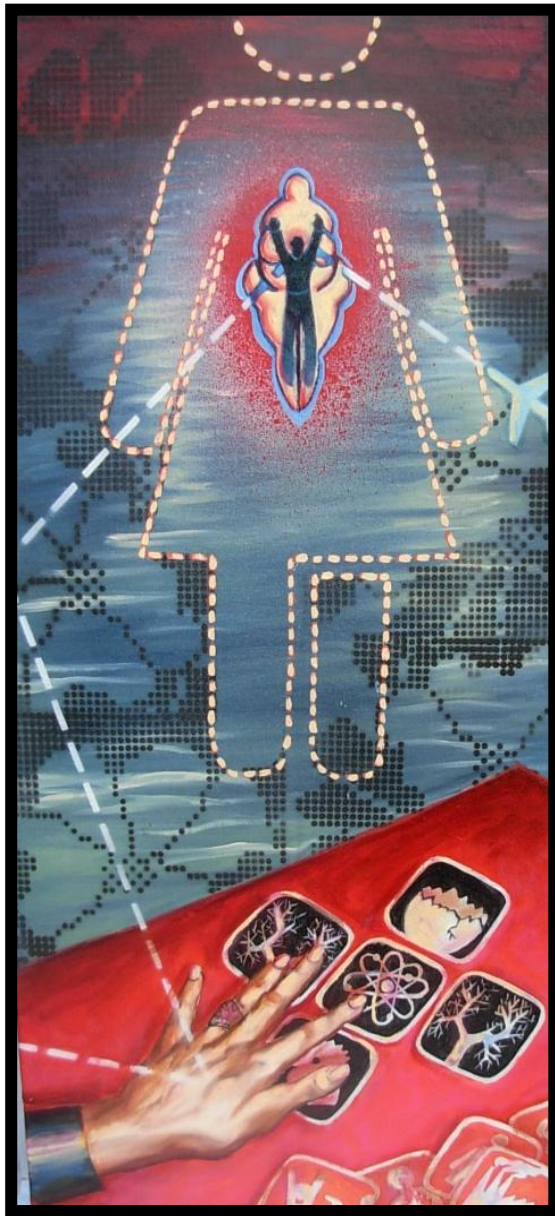


Fig 44: 'Peace, love and harmony'.(Scott 2009, oil and spray paint on canvas, size: 85cm x 40cm).

Fig 45: 'Peace, love and harmony' PicTopics.

The values this painting reflects, are about well-becoming, and the desire for harmony and balance within self.

6.4.8 Stories Eight and Nine: GPS and The card I would choose...

The two paintings are the same height and work as a diptych. They are in oil paint with the two pictographic representations of women cut out of superwood. The female forms have the images of birds and wording spray painted onto them (see Figs. 46 & 47).

These paintings and the accompanying poem were inspired by a PicTopic card prompt that I chose, that of a person being held up at gun point. The story is my own and yet the two paintings are ultimately about how I choose to live my life, with forward thinking, joy and an acknowledgement of the abundance in it.

GPS system and The card I would choose....

This card is not my GPS system,
it does not guide my daily navigations between work
shopping, cooking and home
The card I would choose would be of a bird
to remind me that I have freedom
of a tree
to remind me that I can breathe
of a key
for I alone can open many doors.

Lee Scott (2009)

The values that I would attach to these paintings are purposefulness, and once again, well-becoming, harmony and balance.



Fig 46: 'GPS Card'. (Scott 2009, oil paint, canvas, spray paint & superwood cut-outs, size: 95cm x 60 cm).

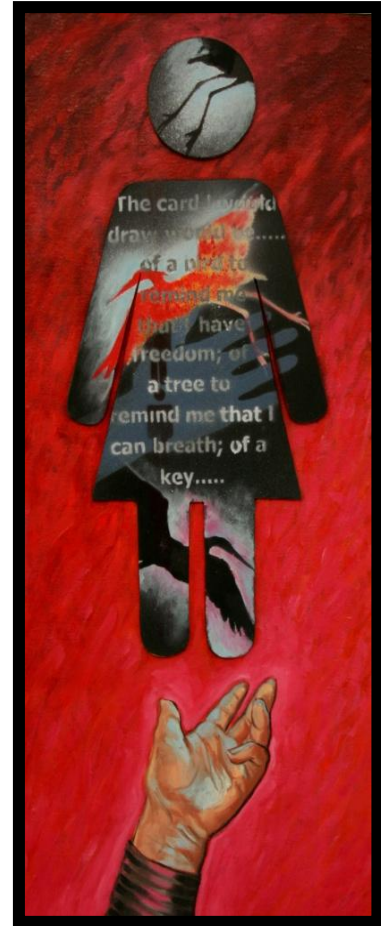


Fig 47: 'The card I would choose....' (Scott 2009, oil paint, canvas, spray paint & superwood cut-outs, size: 95cm x 32cm).

6.4.9 Story Ten: Self portrait as a storyteller - My Cards



Fig 48: My PicTopics.



Fig 49: 'Self portrait as a storyteller - My Cards'. (Scott 2009, oil on canvas, spray paint, size: 150cm x 45cm)

In this painting, I chose to tell something about myself by portraying images or symbols that represent elements of me. The PicTopics are floating just above the surface of the ground laid out in an unfinished circle. The cards I chose were of 'a woman', 'a suitcase', 'an atom and electrons', 'a house painting brush', 'a house with a person walking away from it', an image of 'a couple holding hands' and 'a pair of lungs'. The woman image or pictograph is at the fore of the circular layout of PicTopics. There is a suitcase on my right and a house on my left. They represent for me the fact that I can never 'go home' having emigrated from Rhodesia and the desire to belong somewhere – to find hearth and home. The lungs represent the bush and my animist philosophies (see Figure48).

It is this painting and the critiquing of it by a colleague that really got me to engage deeply about myself as a person and to fully realise my values and belief systems and how integral they are with my practice as an artist, teacher researcher and social being. I had my son take photographs of me outside in my small garden to find an image to go with the PicTopics I had chosen. The fire hose reel was incidental, but after I printed the photograph I liked the irony of its bloody red halo so decided to leave it in. My stance is casually authoritative, implying I realize a guarded openness, implying: "Here I am, this is me and yes, I am wary and defensive."

I journalled and dated this piece of writing on the painting on the sixteenth of September 2009:

Vermilion

Fire wheel vermilion and blood earth with

Playing card symbols for self are set before me

I see a woman first (foremost), yet outsider still

With her unpacked suitcase

Looking for a true home through
Atomic faith and far soul searching
Companionship, two figures and
The tree
Representing intrinsic bonding with the earth;
Of my desire for rooted growth, of belonging
The paintbrush – solid, solid for my Calvinistic belief in hard work
Symbolic of my upbringing, earth-hard, alone and
All life-fluid red.

Lee Scott (2009)

6.5 Reflections and Analysis: What did I Learn from this Experience?

The act of working steadily in a medium for a consolidated period during the three month PP Course aided my practice of working in the medium of oil paint. I had not worked in oils for a number of years and was glad about the re-introduction and the chance it gave me to gain confidence in the medium once again. I was able to settle on a deliberate palette of colours and to draw on and improve other artistic skills such as the mixing my media and putting them together to make them work.

I find it remarkable how this much later date in my reflective critiquing, I am able to read so much into what I painted so instinctively - so reactively, perhaps. I reiterate that the stories I chose to paint were the ones I felt a kinship with. I can acknowledge now that these paintings were symbolic of a modifying experience that prompted a new theme in my painting. These painted stories, especially the one of myself in army fatigues with an array of PicTopics before me, enabled the adaptation of my memories of outsider-

ness, and opened a path that facilitated me facing and painting the series. This re-ordering of my past experiences became the next body of work towards the practical component of this Master's, and a further step forward in the process of improving my practice as artist, researcher, teacher and social being.

I understand as a practitioner, as Donald Schön (1983) writes, that I both reflect-in-action and on-action. Reflecting-in-action enabled me to use my living theories as a practitioner of painting and drawing to continually assess, analyse and improve my painting technique over a period of time. This process included discerning how I interpret a story, the elements of the story that I choose to interpret as visual images and symbols, composition, design, choice of colours, and the type of mark or paint stroke, including the layering of paint to achieve my objective, and the actions that would best narrate the three dimensional lived story on an inert two dimensional surface.

The reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983) is the mental and physical stepping back from the painting, the hiatus where I have turned the painting to the wall, to only later (months often) turn it around to then critique it. This critiquing process – a method in the process of painting after putting it away and forgetting about it - allows for fresh eyes when appraising it later. This revisiting allows me to see what the work needs, determining whether the painting is 'working', 'reading well', and what needs to be re-worked in some cases. Such assessment of the aesthetic is very much a conscious and necessary process that leads me to feel whether the painting is nearing completion or is completed. More importantly from Schön (1983), as a continuation of improving my practice, the act of looking back and inwardly after the event involved, turning my reflections and learning into knowledge of myself.

6.6 The Unravelling: Following on from the PP Course - ‘Unpacking that Damn! Suitcase’.

6.6.1 Introduction

The word ‘unravel’ according to the online Encarta dictionary¹¹³ has several definitions - that of “undone” and “coming apart”, “disentangled” and “to make the complexities of something clear and understandable”. What follows here in my writing is an unravelling of the complexities of my purposefulness and paintings in order to make all “clear and understandable”.

The paintings that I unravel in my writing here are inspired by my childhood. Because of the PP Course I have been able to recognise how I have often drawn on symbols from my childhood and used them as metaphors to express myself and social issues.

I have spent the last three years looking back at, and critically reflecting on, the past 42 years of my life. From this experience and reflection, I have learned that the time when I was busy on other things - that is the time between painting the body of work for the PP Course and the consequent later body of work - has allowed me other insights into myself and my practice.

The greatest learning for me has been connected to my identity. In telling/ painting my stories, I set out on a path of facing, challenging and interpreting /expressing my own painful conceptions of myself. Widdershoven in Jousselson and Lieblich (1993:7) writes of how

¹¹³ www.encyclopedia.com/ (Accessed 21/10/2011)

we only become aware of the significance of these experiences by telling stories about them and fusing them with other stories.

Widdershoven is writing about “narrative identity” and explains how stories tell us who we are and that by telling stories (for me this means painting stories), “we change the meaning of our experiences and actions” (1993:7). I know that I only learn from stories if they have a direct bearing on my experiences. Widdershoven articulates that “experience elicits the story and the story articulates and thereby modifies experience” (1993:9).

In the following account, I will focus on a theme running through many of the pieces rather than on each individual piece. This aspect of my artistic expression constitutes a large body of work reflecting the many moods and multifaceted-ness of my artistic practice. Yet it is the pieces titled ‘Rhodesia is Super’, ‘I haven’t unpacked yet’, ‘The Princess years’, and ‘Resolution’ that reflect my living theories, my living contradictions, and my living standards of judgement as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being to the fullest. Some of the pieces reflect a nostalgia for certain aspects of my childhood, but on the whole, thematically, they are about ‘unpacking’ and revealing the physical embodiment of my beliefs and values, and the fact that, ultimately, I am the being I am because of all of my “lived experiences” (Whitehead, 2009 np)¹¹⁴.

6.6.2 Symbols and Recurring images

Many of the images are symbolic and reccur throughout the body of work. These images include birds, cattle, sheep, suitcases, desolate landscapes, barren trees, the mother figures of Mary and the fertility figurine, the Venus

¹¹⁴ <http://www.actionresearch.net> (Accessed 26/02/2011).

of Willendorf¹¹⁵, rifles, camouflage and hands: there are hands everywhere – gesturing, gesticulating, pleading, defying and supplicating.

I cannot go into the depths of symbolism that would be required to truly explain the history and the origins of the recurring images that have become symbols for me, as the scope of this study is not large enough. Instead I give a brief overview of them to contextualise their pertinence in my meaning-making.

I grew up on a farm, in a community that was owned by a large sugar milling corporation called Hulett's. The area is in the South Eastern part of Zimbabwe and was named Triangle, or Tirango in the colloquial. There were vast tracts of bush and occasional baobabs stood like giant sentries in the cane fields, majestic guards which have become part of my repertoire of personal totems. Consequently, I think that I have naturally come to give birds and animals particular significance in my artistic expression, and have often used them over the years to carry a story. My wilderness experiences have heightened my awareness of mankind's continual decimation of the planet, and the barrenness of such landscapes also expresses my awareness and concern about feelings of emotional desolation. My experience of the Rhodesian bush war informs my interpretation of weapons as symbols of power and overwhelming fear. Camouflage represents for me, a false sense of strength, disguise, and the capacity to hide away. I often paint mother figures, as they symbolize, in brief, comfort and the power of the feminine. Hands are the visual expression of profound human emotions, as visual representations of speech, and of conversations and their gesturing is integral with my story telling.

I remember choosing the 'suitcase' PicTopic card in the painting titled 'Self portrait as Storyteller' to symbolise my wish for a spiritual hearth and home.

¹¹⁵ <http://arthistoryresources.net> (Accessed 25/10/2011)

It was only much later after deep reflection that I was able to realise the ‘pull’ of the suitcase because of its continual re-appearance in my paintings. I now see the suitcase as a metaphor for ‘not belonging’ and ‘baggage’ as in ‘everyone has baggage’, which, translated from the colloquial, means to me that all people carry their fears and experiences with them. These experiences generally colour their expectations and outlook on life. In my paintings, the metaphor of the suitcase is both figuratively visual but also profoundly literal.

6.7 The Paintings

The paintings I write of here, although post-PP Course, still reflect my values. Although initially they seem a negation of my values because they reveal isolation and fear, and portray visual symbols of war and aggression, they are not ultimately about that, but about my recognizing them and their importance in functioning effectively as a social being.

6.7.1 I Haven’t Unpacked Yet

That ‘damn’ suitcase followed me from painting to painting. I could not escape it and I was compelled to paint it and repaint it as part of a cathartic technique to face old memories and understand my feelings of dislocation. It was quite a revelation to ‘click’ that I had been carrying these ‘eina’ (painful, yet beautiful) memories with me. These memories have weight. They are heavy and I became conscious that I had been dragging them along with me for years. I realise through introspection and a (kicking, screaming and protesting) determination, how they have shaped my life, my practice as artist, teacher, social being and the values and beliefs that make up me (see Figure 51).

While I paint, I often find myself writing. The act of painting and the flow of the experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1983) seems to allow poetry (I am not

quite sure it is poetry) to manifest. I write on anything, from scraps of paper to even the stencils I am working with (see Figure 50).

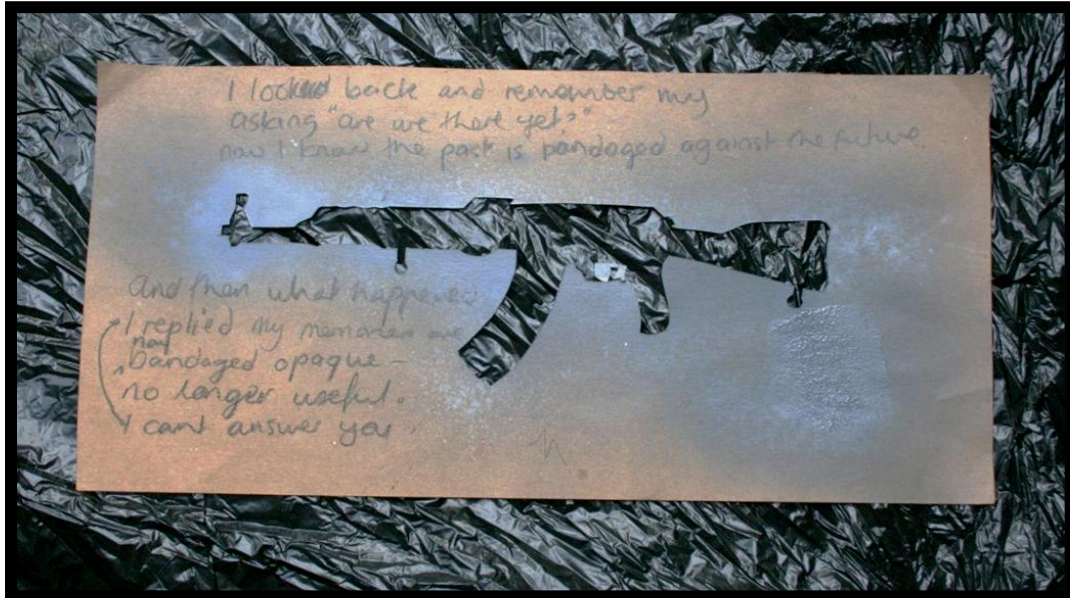


Fig 50: Rifle stencil with poem. (Scott 2011)

I am adding a few of the pieces from my visual journal as they give licence to a form of description that cannot always be adequately expressed. My immersion in the act of painting and its spill over into verbal 'poesis' is akin to a "flow experience", or "optimal experience", a term coined by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1988:3). He describes this flow experience as occurring in moments "when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something that is difficult or worthwhile". He explains there is

a distortion of time, a loss of the awareness of self and everyday problems, and a feeling of transcendence, or oneness with the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988:34).

I experience this 'flow' when I am at my most creative - painting and writing poetry.

I attach the value of creativity to the cathartic experience of 'flow' and its building of a sense of self-worth in the individual. This is very important to me, and is something I have watched again and again in my students over the years. I am very much aware of the significance of flow in the growth and development of the individual, and recognise it especially in myself.

Unpacking

I haven't unpacked yet

Even though I know

That I cannot go home.

Home is a child's memory of

Baobabs, barbels, nungurus,¹¹⁶

Datyas and gakanje;¹¹⁷

Made romantic through

My grown-up eyes and their

Searching for a way out.

Lee Scott (2010)

¹¹⁶ A Shona name for an indigenous fruit we used to eat as children

¹¹⁷ Shona names for crab and frog



Fig 51: 'I haven't unpacked yet'. (Scott 2011, oil on canvas, spray paint, size: 55cm x 70cm)

6.7.2 *Forest of Hands*

I chose to make these tall hand trees because I recognised the consistency of hands in many of my paintings. I wanted the physical act of crafting the pieces of shutter-ply on a large scale - of wrestling with the medium, if you will. I wanted to play with the decorative and graphic motifs I had been developing throughout the painting process so part of the process included making my stencil motifs three dimensional. I cut them out of five millimetre masonite and added them to the surface of the tall structures (see Figs. 52, 53 & 54). This process is a coming together of my "knowledge-in-practice" (Schön, 1983:61) with my reflecting-in-action and I do not separate my "thinking from doing" (Schön, 68:1983).



Fig 52: Photographs of the process of constructing the 'Forest of Hands' (Scott 2011).

Because I have the confidence of years of practice as an artist-practitioner I was able to abstract the emotional intensity that the paintings demand of the viewer, remove some of the angst and make the tree-hands contextual of a grander narrative – a worldwide narrative commenting on the negative impact of war – of all wars on both people and the environment.

These pieces reflect my core values of creativity, playfulness, holism, a determined work ethic, freedom and intense love and passion for what I do as a visual activist.

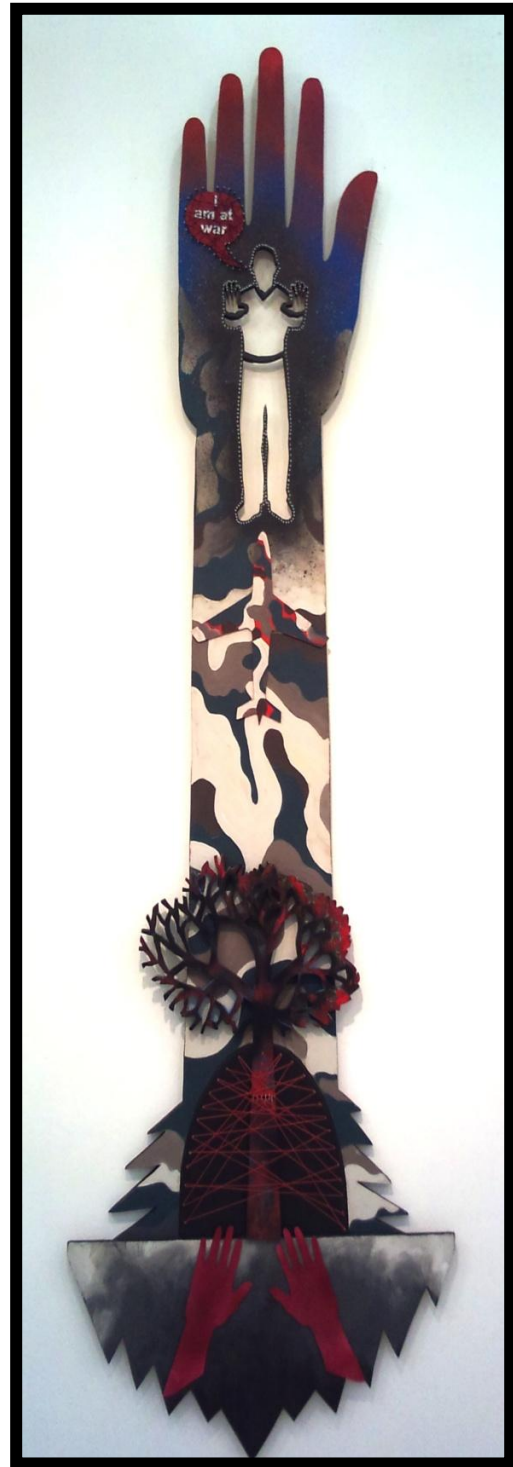


Figure 53: Two pieces from the installation 'Forest of hands'. (Scott 2011, shutter-ply, acrylic, spray paint, sizes: height between 120cm & 230cm)

6.7.3 *The Princess Years*

This painting is in oils, an acrylic paint thickener and spray-paint on canvas. I attach the values of empathy, the importance of inclusion, respect, communication and kindness to this particular painting because the painting has many layers. It is chiefly about feeling excluded by my father as a child, yet as an adult being able to understand why he was like he was and still respect him.

I noticed that I kept on being drawn to a particular blurry black and white photograph in a fashion magazine. It is of a woman sitting enveloped in tulle, pale and luminous against a dark background. I drew and painted it often and initially could not see how it fitted in with the rest of my work. It was the intuitive urge to write that made me understand my compulsion. The poem below was the response that accompanied the act of painting the piece.

Essentially I could never be 'daddy's little princess' in that childhood narrative. He was often away 'defending', for two to three weeks at a time, coming back tick-infested, shadow-eyed, silent, never really home. Representing the ghostliness of my father at that time, I have painted, floating behind the princess figure, a Rhodesian camouflage shirt on a hanger. I painted it in pale line work and can recognise it too as a symbol of the spectre of a time that still hovers around me.



The Princess Years

Palm face up

You read my life

Yet my heart line is flighty

With the AK-ed childhood years and

Bra-ed constraints of puberty

And my wish for princess years that
never happened.

Lee Scott 2008

Fig 54: 'The princess years'. (Scott 2011. mixed media/oil on canvas, size: 120cm x 42cm)

In the painting you see a hand, my hand, holding a Deaths' Head Hawk-moth (Acherontia atropos). I painted it purposefully because according to superstition the moth with its skull and crossbones markings and loud squeak was a harbinger of death, war and disease – pertinent I thought as a way to symbolize my memories.¹¹⁸ The accompanying poem gives vent to my acknowledgement of the loss of closeness and loving relationship because of the war.

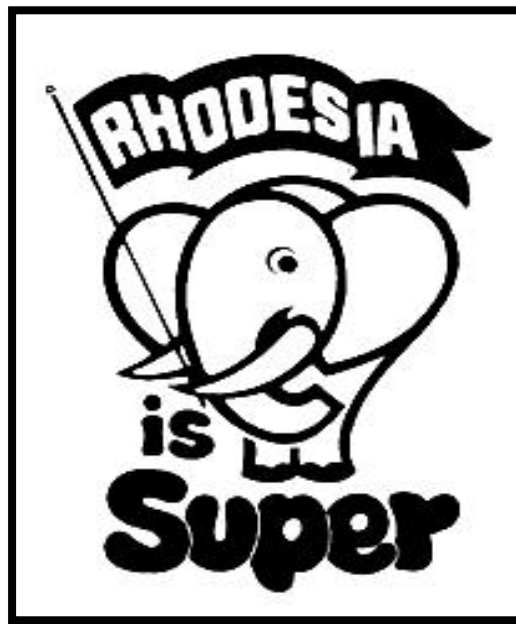


Fig 55: 'Rhodesia is Super' print design¹¹⁹

6.7.4 'Rhodesia is Super'

The 'Rhodesia is Super' painting was the one that took me the longest to paint. It is titled 'Rhodesia is Super' after a logo that was very prominent in

¹¹⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/3311501/Found-in-Wales-folklores-harbinger-of-death.html>

(Accessed 03/11/2011)

¹¹⁹ www.lekkerwear.com/ (Accessed 07/02/ 2010)

the nineteen-seventies, just before Zimbabwe was granted its post colonial identity and independence in 1979. I remember seeing it on bags and T-Shirts during those years.

In my painting, I depict it on the vest I am wearing (see Figs. 56 & 57). I shied away constantly from working into it after the initial stages of painting it up on the canvas. I never put it away, but leaned against a wall in my studio and often looked at it, but found it incredibly difficult to engage with. The 'Rhodesia is Super' painting depicts an image of me in camo-army pants floating above a desolate, pre-dawn or dusk landscape. There is a long narrow dirt road stretching tautly beneath me and there is this plague of rifle silhouettes pushing me further above this landscape. This is not an easy painting for me to explain and I found it physically painful to paint. I had to wrestle with the ghosts that had settled in my inner-child's memory.

I believe this poem that I wrote as a way to analyse my reasons for painting it and as a meta-reflection of the grander narrative it represents, best unravels the myriad of emotional connections it represents.

Closed

My eyes are closed. I don't want to see

My palms face forward gesturing

Helplessness, acceptance, vulnerability

Directly at odds with the facile power of army camouflage

Emblematic of subterfuge and betrayal

Who is betrayed?

The child,

Always the child

With her suitcase left on a dusty road.

Lee Scott 2010.



Fig 56: 'Rhodesia is Super'. (Scott 2011, oil on canvas, spray-paint, (size: 200cm x 60cm))

I asked a friend to critique the painting. My friend exclaimed “Rhodesia? What? Excuse me! How dare you use that word?” She said that I was trying to atone for the ‘white man’s guilt’, and expressing the ex-Rhodesian ‘when we’ nostalgia. Yet she also spoke to me of how, through the act of painting that I was unpacking guilt and also presenting the Rhodesian conflict within the larger palette of humanity caught up in the struggle for liberation. Her opinion was extremely useful as she represents the dominant anti-colonial voice, with a personal background steeped in exile and ‘other-ness’ as a result of unjust oppressive rule and upheaval.

I am grateful for her fiery critique, although I disagree that I am trying to atone for ‘white man’s guilt’. Translating my fear of storying that painting and of revealing myself, I realised that I had resisted using the ‘R’-word because I have loathed being called a ‘when-we’. My intense dislike of being labelled a ‘when-we’ reveals in me what Whitehead identifies in the self as a “living contradiction”¹²⁰ The contradiction here being the recognition of love enveloped in shame, being able to acknowledge an intense love of a country and yet shy away from that acknowledgement because of a fear of rejection and being labelled.

I dislike what the ‘when-we’ label refers to - a particular colonial nostalgia which represents to me a Rhodesian form of apartheid. Yet in my heart’s space, that piece of planet Earth, historically called Rhodesia which is now known as Zimbabwe, is my symbolic home. I refuse to take ownership of the shameful aspects of the ‘Rhodesian identity’, and I realize in retrospect that this has led to a denial on my part which has resulted in a kind of self-exclusion. But there are aspects of my Rhodesian individuality of which I am justifiably, passionately and deeply proud, such as my kinship with the earth:

¹²⁰ www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09).

the animist in me found its place in my being at a very young age in the space called Rhodesia. I also think I would not have developed certain sensitivities, empathy towards others, as well as my values of inclusion, if I have had not been an outsider at 'home' in Rhodesia and an immigrant to South Africa. To me it was important that I lay myself open/bare to get to unpack, as my friend put it, and find a place to shelve my unresolved conflicts and thoughts.

The values this painting reflects are integrity, freedom and respect.

6.7.5 Resolution

One particular painting symbolises a kind of a closure to me. It was one of the last pieces I painted and has a printed background of rifles, dense and layered, which peter away to smaller and increasingly scattered images. In the centre of the composition sits a oval frame enclosing a portrait of my feet (see Figure 57). One of the toes has a ring with the face of the sun on it, and the feet have a luminescence that is offset by the fading red background. I have come to realize that mystical or religious connotations can be attached to the rendering of the feet, that they could be read as the portrayal of martyrdom or crucifixion, however the feet in my painting are from India. Let me explain.

I have been photographing my feet - always barefoot - for years in different places so I had many images to choose from for this painting. I like to see where my feet have walked and I realise they represent, symbolically, my connection to the earth. Yet I unconsciously chose that photograph taken in particularly dusky and pearlescent surroundings in India where I felt a deep serenity. I understand now why I chose this image taken in a moment of profound peace and have used it to explain a symbolically harsh transformation interpreted as a peace offering and a form of resolution.

The values this painting reflects are freedom and well-becoming.



Fig 57: 'Resolution'. (Scott 2011, mixed media, size: 112cm x 45cm)

6.8 Evaluating my Paintings in the Light of my Living Standards of Practice

My living standards of practice (in)form and are (in)formed by my values. The ongoing critical conversations with my 'circle of trusted and critical friends' (referred to in Chapter Three), have been one of the ways that has helped me to evaluate my artworks and their social and educational influence. I have been able to employ self-awareness, describe, critically analyse, evaluate and synthesize my processes, through the useful prompting of Brown's (1994) reflexive self-questioning, and my "living standards of judgement" (Whitehead, 1988), of integrity, empathy, passion, creativity and playfulness. For example for how this approach and analysis leads to an attachment with the living standards of judgement, please see my analysis of my paintings.

6.9 Concluding Reflections

What did I learn from this experience?

I acknowledge the practical improving of my craft, that of an artist – a painter, acknowledging that I have used and applied action reflection cycles, have been able to critically reflect on my various practices, have seen the interconnectedness of my painting practice, with my teaching practice and, as a form of visual activism and social justice, been able to tell my story.

On the whole the learning as an artist painter, and as a teacher, has been multi-layered. I have come to realise that these layers are informed by the values I uphold. This realisation has come to me through 'unpacking my suitcase' and my 'orange net bag of memories' and finding them embodying in my art work. I have learnt that my paintings are not about trying to atone for any form of 'white man's guilt', but are part of a global narrative on transformation and a desire for social justice. My paintings are the story of the children who are born into other peoples' (adult) wars, wars they have no control over and cannot be condemned for, cannot be held accountable for -

and yet are. I have come to learn that we are born into narratives that are beyond our control, which are part of a larger meta-narrative. The meta-narrative for me is the millions of children bearing witness to grown-up wars and atrocities, and carrying those lifelong memory burdens, destined either to repeat the same atrocities, or hopefully and blessedly to be able to right wrongs and live with quiet calm and love, create new meta-narratives in which their children can grow up un-traumatized, loved and loving. My embodied and tacit knowledge is embedded in these paintings, first reflecting years of practice in the technical application of paint and various mediums, and second symbolically (in)forming my intellectual and spiritual growth.

This second body of paintings, drawing inspiration from my childhood, started as just that - a child's memories. I have never been back to the small community I grew up in, for fear of being forced to face deep pain. Through this study, through adult eyes I have eventually been able to conciliate, reconcile and find a place for the memories so that they no longer overwhelm me. Strangely enough, as part of this process I 'Google Earth(ed)' the Lowveld area that I grew up in, and was able to 'fly' over the area, visit the places I loved without actually going there. Google Earth is relatively in real time, so I have been able to move the cursor around, get closer and go along those same dirt roads I used to cycle up and down as a scrawny barefooted youngster, or mentally catch that same farm bus at five a.m. in the morning – we were always the first children en-route to be picked up for school. The fact that I have been able to see and mentally wander the smallness of distances between the fields and particular landmarks, to actually go down those same roads seeing the dusty stunted vegetation, and with synaesthesiac memory, taste the dust in my nostrils and smell the colours of the earth, has put something to bed, has put something to rest, has eased me. I do not know how this, along with the painting 'out' of deeply embedded memories, has facilitated this expulsion of bereavement and sense of loss, but it has. While I

know that a living contradiction (Whitehead,)¹²¹ is about the irresolvable, and that I can never 'go home', I have found much resolution throughout the explorative process of this Master's research. I have come to realise that HOME is an attitude, not a place.

Ultimately my paintings are my attempt to exclude no-one, but to embrace all human beings respectfully to the end of justice and fairness for all.

¹²¹ www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION - (NOT) THE END-REFLECTIONS

“Would you tell me, please,
which way I ought to go from here?”
“That depends a good deal
on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.¹²²

7.1 Recap – What Did I Do?

I set out in this study with a number of purposes in mind, and presented my formal research questions as:

What is the value and role of the PicTopics in generating or communicating a story or message?

How are the PicTopics pertinent to my practice as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being?

How can I improve my practice in a critically reflective self-study, as an artist, researcher, teacher and social being using the PicTopics?

For this critically reflective self-study, I conceptualised and designed a set of pictographic cards – PicTopics - as creative prompts and used them to validate the communication design aspect of my study by showing their pertinence as a creative teaching tool and as a ‘visual voice’ to elicit storytelling and social commentary. I recorded and reflected on the participation of the audience at the artSpace Gallery with the PicTopic cards, on students using them as creative prompts and lastly on how those cards have actively led to my growth and development as an artist, teacher,

¹²² http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/show_tag?id=alice-in-wonderland (Accessed 05/03/2012)

researcher and social being. Marie Huxtable (2009:216)¹²³ writes about the value of enhancing the well-being and 'well-becoming' of all, and sees making one's knowledge public as a gift which may enhance the talents of other human beings. I, in a sense, am using my 'talents' (painting and vision) to create a 'gift' (the PicTopics) in order that others may feel included and can be encouraged to speak their stories by having access to an alternate 'voice'.

The DOT style of pictographic imagery that I based my PicTopics on, I believe, has been successful conceptually. Students of the DUT and the audience at the artSpace Gallery were able to respond with ease to the cards because of a number of factors. The style of graphic representation is so familiar from the mass media that the images on the cards were easily recognisable. These types of images are very much a part of one's everyday visual life in urban environments, hence the ease with which people were able to relate to and interpret the images for their own expression. I also believe that the fact that the brain favours visual storage over the heard or written and that a graphic image is easily recalled (Dowse & Ehlers, 2004)¹²⁴, combined with the playful environments and contexts within which the cards have been used, has been a positive contribution to the usability of the PicTopics.

My analogy of this research having taken me on an 'ant meander', was an important factor contributing to the evolution of this study to the levels or stages it has. The serendipitous ant-like meander by which the course of this study developed (seemingly at odds with the concept of 'design', the

¹²³ ejolts.net/node/139 (Accessed 05/02/2010)

¹²⁴ [http://eprints.ru.ac.za/137/1/sajsci_v100_n11_a35\[1\].pdf](http://eprints.ru.ac.za/137/1/sajsci_v100_n11_a35[1].pdf) (Accessed 23/09/ 2009)

antonym of serendipity), was a part of the natural progression aiding my learning and educational growth.

The lived experiences of the storytellers, the plausibility of their stories and their interpretation of the pictographic images, have all added to the narrative and authenticity of my study. I have 'storied' my dissertation because I have emphasized the value of storytelling as a form of inclusiveness. I have written of how my lived experiences have been part and parcel of the thinking and purposefulness of my study. I have considered this research values-driven and it was important that I relate to the reader, how having certain core values has been influential in the reasoning behind my research. I have stressed the holism of this study and my belief in the interconnectedness of my practice as artist, researcher, teacher and social being. I believe I have certain responsibilities, not only as a teacher, but as a person who firmly believes in social justice and the transformational well-becoming of the individual. The values I attach to inclusiveness are play, fun and creativity. I have shown that my values are interconnected - inseparable - from my practice. I used this approach to justify the 'wholeness' of my values as an approach to my living educational theories.

7.2 What Did I Learn?

Over all, as Leavy writes, I learned that

Integrating artistic processes into educational research is important because this generates unique ways of understanding and representing experiences. Through valuing different ways of perceiving, knowing, and making meaning, an artist-researcher can contribute holistic and intimate perspectives to research. Researcher self-study of making visual imagery while engaged in educational research is one way to extend knowledge of the potential contribution of arts to qualitative research (Leavy 2009:250).

I learned and provided evidence of how the PicTopics are an invaluable tool for people to open up and share their thoughts – whether, questioning, moral,

spiritual, or for fun – and that these stories are a form of social commentary. The stories I was told at the gallery and at the drama workshop, showed me how people are connected through the commonality of experiences and just how intensely I related to those stories.

My belief that the PicTopics can be used as a way to encourage a creative approach to teaching and learning and that the cards can play a transformational role, was demonstrated by the stories documented at the artSpace Gallery, and by the storied performances of the DUT drama students.

I found my research validated by the gift of stories given to me at the artSpace Gallery and that this set me on a path of personal transformation. The PP Course, where I selected and chose to paint certain stories aided the improvement of my artistic and intellectual practice in that I was able to recognise that the stories I chose to re-tell were inclusive of my values, yet, showed me unresolved aspects of myself. These realisations set me on another developmental path. By allowing myself to respond to childhood memories of growing up in the then Rhodesia, and portraying these memories and the educational effect they have had on me as an artist, teacher, researcher and social being, I have had to overcome/transform myself.

The growth and learning that I have experienced in the course of this Master's study has been immense. I have grown in confidence as an artist, and the unravelling of particular memories through the act of painting has laid some old uncomfortable ghosts to rest. Knowing that I was to put up the paintings in a public space, to show my 'true face' to the world, as such, the shame of my Rhodesian roots, was a colossal emotional task to unravel. Yet, cathartically, remembering the hidden beauty behind the shame and portraying that beauty on canvas, acknowledging the story I was born into, instead of denying it, has been pertinent in my growth and ultimately is a form of resolution.

In the words of Whitehead, this activity in itself was a value laden practical activity (1989)¹²⁵. It has aided me, in that, I feel I can now return, go and visit the farming community where I grew up, without the pain of loss, but rather that of acknowledging the wonder of those childhood experiences and their value in forming the person that I am.

7.3 What is the Benefit of my Study to the Reader?

I respond to Brown's questions from the table in Chapter Two. He asks "what is the key benefit to the reader?"(1994:96). I sum up:

- The use of visuals, such as pictographic cards, to aid in the creation of narratives is relevant because "visual images are particularly appropriate to drawing in the participants themselves as central to the interpretive process" (Mitchell, 2008:374).
- Playful ways to release embodied or tacit learning, as seen in the workshop with the drama students, are beneficial as a teaching and possibly an assessment tool.
- Living educational theories¹²⁶, informed by my educational values, of play, fun and creativity, lend themselves to wellbeing and well becoming; there is interconnectivity between play and autonomy that links learning, or rather a demonstration of that learning and wellbeing.
- Past or lived experiences can play a role in determining the artist, researcher or teacher that one is.
- It can be beneficial for an artist, researcher or teacher to recognise the connections between all these roles and the interconnectivity between these practices - none is truly separate from the other, and

¹²⁵ www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09)

¹²⁶ www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html (Accessed 08/07/09)

recognising this can be beneficial in aiding personal growth and research capacity.

7.4 Where to From Here?

I would consider McNiff's comment that "there are no real endings but continual new beginnings" (2002:21)¹²⁷ as an adage well worth adopting. Thus, I find myself excited by the research possibilities still to come.

I intend to develop more images, and realise I need categories of subject matter, for example, pictographs to represent various religions and cultures, sports, household goods, entertainment, the natural world and urban ones.

I have started working on a 'How To' booklet, with various painted illustrations and instructions on how to use the PicTopics. The booklet includes stories and events where the PicTopics have been used and the purposes for which they were used. My intention is to have CD available that includes the booklet, a printable image file for the PicTopics and a box template for the cards to be stored in. It is my aim for people to be able to use this project for their own educational explorations, teaching and assessment strategies.

I have a new series of paintings distilling in my head and on paper. They are a direct result of my learning and resolution achieved through this study.

¹²⁷ <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html> (Accessed 06/10/2009)

AFTERWORD

Australian Aborigines say that the big stories—
the stories worth telling and retelling,
the ones in which you may find the meaning of your life—
are forever stalking the right teller,
sniffing and tracking like predators hunting their prey in the bush.
Robert Moss¹²⁸

Since concluding the writing up of this dissertation an opportunity has come my way for me to visit my 'synaesthesiac memories' of Triangle and I am going up with my family to visit old friends. Even though, as Alice says in Lewis Carroll's book 'Alice in Wonderland', "I can't go back to yesterday, because I was a different person then"¹²⁹, I am not going up with a sacred shrine in my heart, I am looking forward to see the differences and the changes. Yet, I will not forget the little girl – my inner child - who wrote these words:

Who is betrayed?
The child,
Always the child
With her suitcase left on a dusty road.

¹²⁸ www.storyteller.net/articles/160 (Accessed 14/01/2012)

¹²⁹ http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/show_tag?id=alice-in-wonderland (Accessed 05/03/2012)

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'Rhodesia is Super' (image) 2012. Available: www.lekkerwear.com/ (Accessed 07 February 2010)

Appendix A: Sleeve with DVD

Appendix B: Definition of Terms

Holism:

There are varying philosophical versions of holism and it is generally understood that “whole entities as fundamental components of reality, have an existence other than the mere than a sum of their parts”.¹³⁰ For instance a medical practitioner will not necessarily only treat the symptoms the patient exhibits, but will also explore, environmental, social and possibly psychological/spiritual explanations for the patients illness.

I refer to Smuts’ definition of holism because I found that so many aspects of this study could not be seen in isolation, that every aspect and experience I factored into this study led to the improvement of the many practices I have. Practices - those of artist (visual activist), researcher, teacher, social being- that cannot be seen in isolation of each other and in fact make up the (w)hole of me. The idea that new experiences have grown out of earlier experiences links up with my understanding of Smuts’ holistic process of the dynamic generation of creativity (Smuts, 1927)

PicTopic:

‘PicTopics’ stands literally for ‘pick a topic’. The participant, by choosing a card or cards, is choosing a prompt to help them find a topic to conceptualise, write, tell, perform or paint about in accordance to the teaching brief.

Social being:

By ‘social being’ I mean that I am a sociable person, that I am interested in people and as a humanitarian enjoy speaking to people and getting to know about their ‘world’ and their perceptions of their social realities.

¹³⁰ www.dictionary.com (Accessed 03/02/2013).

Social justice:

When I refer to social justice, I am referring to the philosophy of sincerely believing in fairness, equality and equal opportunity.

Visual activist and visual voice:

I consider myself a 'visual activist' because the canvas is my voice and activism, according to www.dictionary.com, is the "policy of taking a direct and often militant action to achieve an end especially a political or social one". Hence I use the canvas as a loudhailer to allow my 'visual voice' to be heard/seen. I do not define myself as militant however, and even though activist art is by definition 'real world' orientated and is "historically specific and aims to address particular cultural, political and social concerns with a view to producing concrete social change". (Klebesadel, 2011) ¹³¹

¹³¹ <http://klebesadel.wordpress.com/2011/05/02/activist-art-art-that-works/> (Accessed 02/02/2013).

Appendix C: Acronyms

AAC: Augmentative and Alternate Communication

CCFOs: Critical Cross-Field Outcomes

DOT: Department of Transport

DUT: Durban University of Technology

ISOTYPE: International System of Typographic Picture Education

KZNSA: Kwa-Zulu Natal Society of Arts

PPCourse: Professional Practice Course

SeStuTHESA: Self-Study for Transformative Higher Educational Studies and Social Action

TES: Transformational Educational Studies

Appendix D: The PicTopic Cards





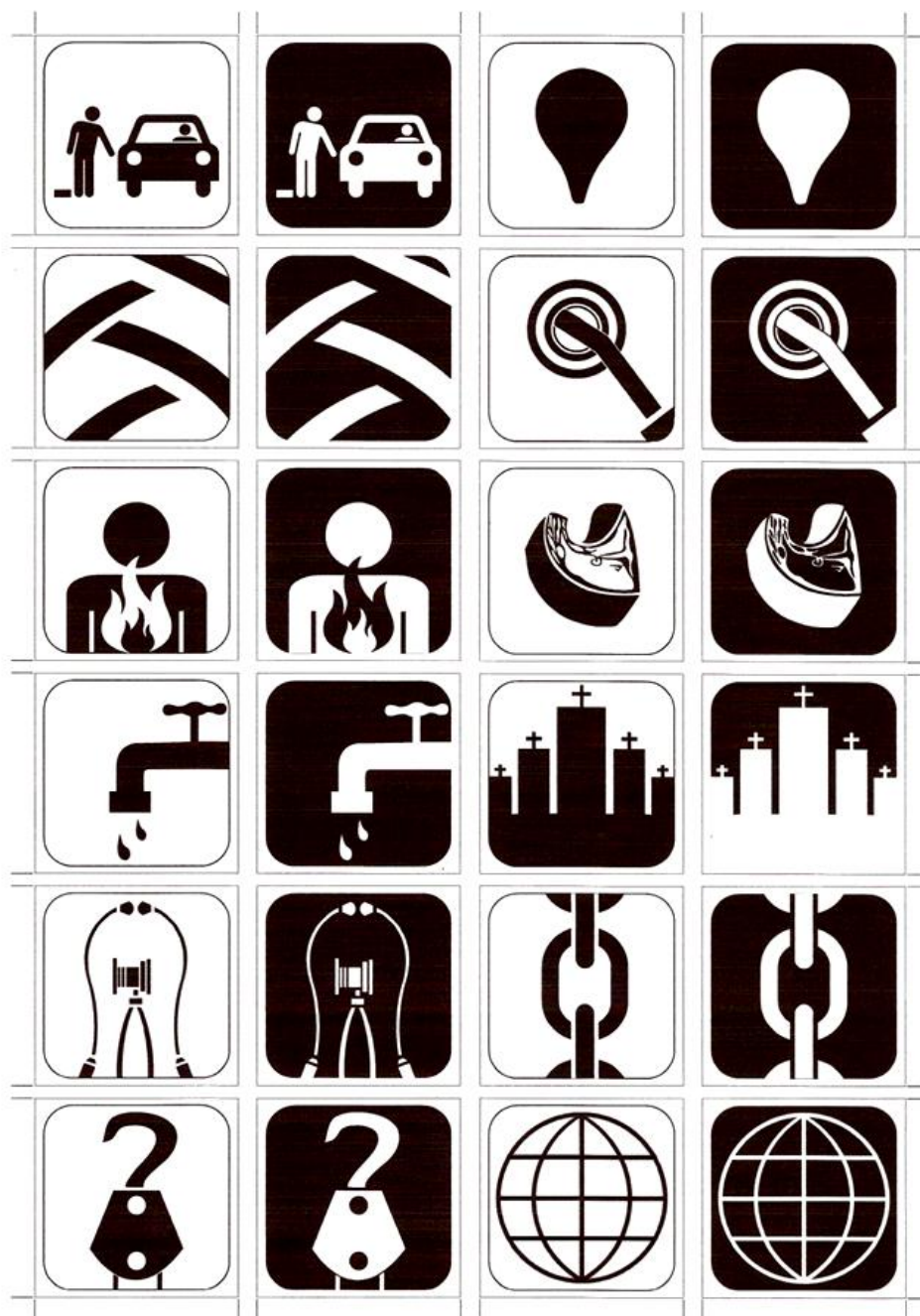


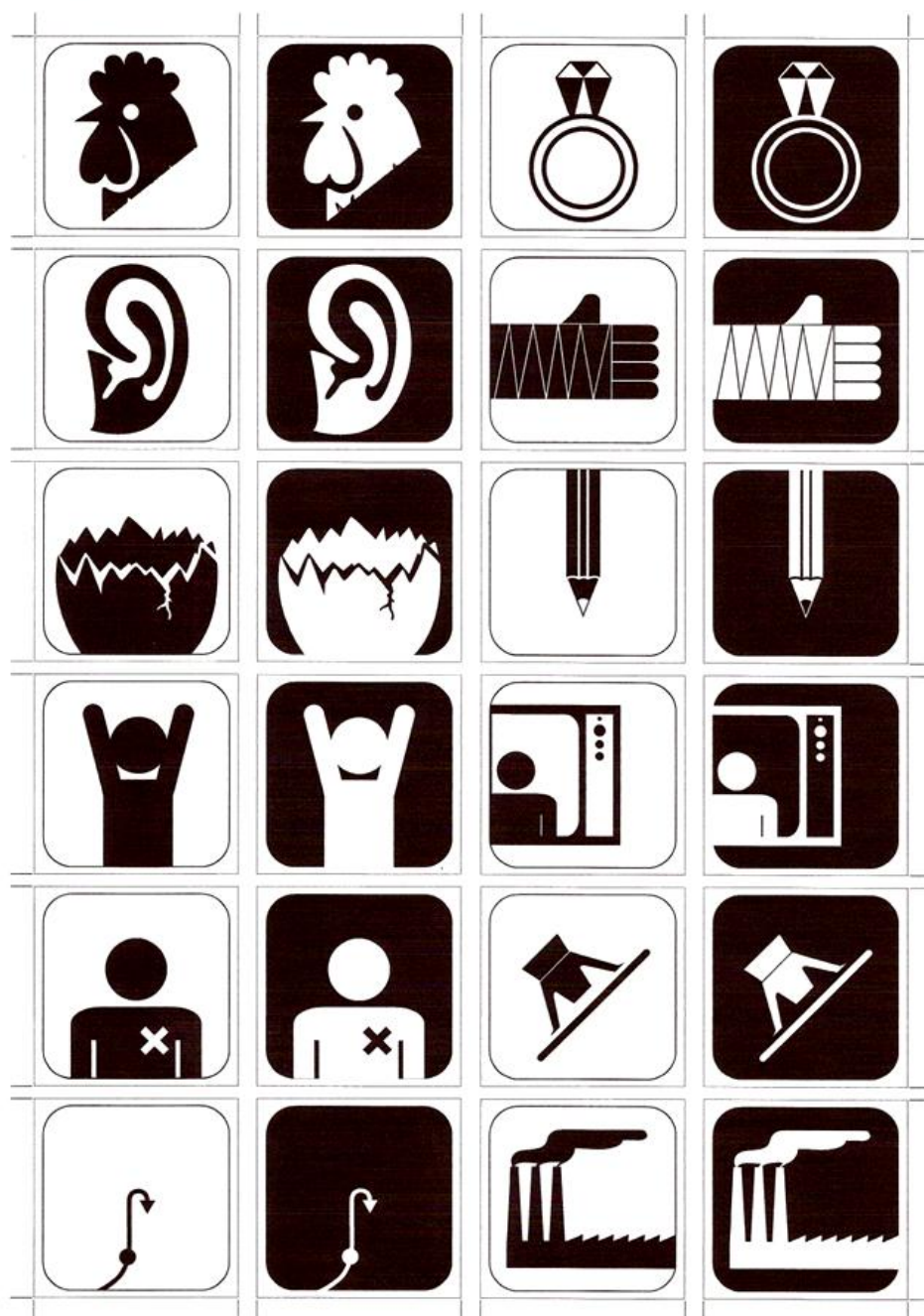












Early draft PicTopic designs not used in final set for reasons of conciseness.



Appendix E:

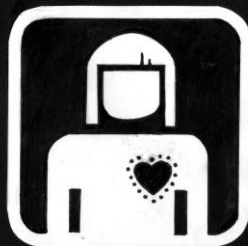
Aims and objectives of the Kwa-Zulu Natal Society of Arts ¹³²

1. To foster the development of the visual arts in KwaZulu-Natal and to assist artists and art groups, regardless of race, creed, age or gender.
2. To make the visual arts more accessible to the people of the region by means of exhibitions, education and interaction.
3. To promote and facilitate exhibitions to effect the sale of works by artists.
4. To introduce art programmes, both vocational and creative, to cater for those who do not have access to formal education in the visual arts.
5. The Society shall not align itself to any political party or movement.
6. The Society shall be a non-profit organisation and all of its activities shall be carried out with an altruistic or philanthropic intent.

¹³² <http://www.kznsagallery.co.za/resources/docs/KZNSA-Constitution.pdf>

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Pictographic Cards



as
**Creative
Prompts**

PicTopic

Using **VISUAL IMAGES** to
elicit **CREATIVITY &
LEARNING**

Illustrations by Lee Scott
2010



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Part 7: Other stories

Part 8 Conclusion

Part 8: Questionnaires

INTRODUCTION

"Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature."

Tom Robbins

I believe creativity and deep learning can be enticed and prompted in light hearted, visual and playful ways. I remember when I was at school and then later at a tertiary institute that the classes that were visually stimulating, engaging and allowed the subconscious to rise to the occasion, were the most memorable.

We live in an increasingly ocular-centric world and with the mass media and advertising, are becoming increasingly attuned to marketing that uses visual images. So to me using pictures of objects and people interpreted in a graphic style that I see everyday to facilitate creativity and story-telling, makes perfect sense.

I have named this educational tool 'PicTopic' and it is licensed under a creative commons license. I want you to use these cards in your own way. I have written up a 'small way' to use

the cards, but would encourage you to use them in any way that would be of benefit to yourself and your students.

I would appreciate feedback on what you have done whether positive or negative as I value sharing knowledge for the betterment of all.

You may write to me at lees@dut.ac.za

Much appreciated – enjoy.

WHAT IS 'PicTopic'?

'PicTopic' is an educational tool presented as a set of cards. There are 100 cards in a pack. The cards are 7cm x 6,5cm each and every card has a different image on it. These images are in black and white and in a style of depiction called pictographic. Another word for pictograph is pictogram.



A pictogram is an image that stands for complex facts and its function is that of quick and clear communication without language or written words. The pictographic images in the pack are simple silhouetted depictions of objects and figures. In our urban environment we can see pictograms everywhere we go. For example the triangular sign at the side of the road showing a man digging is a pictogram. The image of an airplane indicating the turn off to the airport is another image most people are familiar with.

WHAT ARE THE PicTopic CARDS FOR?

These cards were conceptualized initially as a playful, fun way to create and tell stories and for people to interact with one another in an informal manner. However they can be used as an educational tool in a number of ways. The cards can be used to aid:

- Creative writing skills
- On the spot oral presentations

- Script writing and mini performances
- The creation of posters and design projects
- As part of an assessment strategy to assess learning that has taken place

Essentially, they can be used in any way one see's fit. They are designed to stimulate the imagination in a playful way. They function as creative prompts or subliminal triggers. The different images when placed together can set off a chain of associations and aid the creation of stories or narratives.

WHO CAN USE THEM?

Any one can use them. Seven year olds at junior primary school have used them to develop their writing skill. Drama students at tertiary level have used them very successfully to create fifteen minute skits. There is no 'wrong' way to interpret an image; how you interpret the image on the card and use it is up to you. This booklet is written and directed for the student or user and is a simple step by step guide with images of one story that was created and narrated to myself.

"To play is to listen to the imperative inner force that wants to take form and be acted out without reason. It is the joyful, spontaneous expression of one's self. The inner force materializes the feeling and perception without planning or effort. That is what play is."

Michelle Cassou and Stewart Cubley in *Life, Paint and Passion*

HOW CAN I USE THEM, WHAT DO I DO?

Step one:

You can either go through the pack and select +- 7 cards that catch your eye or if this is a class project, random cards from the shuffled pack can be given to each student. You may select up to 10 cards, but more than that seems to complicate matters.



Step two:

Go through the cards you have chosen and select the ones' you can relate to. You do not have to use all the cards. There are bound to be some that you feel will not work with the story that you want to create.



Step three:

Start laying out the cards in an arrangement that helps you to connect the images together. Move the cards around and create a logical sequence for your storyline. Your layout does not need to be linear, as in 'left to right' (a straight line), but can be arranged in a

creative way. Use your cell phone (or somebody else's) to photograph your work. Keep this photograph as a record of your storyline.



Step four:

Write up your story bearing in mind the project or brief it is for and present it.

Things to factor in: it is a good idea to film performances and orals because they can be used by the student(s) to critique themselves and each other.

THE TALE- Roy's Story



When Roy was first given this random selection of cards he looked quite disgruntled. I watched him go through them with this frown on his face, laying them down and shuffling them around, trying different compositions until he eventually decided that a particular card 'did not go' and he could not use it. The image was of a child on a swing. This is his story:



NEWS HEADLINES: THE ATTACK!

He saw the whole story as something he had seen on the news on TV and not as a first hand experience. He spoke about this airplane taxi-ing down the runway and just as it was taking off, it was attacked by terrorists. He said the plane tried desperately to take off properly but it was too badly damaged and then pointing to the 'splash' card, described how it crashed into the ocean. Narrating and gesticulating to me, he said that the sea was close by the airport and that when the plane plummeted into the sea it made this huge splash and shattered into a million pieces. He then explained that the police and ambulances rushed to the scene but they were too slow and nobody survived. Then he said:

“The end”

If you look at Roy's final layout with the cards, you will notice that he moved away from the linear left to right sequencing (with a bit of encouragement), and re-grouped the cards. He grouped the road marking card; the airplane; the gunman and splash card in a circular clockwise composition and placed the vehicle card on it's own to the right. To him the main event was the attack and demise of the plane and everybody on

board. He explained the police force and ambulances were too late and that is why that card was placed away from the main grouping of cards.

What I have found very interesting with many of the stories I have been told is the insight I am given into individuals and their societal concerns. The cards seem to trigger subliminal reactions and function at times as a kind of social barometer. I would be interested to know what you think about this.



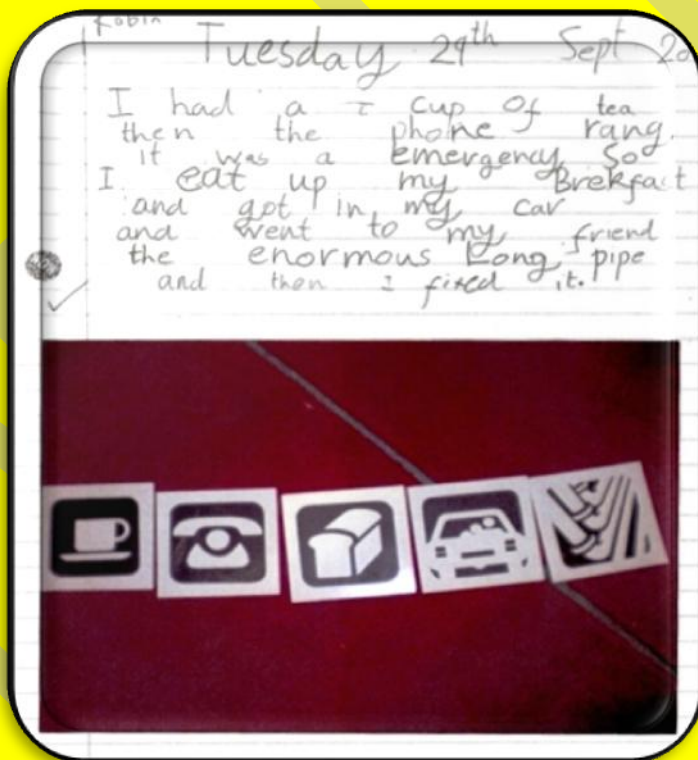
OTHER STORIES

With School Children

A creative writing exercise was done with seven year old school children. They were given a random number of cards and then asked to create and write a story using the cards as prompts. They then narrated their stories to the class teacher who filmed them. The whole setting was very casual. The children were sitting on the carpeted floor and they created their stories in a very relaxed environment. The class teacher

found the PicTopic cards very useful as a tool to encourage creative writing skills. She thought that the autonomy of the children to be able to create their own stories from the cards was a very positive contribution to the outcomes of the creative writing exercise.

Here is an image of one of the stories:



With Drama Students

From a workshop I conducted with drama students I have chosen one of the story-skits presented that day. The class was divided into groups and ten randomly chosen cards were given to each group. From the cards the students created their own scripts. They were given an hour and a half to practice for fifteen minute performances. There were a variety of performances including dance, poetry and singing.

These three cards were used by one of the groups to create a script about marriage in various cultures. The performance was very humorous with the cards being used as symbols to demonstrate the 'fire of love' that brings (hooks) men and women together.



CONCLUSION

"The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves."

Carl Jung

I really believe I have to 'play'; that creativity, play and learning go together. I have found and recognize this as a crucial part of my development as a social human being. So, please use these cards as a way to craft narratives; as a way to trigger creativity; as a way to access and assess deep learning and above all, enjoy the process.



QUESTIONNAIRE 1.

I requested earlier in this booklet that I would appreciate feedback when using these cards. You may write to me at lees@dut.ac.za

These first questions are for people/students using the cards:

- Which images triggered a response from you and why do you think you responded to them?
- Which images did you leave out and why?
- Did you find the pictographic cards useful as creative prompts?
- If so, why and how were they useful?
- If not, what, in your opinion can be done to make them more user friendly?
- What other images would you like to see on the cards?

QUESTIONNAIRE 2.

For the lecturer/ teacher/assessor:

- I would like to know how successful/ effective (or not) you felt the pictographic cards were at prompting the 'visual expression' of what the students have been learning.

- Do you think that the playfulness of the visual prompts and it being a kind of a 'game' helped the students to be creative in the design of their performances, orals, creative writing etc?
- I feel that giving the students the autonomy to create their very own stories/skits really enables them to get into the whole flow of things and to certainly show their exuberance whole heartedly. What do you think about this?



**"Play gives children
a chance
to practice what
they are learning."**

Fred Rogers