

How Active Engagement in Art Assists the Artist in the Process of Self-awareness

Mohamad Javad Ahmadi

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Abstract

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Javad Ahmadi

This dissertation is a phenomenological study on the origin of expressive arts as an innate human need rooted deeply in the psyche in order to grasp and relate to the human condition. Carl Gustav Jung said, “Life has no rules and that is its mystery.” Art compensates for the chaos that originates and often rules life.

The history of art and its evolution in society was explored to paint a picture of the experiences that dominate and leave permanent etchings of the complexities, attachments, and traumas on the psyche. I explored the history of art and its ability to stimulate curiosities, discoveries, and learning.

Additionally, I followed the birth of art education and its crossroads within the discovery of the unconscious mind and Jungian psychology. I followed the effects of the unconscious mind and psychology on art and art education, the ecological agents of the Industrial Revolution, the birth of the middle class, and the new accessibility of art. I also discussed the Industrial Revolution and its impact on pushing the artist to new interior boundaries of altered states and the birth of abstract art.

Moreover, I looked at expressive art, painting, poetry, and sculpture as the foreground to discover the psychic energy and complexes that stimulate and inspire the artist. I presented eight artist interviews randomly chosen from different backgrounds, specialties, and age. The data

analysis process allowed me to gain insights into the artists' perceptions of how art has enriched the development of their psyches and their lives.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Ahmad F Ahmadi and Effat F Ahmadi.

Marjan, Amin, and Kiana, my forever loved ones,

and my sister, Dr, Maryam Ahmadi, for her love and support.

And my older Brother Mohammad T Ahmadi for being there whenever I needed him.

To Dr. Lisa Miller, my spiritual mentor and savior, for believing in me and opening the door.

I am beholden to you for all you have done for me! My teacher and my sage!

Dr. Hafeli, for her kindness, guidance, going above and beyond, and

Dr. Athan, for her inspiration, resolve, and discipline.

Dr. Joseph Wagenseller, for six years of therapy, learning and unlearning,

Dr. Mitch Saskin, for his empathy, humanity, and friendship,

Dr. Randi Dickson, for pushing me on, and

Dr. Mary Volpe, a legend in her field.

Jaffar Tabib, my cousin, who told me to go after my dreams,

and supported me every step of the way.

To Tom Kashi, the sweetest and kindest friend and cousin.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

As a young poet and later as a painter, I have found solace from my existential angst through the artistic process. The act of creativity makes life more palatable. My art has also come to make me feel like more of an individual, unique in my experience and ability to express thoughts, emotions, and perspectives. I believe that there is a 'becoming' every time I put pen to paper or paint the landscape of my unconscious. This is an experience beyond the logic of place and time, like a certain fermentation happening within me. Rumi, the Persian Poet, questioned the absurdity of life similarly to what Sartre and Camus referred to as existential angst. These writers pondered the unanswerable eternal questions, such as Why am I here? and What is the purpose of life? These remain the questions that have perplexed humanity from the beginning of time. Furthermore, I had noticed how my attempts at poetry had opened new horizons for my imagination and how that made me feel more unique an individual. I also felt a certain pride in being called a poet and a writer amongst my classmates. I enjoyed my preoccupation with words and the sense of release that lifted me afterward. I personally felt the upheaval that art brings to the soul and was curious if other artists have had experience this experience.

There were ambitious attempts by prehistoric people to express their psyches by depicting etchings on cave walls as an affirmation of being. This was a way of saying, "I have been here," a unique individual organism with the privilege of consciousness to assess and analyze their surroundings and inner world (Zorich, 2014). Greek scholars first used art as a visual stimulus toward cathartic cleansing and as a purgative cure in temples in Ancient Greece. There is a resurfacing of such practices in research and therapy. There is further recognition of

the life of spirit and inner sanctities of the mind through a new understanding of the unconscious and its role in the direction and focus of our lives (Brooks, 1998).

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche expanded on his idea of living creatively as part of the artist's life. Nietzsche divided creativity into conflicting energies: the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian is the emotional, irrational intellect heavily rooted in passion and desires, and the Apollonian is the rational intellect heavily rooted in logic. Nietzsche believed Apollonian intellect was more popular within society at the time, while the Dionysian intellect was being neglected as emotions were often represented passively. He also thought that there must be a balance between the two in any progressive society and presented artworks such as the Greek Tragedies as an example to reach that balance. Nietzsche (1872) noted:

We shall do a great deal for the science of aesthetics, once we perceive not merely by logical inference, but with the immediate certainty of intuition, that the continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollonian and Dionysian duality: just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations. (p. 24)

Nietzsche believed that the display of human emotions, grief and joy and attributes like courage and heroism, would make us aware of the beauty in life, as do life-affirming values such as morality, empathy, and the expressions in loss or love. Nietzsche preferred the catharsis of emotions over the dry rationality of logic. He warned of the bleakness of life without emotions. Descartes (1637) declared, "I think therefore I am!" and that started the age of reason and ascended humankind to the throne as the conscious animal with the gift of deduction and reason. The Renaissance took that further and after the Scientific Revolution. Human innovation brought on more logical ambitions to explore the boundaries of math and logic, physics and chemistry. Though such ventures brought many inventions and discoveries, they also created new barriers that separated humanity from animals and nature. The scientific

potential of chemistry and exploring the micro-potential of elements and the extent of their correlation in creating new boundaries and new elements promoted the rise of industrial science and medical science as the sciences of the future.

The opportunities that city life offered further separated people from the languid lifestyle of villages and small towns. Humans learned to focus on understanding the laws that governed scientific evolution in elements and their relationship to external factors. Scientific law replaced natural law. The age of reason and deductions of logic became the dominant culture of academia and science. The role of the unconscious in the creation of art had not been established. The artist, and more specifically the painter, had become technicians that excelled in depicting their external life. Still-life, portraits, and landscapes were the revenant scenes capturing the artists' eyes. They excelled in creating new hues and techniques yet all in the service of depicting the energy of life in the moment (The Scientific Revolution | Boundless World History). Confusing the Industrial rev with the Scientific rev? Age of reason with Industrial rev? Cultural history is misleading and confusing (*The Scientific Revolution | Boundless World History*).

Impressionism was the first movement that challenged the truth of natural lines and shapes by creating landscapes and scenes out of focus and fluid. For the first time, the viewer had become privy to something more entirely unique, taking a role in the impressions of the artwork. I believe that the bleak pastures of industrial life and city living, at last, had forced the artist to look elsewhere for an unexpected sort of beauty, scenery, and art. The artist found out that the imagination of the unseen or the reality of what could be within a different prism allowed the artist to explore a more individualistic form of creativity (*Impressionism | Boundless Art History*).

The creation of the camera replaced the painting of portraits and still life. The impressionist style brought a whole new prism of the artist's vision and allowed the artist the liberty to be more involved in showcasing and creation of his vision. Monet mastered the art of impressionist painting. The Post-impressionist era had its own masters. Gauguin and Van Gogh became the trailblazers of this transition, breaking the boundaries of line and color, allowing a more deformed representation of beauty in their work. The inner world of the artist became the new subject and individuality. Munch ventured further with the possibilities of lines, colors, and deformity of shapes, faces, and objects. He colored the reality of perceptions around him with the hues of his pathologies, complexes, and fears. The transition to get away from reality became complete with his painting titled *The Scream*. This famous painting depicts a deformed face that is alien in its physicality yet potent in the depiction of fear and hysteria.

Art created a vehicle for being against The Industrial Revolution, and its harsh living conditions as foreshadowed by philosophers like Kant and Descartes. Art makes life palatable and allows for rich discoveries concerning the human condition. Art provides a shield from the cold delusions and sensibilities of existential angst that mercilessly bear on humanity. The poet John Keats referred to this as negative capabilities (McNiff, 1992 p. 5). The revolution in France in the late 1800s and the American revolution changed the structures of the societies in Europe and brought on the birth of the middle class. Art was no longer reserved for nobility and affluent circles. Art became more accessible to the masses and found direction towards broader sensibilities. New venues became the alternative to the Salons that were semi-annual exhibitions by the Royal Academies of Art in France and England, established in the 17th and 18th centuries. These institutions and their directors had monopolized the public taste with their affinity for traditional art. The emergence of democracy also emancipated the common

individual from a life of servitude and brought new optimism to their sense of destiny and personal growth (*Edgar Degas (1834–1917): Painting and Drawing | Essay | The Metropolitan Museum of Art | Heilbronn Timeline of Art History*).

The 19th century gave birth to abstract art, which was the natural evolution of Romanticism. The abstract movement promoted subjectivity, the primacy of the artist, the role of inspirations with emphasis on imagination, and the role of the unconscious as the main instigators and stimulus in the creation of art. There was no room for imitation and idolization. “It should be remembered that a picture—before being a war-horse, a nude, or an anecdote of some sort—is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order” (Denis et al., 2010, p. 73). The artist became more of a creator rather than an imitator, which brought a new sense of elation and pride to his/her personhood. The artist became not only the prophet but the god and the creator with boldness and uncompromising vision to stand on his/her own and rebel against the establishment. The artist turned away from limited sight and discovered the infinite territory of the unconscious. Abstract and Cubism led to new schools of Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, and Futurism, within the first two decades of the 20th century. During the same period, Psychology was struggling to become more than a movement and school of thought among Jewish intellectuals. Psychology was attempting to establish itself as a new science. Freud reintroduced the concept of the unconscious, which had been discovered earlier by Marcus Aurelius as a scholarly idea amongst Greek philosophers. It was also seen in Nietzsche’s literature. Freud elaborated on it and made the exploration of the unconscious the foundation of his psychology (Adams, 1994).

Unconscious theory focuses on the primitive instinctive desires that are mostly painful and too dark to be realized. Subsequently, they are locked away in a lair underneath the

consciousness. The unconscious mind contains our biologically based instincts (Eros and Thanatos) representing the primitive urges of sex and aggression (Freud, 1915). Freud argued that our primitive urges often do not reach consciousness because they are unacceptable to our rational, conscious selves. People have developed a range of defense mechanisms (such as repression) to avoid knowing what their unconscious motives and feelings are. Further research by Jung suggested that the unconscious mind is always in a depressive state and there is an innate need in it to become conscious. However, such a transition can be dangerous since there are irrational impulses and disturbing beliefs, fears, and complexes in the conscious mind. The suppression of these psychic energies cannot last without creating symptoms of anxiety and mood changes. These impulses should be brought up to conscious awareness under the guidance of therapists so they can be explored and remedied (Berlin, 2011).

Freud's unconscious theory was eventually referred to as the personal unconscious since it dealt only with psychic energies and irrational impulses that were limited to everyone's life experiences. The purpose of the theory was to define the effect of the unconscious and therefore its power in dominating the psyche. Carl Jung discovered the Collective Unconscious which was infinite and limited only to the length of creation from the beginning of human beings. He believed the psychic energies and impulse that had occupied the human psyche from the beginning of time were still in circulation. Moreover, he believed that these energies were presented in primordial images and symbols from previous civilizations. However, the prevalence of such primitive impulses and psychic energies had to be framed in the Archetypes which were derived from Mythology and cultural storytelling of all human beings, tribes, groups, culture, and religions. Archetypes became the frameworks that were recognized to the same measure and meanings by all cultures (Shamdasani, 2003).

Carl Jung traveled extensively throughout the world. He visited the tribes of the Aztecs in South America, African tribes, and the Indians in North America. Jung found out that these civilizations had a surprisingly similar common understanding of Archetypes such as the Father, the Mother, the Hero, the Sun, and others credited with the same attributes and powers in folklore. The Archetype of the Hero had the same wisdom and power in the Indian tribes as it did in the African tribes. Jung discovered these Archetypes in the mythology of many different cultures. He studied them and created a large field of archetypes, which became the historical framework to decipher the collective unconscious. Consciousness has been a more recent evolution of the human psyche, and the human had evolved mentally as it had physically, and the mythologies and archetypes became the history of that evolution (Jung, 1981).

The creative process reveals the content within the unconscious which brings consciousness to inner conflict. This is part of the therapeutic potential in art. Moreover, this dynamic establishes art and creative expressions helpful for counseling and the healing process. Anna Freud (1946) observed that the artists' process of interpretation of symbols becomes a shortcut between the depth of the unconscious to the peaks of consciousness. The arts make the therapist privy to the overt and covert landscapes of the psyche (Lisa, 2005). Jung viewed art as an antidote to stress, anxiety, and traumatic emotions by spending the psychic energy and impulses within the fervor of its process, restoring inner calms and quieting the mind (Malchiodi, 2006).

I have come to experience the crossroads of psychology and art and the unique symbolic terrains they share. I also witnessed how these disciplines impacted my students and made them aware of their unconsciousness. Forough, the young Persian poet, said after visiting Louvre: "Art

makes me religious. I wanted to stand and say the Namaz, the Islamic daily prayer in front of each piece of art I saw there.” Similarly, art lifts me to a higher level of consciousness.

Considering my own experiences, since artwork has been a conduit for my own growth and development, I wonder if the same can be said for other artists. My preoccupation with this question has led me to explore this topic with a group of artists, relating to their personal experiences in the practice of their creativity.

Problem Statement

The creative process can be seen as a pathway toward self-awareness. However, little is known about how active participation in art fosters self-awareness. The Buddhist Monk Matthieu Ricard (2016), a prolific author and thinker, shed light on the potential art holds when coming to know oneself. He wrote:

Sometimes with nature or with art, you experience greater insight, a real moment of enlightenment, or a luminosity that connects you with the world or nature or others. By understanding the nature of your mind, you naturally come to what we call intuition and insight. These moments come from your practice.... Consciousness is an experience. It goes deeper and deeper into the experience, behind mental constructs and the veil of your emerging tendencies. You come to your natural wisdom. So, intuition or inspiration is the experience of yours. It is like seeing a small patch of blue sky amidst the clouds—and you try to widen that patch through personal transformation. (Vol. 37. no. P 121)

Due to the mystery connected to this process, further research is warranted to understand how active engagement in art assists the artist in her/his process of self-awareness.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the influence that art has on the artist’s sense of self-awareness. This study included interviews with eight contemporary artists.

Research Questions

1. How do artists describe the influence of their art on their self-growth?
2. How do artists experience the relationship between solitude and the process of creating art?
3. In what ways do artists characterize Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as it relates to emergence of introspective art?
4. How do artists describe the impacts of the artistic process on their emotions?

Approach

For this study, which focused on the subjective, individual perspectives of the participants, I chose a qualitative exploratory approach. The primary method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with eight artists. The purpose of the interviews was to explore if art allows for a unique exploration of experiences within the creative process that subsequently leads to a heightened level of self-awareness.

Additional supportive data were collected by conducting a focus group consisting of six artists who were not part of the interviews but met the same criteria. I worked with the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) to meet all requirements for conducting interviews, including obtaining informed consent from all participants. The rights of participants and confidentiality have been fully acknowledged and protected following IRB regulations and the highest ethical standards. I communicated with participants the reasons for the study and the anticipated benefits of the research. Full details describing all aspects of the approach are described in Chapter III on Methodology.

Anticipated Outcome

While conducting this study, I anticipated receiving comprehensive, emotional replies that came from the thoughts and experiences of the interviewees. I anticipated participants sharing numerous memories, sentimental thoughts, emotions, and unexpected moments of clarity once I was connected to each subject's unconscious through art. Once analyzed, coded, and written, these data may be used for more in-depth studies in psychology and art.

Assumptions

As the researcher, I held the following assumptions as I embarked on this study: That art is the reactionary manifestation of the individual in his/her relation to the ecological landscape in the exterior life. There are also psychic impulses that allow the individual to see beyond their senses, into the chaos and harmony of the interior life. These psychic impulses cause growth in the comprehension of his/her place and purpose in the universe. These creative expressions come to the individual in the form of art. It is through this artistic expression that one finds salvation and reaches transcendence. The individual also prompts his/her culture throughout the creative process.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study was to find new approaches to showcase the importance and urgency of art in life—particularly as related to the process of gaining a heightened level of self-awareness. This study sought to illustrate how art engages unknown emotional and psychic territory that should be discovered and explored for betterment in the quality of life. The significance of conducting this research was to establish art as one of the most potent remedies to lighten the existentialist angst that is prevalent amongst students at every level of education.

Positionality and Biases

Rumi said that your damage is your gift, that is how light gets inside you! For centuries, there has been a fascination surrounding artists and their psychological pathologies (Grant & Daniel, 2018). For many artists, this refers to the damage that taxes or pushes an individual toward finding an anterior reality other than the one in which they live, often contextualized by parental complexes that saddle many people throughout their lives. This may result in a generational pattern that is inherited from fathers, mothers, and their forefathers and foremothers. Once we look through the lives of the artist, we may find out that they were damaged, and that trauma can be passed down.

For example, there are stories about Munch, Van Gogh, Virginia Wolfe, and Sylvia Plath regarding how they all carried their pathologies through their art (Wolf, 2001). There is also the school of thought about the wounded healer which becomes the basic pathology of the scholars in psychology. More specifically, psychoanalysis suggests that there is a relation between the artist and the altered reality (Garret, 2012) which does not fit the uniform blueprint of life to which most of us adhere. As it relates to my own artistic development, I have also suffered from a mother complex, alongside other parental issues. I found my escape in books early in life, wrote poetry since I was 10, and continued writing all my life. When I started therapy, my therapist prompted me to take up painting and drawing to help me delve deeper into my psyche.

Carl Jung believed that making one's unconscious conscious was what every individual must do to get to know himself/herself (Jung, 1940). Furthermore, Jung asserted that the unconscious is always in a depressive mood since it is privy to most of what happens in our lives and it needs to show itself; therefore, exposure comes through our dreams and our art. Specifically, our unconscious life has been practiced and promoted by artists such as Kandinsky.,

Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, and Pollock. Moreover, the whole school of abstract paintings, which puts most of its core in symbolic paintings, is also part of the language of the unconscious in psychology (Geiser, 2005).

I also experienced it myself by approaching the canvas with no intention but splashing colors on it and seeing what emerges. I learned about myself in the process as I found a certain release and euphoria stronger than the effects of endorphins that one experiences after running for miles. This was part of the mania that I felt painting in the studio for 6 or 7 hours, I was also exposed to this experience in classes I taught as a student teacher in art and psychology. There was a peculiarity in the students who were most talented in their arts and most insightful in studying psychology. Psychology gave them a tool to understand why they are the way they are and how they can use that knowledge to start healing themselves. Furthermore, going through 2 hours of therapy every week with a Jungian therapist exposed me to the crossroads of psychology and art. Carl Jung went to academy in France to learn how to paint so he could depict what he came across in his dreams and active imagination sessions. In *The Red Book*, Carl Jung used paintings as a symbolic language to communicate the limitations of language in terms of expressing the unsaid and uncovering the unseen and unheard. Without paintings, *The Red Book* would have fallen short of its objective to push the boundaries of expression.

As a teenager, I was saddled by feelings, angst, that I could not understand, yet I knew I could write and try to decipher them. Art was an enigma to me. Writing settled my mood; poetry took me away. If I could not write, I would draw, as it was satisfying if I had something expressed on paper. I came to the United States to study writing, yet life had other plans—the Iranian Revolution changed my course in life. I had to bring my family over and find a means to

earn money. I had to put aside my dreams, study business, open a store and run a family business, get married, and begin a conventional life.

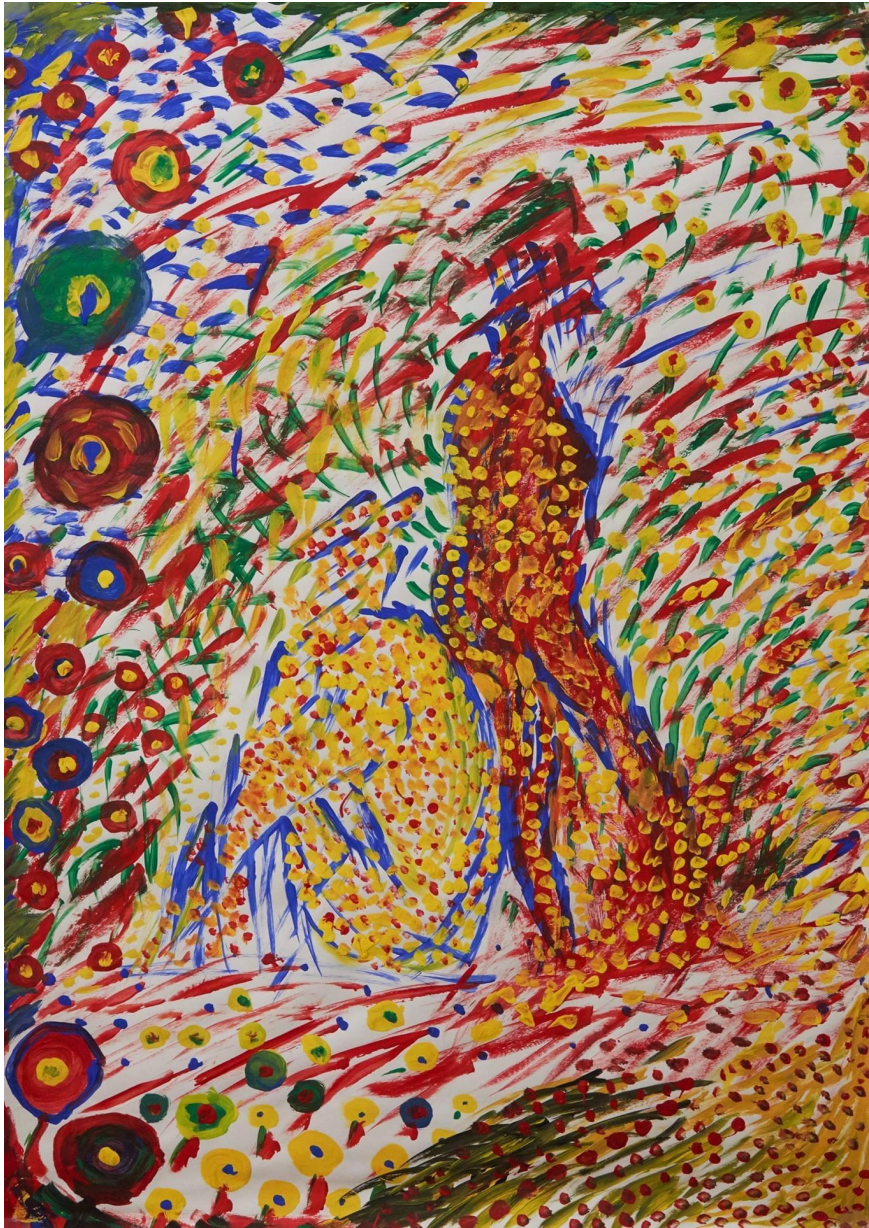
Friedrich Nietzsche said, “Art is not so you could make beautiful frames and sell them. Art is to save your life.” By age 49, I was living my normal life. I had been married, raising my two kids and running a successful business working 7 days a week. I lived in a beautiful luxurious home in a wonderful neighborhood in Connecticut and I was miserable. Under the care of a therapist and taking medications, I was diagnosed with depression. My wife left with the kids that year and we were divorced a year later—I was devastated. My father passed away the following year, and the lease on my store was not reinstated. The building was sold, and I had used up all my options. I had to close the store, and I was left completely exhausted by the schedule I had kept all these years.

I eventually lost my store and I planned to go back to Fairfield University to study for an MFA and teach poetry. I had been writing poetry all my life and had worked with Dr. Bridgford, the head of the English department at Fairfield University, on a series of seven poems with a female voice on subjects of depression and anxiety in the everyday lives of women. The collection had won the first prize at the College of Arts and Science. I also had the opportunity to publish essays and poetry in local magazines. I was set to change my life to become what I always wanted—a teacher. An accidental meeting brought me in contact with Dr. Lisa Miller. After I sent her my poetry, I asked if I could have a meeting with her. We connected on my poetic exploration of psychological pathologies and spirituality. I applied to Teachers College, Columbia University to get a Master of Education in Psychology. The synchronicity of everything coming together to change the course of my life, especially at the most desperate

point of my life, made me feel invigorated to return to school. My dream of becoming a teacher was turning into reality. Art did save my life.

We need art so truth does not kill us (Nietzsche, 1865). I believe in that quotation, and as I was going through therapy 2 hours a week with Dr Wagenseller Discovering my Unconscious and felt myself growing internally, I became aware of my shadows, Anima, and worked on my dreams. Dr Wagenseller suggested that I should try painting so I could depict the images I was seeing in my dreams. I did that and took two classes with Dr. Jun Gao. The first session in the class, I was intimidated by how most of my classmates were skilled painters. I did not sleep well that night. I woke up early and got myself to the Macy studio, set up an easel, paper, and paints, and began to brush the paint on the paper with random strokes. I walked back from the painting, and to my surprise, I saw the traces of figures and images. I made those traces more visible, and there I had my first painting. To my mind, it was obvious what had happened—there was a clear function of my unconscious since I had not approached the canvas with any intention and was free of any thoughts. In other words, none of my brush strokes were deliberate. Afterward, I turned on the music and painted five more canvases. Dr. Gao encouraged me to continue painting and throughout the two courses I took with him he remained a source of encouragement. My mentor Dr. Miller was also surprised by my paintings and encouraged me to continue exploring visual art. Dr. Miller had been impressed with my creativity after I gave a 6-minute silent speech in her class and when I came up with the idea of Absolute Darkness in the Therapy room as the research project for my master's thesis. She nominated my research thesis for an annual excellence in master's thesis competition.

Figure 1. painting “*Man discovering his Anima*”



I also conducted research for Dr. Richard Jochum in the last semester of my master's program. The primary research question investigated how many of the students at Teachers College knew if Teachers College had an art studio and if they knew where the Macy Art studio was located. I took my iPhone camera and went all over campus asking students the above questions. It turned out that only 5% of students knew that Teachers College had an art studio, let alone knowing where it was located. I shared the results with Dr. Jochum and found my way to Dr. Judith Burton to share my findings as well.

I applied for a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in Psychology and Art and was accepted to continue my studies in the crossroads of psychology and art. This is when Dr. Miller also suggested that I should enter therapy with Dr. Wagenseller. This was one of the best pieces of advice that I took to heart and did for myself since becoming a father and raising my son and daughter, which required a great deal of sacrifice. During my second year of doctoral studies, Dr. Miller suggested that I visit the Rubin Museum and take a course in Jungian Psychology with a Jungian scholar. The title of the course itself shook me to my core: "Silence, Emptiness, Art, Darkness, and Jung." The course introduced me to the mysticism, the abstract introspection in the irrational psychology of Jung, and the journey to the symbolic language of the unsaid, unheard, and unlearned.

Between what I learned and unlearned through therapy sessions with Dr. Wagenseller, the concepts I painted, exploring my unconscious with Dr. Gao, and my independent learning while putting a syllabus together for teaching, I was being entirely immersed in art, psychology, and education. My therapy sessions with Dr. Wagenseller were structured by meeting for 2 hours on a weekly basis. This involved 1 hour of therapy and 1 hour of teaching. I also did my own research by finding lectures and articles on Jungian Psychology. I found the collected works of

Jung online and started studying them. I also had the benefit of many meetings on a regular basis with Dr. Miller, who encouraged me to apply for Psychology and Art in Interdisciplinary Studies to earn my doctoral degree and stood behind me at every turn. We had lively discussions throughout my therapy sessions, and I had the chance to share my paintings and drawings with Dr. Wagenseller. By then, I was taking two courses in drawing with one of the most celebrated artists at Teachers College, Tara Geer.

During my first painting course, I painted 24 canvases. The average student did three to four at most. I was consuming art and art was consuming me. I had opened a portal to my unconscious through my art and dreams, and I had a blast exploring the collective unconscious. At this time, I was exploring *The Red Book*, which provided me with a blueprint for maneuvering the dangerous line between reality and altered states, where every time I closed my eyes, ghoulis images came to me. I enjoyed this prolific period of creativity. I enjoyed how it affected my life, my art, and my psyche.

By now, my experience of art and psychology had become almost like a religion to me. The thought came to me that there should be mandatory art courses for all disciplines at the master's level—four studio courses for four semesters. At the minimum, this should apply to psychology students. I also believe there should be psychology classes for art students. Shouldn't art students know where their art comes from, and wouldn't that knowledge help their understanding of themselves? Wouldn't this experience make them more balanced individuals in their approach to art? And the same on the other side, concerning the whole experience of art for psychology students. I have talked with some scholars, professors, and students about the prism of art leading to a clear understanding of self and personal growth. The concept seemed alien to them until I explained the disciplinary crossroads and the fact that art is the language of

psychology (Jung, 2014) since both art and Jungian psychology share a foundation in symbols and their language.

My education, personal experiences in the arts and psychology, and overall life have been my tools to promote the idea that art and psychology are essential in the self-growth of students, and they are essential to a better comprehension of the world around us and each other. It was the holistic experience of my life and approach to education that brought the idea and title of the first course that I taught for Dr Miller and SMBI: The Poetic Language of Psychology, Rumi, Bly, and Jung. Through the reactions and reflections that I received from the students in my workshops and in my classes, including letters of recommendation that students wrote to Dr. Miller, I was surprised and invigorated. I became more convinced that there was a mission for me to promote creativity and imagination in psychology and self-realization and curiosity in art. That is how the idea behind this dissertation was formed.

Furthermore, I have come to realize that the parental complexes, or any traumas between ages of 2 to 7, often become a part of why many artists delve into art, finding a new realm and language to evolve and express themselves. I did not fit my reality, and I had compensated for it through artistic escape. A place to get lost in, a place that suited my sensibilities and engaged my curiosity. I was expecting a similar perspective from my interviewees. Surprisingly, most of my interviewees shared much more of themselves than I expected. Some of my participants were eager to share, talking comfortably about the traumas and abuses in their childhood and, of course, some others maintained their privacy and conveyed a quiet and normal childhood without any major incidents. Most of my interviewees who were art teachers and art therapists using art to heal children suffering from early childhood traumas and pathologies shared their memories eagerly and gave histories of the professional help they had received. The participants who were

only artists and had little knowledge of psychology were more curious, but had not explored their psyche thinking that might cause interruption or change in their art. However, I explained the pathologies of early childhood traumas to them when they asked. Lastly, I had to understand that research is not for me to prove something but to question it. This can be difficult to grasp until one enters the field and begins to conduct research.

Definitions

Existential Angst: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of my being? These are questions that cause angst once an individual comes to discover his/her limitations.

Alchemy: Medieval hypotheses in chemistry on the transformation of matter, specifically metal to gold. Jung also used it as a process of spiritual growth.

Cathartic Cleansing: The purification or clarification of emotions. Particularly, anxiety and fear through art that results in renewal.

Apollonian: The rational, self-disciplined attributes of human nature.

Dionysian: Emotional, sensual, and spontaneous aspects of human nature.

Impressionism: The artistic style to capture a feeling or experience rather than depiction.

The Unconscious: The inaccessible part of the mind which affects behavior and emotions.

Archetypes: Archetypes are the images and symbols in the collective unconscious that appear in dreams.

Shadow: A dark shape on surfaces created by any object that stands between a light and the surface. A psychological phenomenon in Jungian psychology that happens when the ego denies the objections of the society and morality to do what it desires, leading to the creation of complexes and shame.

SMBI: Spirituality, mind, body institution founded by Dr. Lisa Miller to research and teach spirituality and psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of how the creative process of the artist influences their self-awareness. To contextualize this study, a literature review on the following topics was conducted: (a) Art Education (including the definition, origins, history of European and American education, and the role of art education), and (b) the Unconscious (the definition, the discovery, and the nature of unconscious in psychology with an emphasis on Jungian psychology and as the foundation for creative impulses and individual development).

The library catalogs at Teachers College, Columbia University, and their affiliates, as well as internet search engines, in particular Google Scholar, were the sources of research on these topics. The research identified journal articles, books, and magazine articles, and included interviews and conversations with artists. Search terms included the following in different combinations: art, art education, sentimental and naive, original art, the romantics and abstract art, the unconscious, the creative impulse, the creative urges, the conscious mind, libido, psychic energy, shadow, and individuation.

Rationale for Topics

The literature review and the researcher's experience in art and its effect on human psychology were relevant to this study since the purpose of the study was to understand the phenomenon of the effects of art and art education on human psychology as a stimulus toward personal growth. Therefore, the literature review begins with an overview of art education by providing a historic look at the boundaries and development of art education. We also explore

the origins of the unconscious, creative impulse, and the effects of visual and expressive arts on the development of the human psyche.

Furthermore, I discuss the progress made throughout the 20th century through emerging constructs and an original look at the pedagogy of art in education and the execution of such a hypothesis within the boundaries of social programs and advocacy. I explore the effects of the discoveries in psychology in art education and art philosophy within the educational hierarchy. Additionally, I discuss a Jungian approach to progressive psychology of the human condition and pathologies, the role of the unconscious toward individuation, and how the expressive and creative essence of art stimulates the human psyche through the depth of the unconscious.

Art Education

There are schools of thought and practice in terms of establishing how art education requires boundaries to exist. This also means that art education must be aware of and venture to new territories to flourish (Weitz, 1956). This expansion of educational boundaries is facilitated at the university level which allows the emergence of hybrid disciplines. This phenomenon has also been a part of the growth of art education. This development in art education has established and strengthened art education amongst school curriculums. The “Post-Sputnik” era brought new attention to mathematics and sciences during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Art education, like most other disciplines, had to justify the importance of its existence in the public-school curriculum by providing a solid science base at its core (Schell, 2007).

Philosophy, and later psychology, brought new areas of exploration to the subject by highlighting the cognitive aspects of their disciplines as the essence of art (Bresler, 2007). This theory was further established by psychological research that reflects the merits of cognitive aspects of art (Miller, 2011). These studies flourished and brought forth the new

conceptualization and merits of arts education and created the movement toward Discipline-based Art Education and Art History (Dobbs, 1998).

The postmodern paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s brought new emphasis to the research-based disciplines in school curriculums which also impacted art education. There was a new articulation of sociocultural principles which further created new schools in the sociological perspective of the arts. These perspectives brought clarity and dominance to how the arts reflect the qualities and values of the society it represents (Shabani et al., 2010).

History of Art Education

Does history matter in the education of art (Lagemann, 2005)? There was a drive towards mass education in the 19th century that brought many challenges to art education (Bresler, 2007). It was a well-perceived rationale that art education fostered ideals in beauty and morality which contributed to the development of mental faculties. However, the rationale was not grounded in active research-based disciplines and documentation. The arts needed the cross-fusion of scientific methodologies established in philosophy, sociology, and psychology.

The history of education has ventured much further from focusing on the great institutions and state-sponsored education of the 19th century. Since the late 1960s, a host of new approaches has been embraced by scholars in education (Ball & Cohen, 1999). The emergence of a focus on social control and social conflict, history of women, people of color, urban history, history of religious and cultural minorities, in addition to the significant influence of new schools of thought such as functionalism, post-structuralism, and Marxism has infused the broader aspects of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies into art education. Behaviorism had been the dominant force in American psychology from the

1920s to the 1950s (Foley, 2010). Behaviorists believe that the environment is the most influential factor in how people act, focusing on the behavior that can be observed, mostly in the human relationships with animals and other individuals. They deny any internal stimuli for behavior and focus on exterior stimuli (Davis & Gardner, 1992).

There was a challenge to the behaviorists' dominance from cognitive psychology during the 1950s. Cognitive psychologists argued that behavioral approaches were limited, and psychology should focus on internal information processing by looking inside the mind and focusing on mental activities through the use of symbols and languages as the source of any action (UKEssays, 2018). This includes intelligent functions such as logical reasoning and problem solving (Davis & Gardner, 1992). Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist, defined the structure of cognition in education and the curriculum at the Woods Hole Conference in 1959. This referred to the structures in the knowledge of the subject matter that defines and allows students to reach mastery in a subject (Efland, 1988, p. 263).

There were also two conferences held by professional educators and art scholars to establish a structured discipline for art education. They were conducted at Penn State in 1965 and Aspen, Colorado, in 1977. Scholars wrestled with the challenge of deciding what these structures might become in art education, and how they would be implemented and reconciled with curriculum demands. Bruner had forged the gap between cognitive theory and educational practice, and art educators worked to redefine aesthetic education as “the education of a process of thought” (Davis & Gardner, 1992, p. 113).

Subsequently, art education became the art of expression based on emotions. However, the individualistic nature of art allowed the student to have creative liberties. The cognitive view argued that artistic expression had to find its language in the symbolic

vocabulary of art (Davis & Gardner, 1992). Gardner believed that art was the communication of subjective individualistic knowledge through the creation of symbolic objects. Art was rooted in subjective and objective factors that were above the difference between thoughts and feelings and therefore impacted cognition.

Moreover, Harris and Gardner (1976) claimed that

certainly, the arts are apprehended by the intellect, but just as assuredly they marshal effective responses and are concerned with the quality of feeling. Indeed, the differences in human reaction to persons and objects suggest that the quality of effect depends on the kind of object perceived and its relationship to other persons or objects. (p. 36)

Cognitive scientists also found it necessary to assume that there is more than just the combination of an input (physical perception of stimuli) and an output (behavior).

Symbols are part of the language of art—this is where the arts, dreams, and Jungian psychology become important in art education. Jung also believed that poetry is a key part of the language of psychology, and it is in recognition of the symbolic values and interpretation of them that art embraces psychology. Moreover, Jung wrote, “Image is not the psychic reflection of an external object but a concept—driven from poetic usage. Poetic usage is the beginning of the right language for Psychology” (Jung, 1961). In his collected works, Jung investigated the relations between art and analytical psychology. He viewed art as a psychological practice since it derives from psychic motives. However, Jung warned that only the creating aspect of art creation, the process of it can be subject to psychological interpretation.

Jung established symbols as the unique language of the unconscious and subsequently dreams and analytical psychology. He separated his understanding of symbols as “an expression of an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formulated in any other or better way” (Jung, 1961). Jung pointed out the parable of the cave in Plato’s *Just City* as a symbol. Jung separated the work of

art from the artist and did not promote investigating the artist but rather the work of art on its own merit. He also did not treat all works of art equally. He established that the intentionality of the artist toward reaching a particular preconceived image and the skill gained for such endeavor makes the artist a mere technician. Jung believed real art must be original, derived from the interior landscapes of the unconscious and created by impulses that emerge from the psychic energy of primordial images. Jung (1961) called this process birthing:

These works positively force themselves upon the author; his hand is seized; his pen writes things that his mind contemplates with amazement. Then my work brings with it its form; anything he wants to add is rejected, and what he himself would like to reject is thrust back at him. While his conscious mind stands amazed and empty before this phenomenon, he is overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images which he never intended to create and which his own will could never have brought into being. Despite himself, he is forced to admit that it is his self-speaking, his inner nature revealing itself and uttering things which he could never have entrusted to his tongue. (p. 73)

The distinction between the two styles of creation was differentiated earlier by Schiller in his concept of the sentimental and the naive. He referred to the sentimental as the introverted process and the naive as the extroverted process. “The introverted attitude is characterized by the subject’s assertion of his conscious intentions and aims against the demands of the object, whereas the subject’s subordination characterizes the extraverted attitude to the demands which the object makes upon him” (Jung, 1961, p. 73). At this point, the artist becomes an instrument in the grip of creative impulse which rises from the unconscious. Creative impulse is often imperious in nature. This urge demands domination and brings havoc to the psyche, all in the service of the creative process. It is tyrannical and oblivious to the well-being of the artist. In fact, the artist is a mere instrument and a source of nourishment and creative energy toward this impulse. In analytical psychology, this organic force is called Autonomous Complex: the psychic formation that remains subliminal until its energy-charge is sufficient to carry it over the

threshold into consciousness (Jung, 1961). It splits off the psyche and survives on its own outside the reign of consciousness.

The poet laureate Mary Oliver described the creative process and the havoc it ensues within the contemporary life of a poet:

It is six A.M., and I am working. I am absentminded, reckless, heedless of social obligations, etc. It is as it must be. The tire goes flat; the tooth falls out; there will be a hundred meals without mustard. The poem gets written. I have wrestled with the angel, and I am stained with light, and I have no shame. Neither do I have guilt. My responsibility is not to the ordinary or the timely. It does not include mustard, or teeth. It does not extend to the lost button, or the beans in the pot. My loyalty is to the inner vision, whenever and howsoever it may arrive. If I have a meeting with you at three o'clock, rejoice if I am late. Rejoice even more if I do not arrive at all. (Popova, 2020)

This flight of the fancy within the landscape of the unconscious pushing the territory of the collective unconscious is, at times, beyond the comprehension of the culture and the society that the artist serves. The artist often becomes famous and relevant posthumously. As society and culture catch up in their attention and comprehension within the boundaries of their collective psyche, they discover the artist. This was articulated by Jung (1961) when he wrote:

The reader as well would be unable to get beyond the bounds of the poet's consciousness which are fixed by the spirit of the time. There is no Archimedean point outside his world by which he could lift his time-bound consciousness off its hinges and recognize the symbols hidden in the poet's work. For a symbol is the intimation of a meaning beyond the level of our present powers of comprehension. (p. 77)

The Unconscious

The duality inherent in the ebb and flow of the sea is in line with the characteristics of the unconscious psyche, which can be a source of healing energies if attended to consciously. This force can also be destructive if ignored or repressed. Nowadays, more and more people, especially those who live in large cities, suffer from a terrible emptiness and boredom as if they are waiting for something that never arrives. Movies and television, spectator sports, and political excitements may divert them for a while, but again and again, exhausted and

disenchanted, these individuals return to the wasteland of their own lives. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has turned that world upside down. Many individuals do not have the privilege of a timely distraction anymore. There is a sudden interruption in our daily habit that may also be seen as helpful toward understanding our unconscious life. As much as this coming face to face with our incapacities can be a first step toward our individuation, the forced, abrupt process of it may be psychologically destabilizing.

Freud's (1922) original hypothesis on the unconscious instructs that it is the primary psychic phenomenon that has a complete guiding influence over most details of our lives, from our motive to our agendas, to our desires and aspirations. Over the past 30 years, new psychological models and empirical research have diminished the extent to which the unconscious guides daily life. However, the cognitive and social psychological evidence fully supports the existence of the unconscious mentation. The primary description of the unconscious based on its attributes has been that of a void of consciousness. In other words, the unconscious refers to what is not intentional and cannot be controlled (Burgh & Morsels, 2008).

The unconscious is not serial in nature nor is it accessible to awareness; hence, it is not verbally reportable. It has been established that some human frailties are rooted in the fact that the conscious mind is not the source of behavior. The impulses that source the action are activated unconsciously. The conscious mind tries to reason our actions after the fact (Freud, 1990). Although the origins of the impulses are not clear, it has been suggested by many that these impulses are generated unconsciously, and the unconscious mind comes to experience it as its own.

Behaviorist theories have argued that unconscious learning creates behavioral impulses formed by evolved motives, culture norms, and the precedent of past experiences (Schunk,

2012). The collaborative fusion of these agents enables the unconscious operating motives, preferences, and behavioral tendencies that are enhanced by mimicry and priming effects caused by mere perception and reaction to others' behavior. The behavioral activity is a singular motion in a serial world; we are only capable of doing one thing at a time. However, there are multiple, parallel unconscious behavioral impulses that create conflicts since they cannot all be acted at the same time. That is one of the primary causes of suppression in our developing years. Before the learning process when the operant learning has a more significant influence and controls the behavior and its preferences creates suppressions since not all the impulses can be gratified simultaneously (Zimmer-Gembsuck & Skinner, 2016). The neural event that involves these conflicting intentions leads to a lack of or delayed gratification with potentially adverse consequences. The damage of such strife caused by the conflict cannot be healed. The impulse can be suppressed behaviorally but not mentally (Bargh & Morsella, 2008). The unconscious does influence the behavior directly; however, it affects the consciousnesses, and urges are experienced unconsciously even if they are not acted out; these urges become "internalized reflexes" (Shabani et al., 2010) playing an essential part in mental simulation. These internal reflexes form explicit conscious memories that are apt to simulate future actions (Schacter & Addis, 2007).

Before the advent of suppression, our genetic system evaluated favorable actions and controlled the ensuing behavior. However, the suppressed agents responded to these simulations as if they were real external stimulation. The internalized reflexes create the evaluating judgment that simulations need, commonly called "gut feelings" (Gigerenzer, 2008).

It is locating the process of conflict resolution in the unconscious supply of the information that we need for the conscious planning of our future. These pieces of data create

a blueprint or a plan of reaction to specific events which become operational automatically once the situation arises. This established that the unconscious is not only a source of adaptation to our present but also the creator of the blueprint for our future (Gollwitzer, 1999).

Human history has relied on and celebrated conscious thought and intentional behavior. Moreover, original thoughts guide the progress of our culture, society, science, and technology. The theory of evolution by Darwin and the discovery of hypnotism by Mesmer brought the possibility of an altered state of the unconscious, presented as the unintended cause of urges and reflexes that creates human behavior. However, the extensive research and literature by Freud and Jung, and the birth of analytical psychology alongside other agents in philosophy, sociology, and human sciences, have brought a more precise view of the unconscious as a sophisticated, adaptive, and flexible system that guides and procures a blueprint for human behavior. This unconscious system becomes the high-functioning default behavioral characteristics that govern our behavior and allow the conscious mind liberties, appealing to the nature of the conscious mind to avoid the reality of the present and taking solace in the finality of the past and the possibilities of the future (Crabtree, 1988).

Jung regarded Freud's theory of the unconscious as a personal unconscious since it was a collection of repressed thoughts, images, and psychic urges particular to the individual. Jung found such a reservoir somewhat limited in scope and outside the influence of the much more in-depth and infinite evolution of all the psychic urges, impulses, and energies throughout human history. Jung had discovered a new psychic territory beyond the scope of scholarly research at the time. He called it the *Collective Unconscious* (Elkind, 1970, p. 218). This belief does not originate in personal acquisitions but the inherited possibility of psychic functioning through an

inherited brain structure (Mills, 2019). It is an innate predisposition to operate psychologically within every human, similar to basic biological patterns that are exclusively shared for growth and maturation. It is not the psychological experience but the capacity to experience the psychological phenomena similarly.

As Jung (1981) put it in his words, “It must be pointed out that just as the human body shows general anatomy over and above all racial differences, so, too, the psyche possesses a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness. I have called this substratum the collective unconscious” (p. 118). He added, “Archetypes are the channels that form the connection to the collective unconscious. Pre-existent forms of apprehension, or the congenital conditions of intuition, viz., the ‘archetypes’ of apperceptions which are a priori determining constituents of all experience” (pp. 275-276). Jung recognized these archetypes in mythology and folklore tales that many cultures have specific to their ecological surroundings and customs, bearing similar characters: mother, hero, joker, and others.

These archetypes have not been shared and copied throughout the ages, and each has specific visual or seminal attributes unique to their cultures, with vast geographical distances between them. However, they share the same characters, messages, and associations. Jung instructed that a similar archetype experience results in similar stories in the psyche of the individual. As Tris, the first known philosopher, said, “I am human, and nothing human is alien to me.”

There are characters who represent the hero, devil, mother, virgin, and images like the sun and cross appear in the mythology of many cultures. These are the symbolic presentations of the human experiences originating from the same psyche and carrying similar messages. These archetype images find their way into our dreams and fantasies, resembling ancient images to the

dreamer. Archetypes are creations of the psyche to process and transfer their experiences to the conscious mind. The transformation creates psychic energies and impulses, which become symbols and images, words and messages carried throughout time. Herbert Read (1915) the psychologist, has compared Jung's archetypes to a "Memory trace" or a Gestalt concept, and also to an "engram," which is a concept in neurology.

Jung also used the term *Libido* in describing the energy in the psyche. Jung (1981) stated that "Psychic energy is the intended site of the psychic process—its psychological value" (p. 571). Libido was used by Freud mainly to describe sexual energy; however, Jung viewed it as an energy that comes in the form of longing, desire, and any urges that intensify the interest to an object and the volume of energy that such attention elicits. Jung went on to say, "Libido is natural energy, and first and foremost serves the purpose of life, but a certain amount over what is necessary for instinctive ends can be converted into productive work and used for cultural purposes" (page.158) The excess of libido can withdraw from the conscious mind and present itself in the unconscious, conjuring a transformation in dreams, fantasies, and moods.

Impulses and moods are the unconscious inroads to the landscape of creativity and art. Dreams and fantasies are also pathways to the creative process. The unconscious conjures intuitive visions, whims, and urges, sparking creative urges that facilitate the creative process. In return, art tends to strengthen the individual's connection to the unconscious and stimulates the unconscious in a deep psychic collaboration that enriches both the artwork and the unconscious. The artist discovers that the unconscious can be a significant addition to his/her toolboxes of pens and brushes, color impulses, urges, and dreams.

The psyche also uses the compensatory character of the unconscious to balance the human condition. Art expression in its unconscious nature could heal and compensate for poor

conscious alignment. Jung believed that the psyche is a self-regulating system that maintains its equilibrium just as the body does. Moreover, every process that goes too far immediately and inevitably calls forth compensation, and without these, there would neither be a normal mental or typical psyche (Jung, 1981). For example, this is the dynamic behind the observation where the quiet, shy girl in the class would paint a gory depiction of a violent scene, and the tall bully football player paints a beautiful sunrise with a sensitivity toward composition and light. They both reach into the unconscious to reveal a core part of their psyche that is not available to their conscious mind (Jung, 1964).

The unconscious is an out-of-reach territory due to its nature. The individual can trace the unconscious mainly through dreams, fantasies, and works of imagination. It is also possible to study the unconscious by examining neurotic and psychotic symptoms and behavioral patterns. The significant discoveries in the unconscious are possible by dream analysis, which seeks to make the unconscious conscious. Nevertheless, the high range of activity in the unconscious brings fluctuation that can result in regression, and the conscious material can slip back to the unconscious. There is also the irrational and symbolic nature of the unconscious that does not abide by the logical and rational laws and constructs of science and their comprehension. The unconscious cannot be generalized or reached by broad interpretation since it is symbolic in its language and images and only open to individual interpretations.

It is a highly significant, though generally neglected, fact that those creations of the human mind which have borne the stamp of originality and greatness preeminently have not come from within the region of consciousness. They have come from beyond consciousness, knocking at its door for admittance: "They have flowed into it often with a burst of

overwhelming power” (*How to Stimulate Creative Breakthroughs: The Unconscious and Creativity*, 2016).

At age 40, Carl Jung returned to the academy in France to study painting. At age 50, Jung resigned from all his institutional duties and went back to his home by the lake to live in solitude and rediscover his purpose. That is when he wrote his masterpiece, *The Red Book* or, as he called it, *Liber Novus*, written in an ancient language. This book was illustrated with his paintings and “consisted of some 200 parchment pages of meticulous calligraphy and visionary paintings collected into a huge folio bound in red leather” (Harrison, 2009, p. 28). *The Red Book* became the journal of visions Jung experienced in his dreams and active imagination. He made commentaries about the visions. He painted images of his dreams to allow himself a deeper path to his unconscious through words and images. He also intended on stimulating his unconscious further, creating havoc between his waking-hour visions and dreams to “understand the psychological nature of symbolism to a new way of looking at their souls” (p. 29).

In Jung’s book, there is a significant influence from Nietzsche and his masterpiece titled *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Additionally, Jung was inspired by the Bible, Greek mythology, the Apocrypha, the Upanishads, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Goethe’s *Faust*, the ancient Egyptian “Am-Taut,” and Wagner’s *Ring*. His translator Shamdasani wrote that, although the writers on whom Jung drew “could utilize an established cosmology, ‘Liber Novus’ is an attempt to shape an individual cosmology” (Uğuz, 2012, P.158)

Eventually, Jung would begin prescribing dream journal sketches to his patients. Jung further described these journals as “Your church-Your cathedral-the quiet places of your spirit where you find renewal” (Herrmann, 2020, P. 98) Jung believed that it is in the darkness that man will find light, and the destination for his red book is not heaven but Hell. On his way down,

he comes to meet Salome and Elijah, the Devil, and a Serpent. The narrative is a blend of biblical prophecy and Dialectic, with some dark cutting humor. Moreover, in his dialogues with these characters, they mock him and his intellectual snobbery; in the spirit of accepting his shadows, he even takes responsibility for almost all human incapacities and frailties in a compelling dialogue with Devil.

All those qualities, capacities and tendencies which do not harmonize with the collective values—everything that shuns the light of the public opinion, in fact—now come together to form the shadow, that dark region of the personality which is unknown and unrecognized by the ego. The endless series of shadow and doppelgänger figures in mythology, fairy tales, and literature ranges from Cain and Edom, by way of Judas and Hagen, to Stevenson's Mr. Hyde in the ugliest man of Nietzsche; again and again such figures have appeared and made their bow before human consciousness, but the psychological meaning of this archetype of the adversary has not yet dawned upon mankind. (Neumann, 1990, p. 138)

It is in acceptance of the evil within the realm of the unconscious mind that makes an individual conscious of his/her frailties and the dangers of living an unconscious life. The individual must strive to become aware of his/her shadows and the vulnerabilities of their emotions. "What you do not know always has a hold on you" (Othon, 2020, p. 33)). Jung (1951) believed that "The privilege of life fully lived is for the man to know himself" (Jung. 1953). It is in this knowing that one has to come face to face with their shadows, no matter how dark and ominous. The individual has to recognize their frailties and incapacities to free their soul from them and become whole. The path to finding one's shadows falls through the unconscious mind, and the path to the unconscious mind begins in dreams and creative visions, where one comes across the interiority of their soul, the duality of existence, and the freedom of knowing and accepting all that one is inside. The creative visions and expressions of the unconscious in art stimulate the core being with curiosity to discover the unseen, unheard, and the value of the

unknown to create an individualistic path toward becoming whole (*Know Yourself—The School of Life Articles* | *Formally the Book of Life*).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological research was to explore artists' perceptions of how and in what ways their work influences their awareness of the self. The study included semi-structured interviews with eight artists and a focus group with six artists. To carry out this research, the following questions were addressed.

Research Questions

1. How do artists describe the influence of their art on their self-growth?
2. How do artists experience the relationship between solitude and the process of creating art?
3. In what ways do artists characterize Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as it relates to emergence of introspective art?
4. How do artists describe the impacts of the artistic process on their emotions?

Conceptual Framework Narrative

The review and critique of the literature, combined with the researcher's own experience, contributed to the development of a conceptual framework that provided an organizing structure for the design and analysis of this research. The conceptual framework served as a repository for the study's findings, guiding the data analysis and interpretation, and informing various iterations of a coding schema (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The conceptual framework categories were derived from the study's four research questions. The first question sought to receive an individual artist's evaluations of their art on their well-being. The artist must review their relationship with art, motivation, and inspirations. Where do they come from and how do they come to receive them? The artist must ponder the time that they spend in the studio. What

motivation takes the artist there, and what inspiration makes the artist spend many hours in creative seclusion? There is always the reality of making a living; however, for the artist, there should be more urgent spiritual satisfaction.

The second question requires an in-depth answer with more psychological ramifications. This question involved learning about how the artist deals with emotional turbulence and financial ebb and flow. It also sought insight into understanding if these challenges leave a permanent mark on the artist's psyche. The artist often must delve into solitude to find their voice and language. I explored how well the artists have come to experience solitude and the elation that comes from that habitat.

The third question is more specific. Art education has gone through periods with an emphasis on teaching the psychological orientation of art-by-art educators. While not all art educators are familiar with the work of Carl Jung and his influence on the fields of psychology and art education, most art educators, at the least, are intuitively aware of the relationship between psychology and art, if not trained to some extent in the connection between the fields. The third question sought to measure both the comprehension and the effects of that dynamic.

The last question addressed the emotional cost of making art and the emotions that arise in the artist. These emotions may include euphoria, excitement, or melancholy, which the artist comes to utilize according to the depth or height of the landscape they explore. There are clear awareness and regulation of the artist's emotions as one of the foundations of Jungian Psychology that I deliberated on as a topic of art education and the unconscious, and how they are related to the psyche of the artist are the right boundaries to structure this research.

The Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

This research explored how art opens a window to the inner world and takes the artist on a journey toward a more fulfilling quality of life. This exploration delved into the ways that art presents the artist with an opportunity to achieve a heightened level of self-awareness. The significance of conducting this research was to establish art as one of the ways to address the existentialist angst that is prevalent amongst contemporary society.

I explored hypotheses and constructs that were naturalistic in their core and evolved from the emerging curiosity to learn and explore human experiences toward the betterment of human conditions. In this dissertation, I conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the experience of the interviewees—the artist in their creative environment. The subjects of conversations revolved around attributes that were part of the routine experience for the artist in their singular mission to explore and push the boundaries of life. Moreover, as the differences emerged within the scope of each interview, the research produced a cornucopia of ideas and burgeoning thoughts as different as the artists who were interviewed, which allowed for a diverse range of data for further analysis.

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that qualitative data “are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions, and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts. With qualitative data, one can preserve chronological flow, detecting which events lead to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations” (p. 278). Qualitative methods seek to explain human behavior and are concerned with how human behavior occurs within the social structure. As related to this study, it is the subjective and biased individual context for which I sought to gather and analyze data. The interpretive nature and ambiguity of qualitative data suit the individualistic impulses of expressive art.

Qualitative research affords a wide range of methodologies within its traditional discipline. The diversity offered in these methodologies allows for the most suitable research methods that enable discoveries within the research design. Merriam (2009) stated that “The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 14). The intimacy of communication in an interviewee or a discussion provided the bulk of the data for this study. Throughout the interview process, the spontaneous process of reacting to different ideas and questions remained at the core of this research.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) noted that qualitative methodologies offer the researcher the ability to focus on three goals: to explore, explain, or describe a phenomenon. One reason I selected a qualitative approach for this study was that I was concerned with understanding the process and the means rather than an end. The phenomenon explored was the effect of expressive art on the self-awareness and general well-being of the artist. The research questions provided the interviewees with multiple ways to measure their understanding of the creative process they experienced. Audio recording the interviewees and studying the media further with transcripts of the sessions allowed for an in-depth analysis of data. I also discussed my findings with colleagues and mentors before drawing conclusions and reporting them.

Objectivity was not necessarily a focus since my background and interest were the base for the conduct of this study. I focused on the honesty and transparency of my subjectivities such that the readers can draw their own conclusions and interpretations of the research. Guba (1981) suggested that research should “celebrate subjectivity” (p. 17). In doing so, researchers and participants profess their truth. It is this unique individualistic truth which is the core of the

artists' innate talent and curiosity, allowing them a defined and grounded habitat. This makes their flights of fancy interactive and interpretive. Artists cannot fully explore their imagination without having one foot firmly on the ground—this is where the individual truth of the artist allows them specific patterns and styles in the expression of art.

Maxwell (2005) pointed out that the ability to understand the meaning of participants' experiences and perspectives, the context in which they act, and the process by which events and actions take place are among the strengths of qualitative research. Often common in artists are an open-mindedness and sense of curiosity since they tend to seek new horizons and celebrate the unique. Creswell (2003) stated that a qualitative approach is applied when the researcher subscribes to a constructivist (in art, constructive aesthetic of a building) perspective of the world. The researcher operates from a constructivist epistemology. The researcher relies on in-depth interviews that allow a constructive dialogue and belief that the depth of the research question and the innate need and urge in the interviews to discuss their art would result in an insightful interview. The artists are also aware that there will be new findings for them in their answers and stream of consciousness that naturally lead them toward unexplored boundaries of the unconscious, which then enhances their understanding of their craft.

Rallis and Rossman (2003) described qualitative research as "...an emergent, interpretive, holistic, reflexive, and iterative process that uses interactive and humanistic methods" (p. 26). There is an abundance of art within daily life such that as a process, emerging, developing, and rising within the psyche of the artist. These are all the impressions they receive through the simple process of being and living in their truth and beauty. The artist is trained naturally or academically to explore the different paradigms of meaning for the images that are not privy to others. It is the subjective, individualistic vision that is particular to that single being

within the parameters that art brings to the process. Moreover, qualitative research (and, more specifically, semi-structured interviews) is likely to be experienced as an organic process for the artist since these methods resemble the playful and spontaneous nature of creativity.

The Research Sample

The criteria for creating samples require a purposive strategy. My goal was, as Creswell (2003) noted, to obtain a purposive sample of participants who were best qualified to help me understand the problem and answer the research questions. For this study, the preliminary research existed in the field of interviews. Through advice from mentors, I selected eight artists within different disciplines and certain age groups who were eligible to participate in the study. The purposeful selection consisted of the strategy of selecting individuals who could provide the information needed to address the research questions. Once I compiled a list of potential participants, I determined the best means of contacting them, keeping in mind that these decisions were all part of the research design, ethics, and methods (Maxwell, 2005).

Interviews

The primary method of research was semi-structured, one-on-one, in-person interviews with eight professional artists. The interviews were based on open-ended questions designed to garner rich insights and nuanced descriptions about their experience of art within their human condition. This methodology allows the interviewer to redirect the stream of questions (Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). With guidance from my advisor, I developed an interview protocol composed of 10 to 15 open-ended questions designed to help uncover the participants' views. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) recommended, the researcher develops questions to simultaneously provide participants with the structure and latitude with which to respond.

One group of questions were designed to elicit information about how the artists perceived themselves. These questions explored what brought the artists to their art. Additionally, the questions sought to understand if the urge to become an artist was innate to them or if it was influenced by parents, teachers, other artists, and so on. Another important question in this group revolved around the key influences in their art, and how their art had affected their lives. Another group of questions focused on the artists' level of knowledge in psychology, and if they were aware of consciousness and the unconscious mind. The final group of questions examined how the artists related to the emergence of the unconscious in their work, and if the satisfaction and self-worth they experienced through art helped them to develop as human beings. I also enriched my research by going through their collections. I intended on exploring the emergence of the unconscious within the artworks.

To begin with, I conducted four pilot interviews to refine the interview protocol. Additionally, the pilot interviews provided the opportunity to practice arranging a comfortable and inclusive environment, modify the questioning approach, and sharpen skills at probing interviewees. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) noted, pilot interviews helped me understand myself better as a researcher (p. 57), and this kind of reflexivity was essential to conducting successful interviews. For the interview process, participants agreed to 60-90 minutes of interviews in person. The interviews were conducted and documented through Zoom audio on both a digital and analogue recorder, and they were then transcribed verbatim.

Focus Group

The focus group consisted of selected artists based on the perceptions of artists who met the criteria and had not already participated in the study. The focus group, conducted at a mutually convenient time, was comprised of six artists and facilitated by me. The questions were

prescribed. This method assumes, as Marshall and Rossman (2006) observed, “that an individual’s attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum: People often need to listen to others’ opinions and understandings to form their own” (p. 78) This allowed me to listen to the artists’ answers and find new questions and topics to discuss through active dialogue.

Data Analysis

The early process of collecting and analyzing data begins with conceptualizing the research problem. The conceptual framework guides the analysis and synthesis of data. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), this ongoing process is not linear; it is iterative and requires a balance between efficiency and flexibility. The formal process of data analysis began by designing a conceptual framework, which was based on the literature review, research questions, pilot interviews, and my prior knowledge and experience with psychology and art. The conceptual framework provides the basis for developing and assigning alphanumeric codes. Portions of the transcribed interviews, along with the coding scheme, was shared with my mentors and advisors at Teachers College, Columbia University, to establish inter-rater reliability. Once agreed upon, these codes were repositories for information gathered through the analysis of the interviews. The process of coding allows the researcher to develop categories and themes to create the “story” of the data. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggested, once the data are coded, they should be read and reread to discover patterns, themes, and categories. Data were examined according to individual cases, across cases, and against demographic data. The codes were modified in this process, and subsets emerged. Then, I critiqued those same patterns, themes, and categories, as Marshall and Rossman (2006) further suggested. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) observed, “The coding process fragments the interview into separate categories, forcing one to look at each detail, whereas the synthesis involves piecing these fragments

together to reconstruct a holistic and integrated explanation/” (p. 85). I believe that the data analysis and synthesis revealed insights into understanding how the process of creating art effected the well-being of the artists.

Literature on Methods

Patton (2002) described the interview process as “open-ended questions and probes yielding in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Data consists of verbatim quotations and sufficient content/context to be interpretable” (p. __). Qualitative methods are regarded as the most suitable for understanding the natural state and explaining the causes of a phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (2006) noted that historically, qualitative methodologies have been employed towards three goals: to explore, define, or describe a phenomenon. Creswell (2003) favored a systematic methodology outlined by Moustakas (Sela-Smith, 2002), in which participants are asked two broad, general questions:

(a) What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and (b) What context of situations has typically influenced your experiences of the phenomenon? Creswell also recommended further reading on phenomenology, including Moustakas’s *Phenomenological Research Methods* and Van Manen’s (1990) *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*.

Phenomenology is the research strategy that focuses on a concept or values that are shared in a small group. It involves researching and analyzing the lived experiences of the participants. It promotes the essentiality of the individual experience as a concept.

Phenomenology originated in cognizance of experience; Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) believed that “one engages the world with intentionality to arrive at the ‘things themselves’” (p.54).

Phenomenology, from a Husserlian perspective, avoids a subject-object slip between perception and the thing itself. Husserl uses bracketing of the “natural attitude” in phenomenology, which does not result in a modern sense of objectivity but rather renders insight into the experience of a given event or phenomenon. The philosophical basis of qualitative investigation stems from phenomenology (as a philosophy), hermeneutics, and existentialism. Therefore, qualitative research is contextualized in different philosophical paradigms that center on diverse conceptions of reality (Lincoln et al., 2018).

Giorgi (2009) held the concept of epoch, referring to the suspension or suppression of judgments and the positioning of the researcher concerning the experiences of the studied phenomenon. This suspension of judgment is a mechanism that encourages objectivity during the process of data analysis in qualitative research. Although the process of qualitative research is based on its subjective core, epoché allows objectivity into the process. With any research methodology, qualitative research in general, and case study as a research strategy, there are innate strengths and weaknesses. Yin (2003) suggested that the strength of case studies lies in their ability to examine the “how” or “why” of questions. Yin noted that case study methodology is often selected when the researcher wishes to examine a process over which he/she has little control and that happens within a real-life context. This methodology was also selected because the studies are bounded by time and activity (Creswell, 2003).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews

Kvale (1983) described the qualitative research interview as “an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (p.45) The researcher should have an in-depth understanding of the described phenomena, and also sensitivity and empathy for the vulnerable

position of the interviewee (p. 174). The researcher should be ready to inspire and listen to the interview while moving the interview toward its purpose.

An interview rapidly yields data in large quantities, and immediate follow-up and clarification may be needed. Marshall and Rossman (2006) reported that sitting for an interview often brings comfort to both the researcher and the interviewee, facilitating in-depth responses. It also allows the interviewer to ask follow-up questions or go back to previous answers to expand and modify the reactions. Additionally, in-depth interviews are designed to highlight the participant's view (emic perspective), not the interviewer's (etic perspective). Marshall and Rossman noted that artists belong to a professional group and are privy to specific shared insights. The researcher comes to the interview oblivious to that insight of holding an outsider's view. The interviewee represents the opportunity to reach that insider's perspective. There are often fluidity and intimacy in a face-to-face interview that allow the interviewer to change the tone of the process to dig more deeply and receive more insights by observing the interviewee's body language. There are four ways, and only four ways, in which we have contact with the world. We are evaluated and classified by these four contacts: what we do, how we look, what we say, and how we say it. The face-to-face interview brings depth to the content within the parameters of such observation.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasized that the use of interviews in research is not new: Freud, Piaget, and Hawthorne based their findings and subsequent theories on interviews. Today, as they pointed out, interviews are prevalent in society and can be found in journalism, legal interrogations, television talk shows, and market research. Kvale and Brinkmann defined an interview as a conversation with a structure and a purpose, and they stated that the act of interviewing results in the production of knowledge. Interviews were selected as the primary

source of data collection because of their inherent strengths. According to Marshall and Rossman, another two advantages of interviews are that “An interview yields data in quantity quickly” and “Immediate follow-up and clarification are possible” (p. 101). Yin (2003) stated that well-informed respondents can provide valuable insights as well as shortcuts to the history of a situation. The face-to-face interview will often result in more individualized and coherent data collection. Moreover, as an artist, I had an insider understanding of the language of art and more access to that community.

Nevertheless, many of the qualities that make interviews a preferred methodology also contribute to their disadvantages. Qualitative interviews depend on the respondents to share details accurately and honestly about their lives, thoughts, circumstances, opinions, and behaviors. Esterberg (2002) wrote, “If you want to know about what people do, rather than what people say they do, you should probably use observation [instead of interviews]” (p.131) Furthermore, qualitative interviewing is expensive and time-consuming. Writing an interview guide, finding a sample, and doing interviews are at the start of the process. Transcribing interviews is labor-intensive—and that is before coding, which is often time-consuming as well. It can also be an exhaustive process for the participants, given that interviews can take extended periods of time and may be emotionally draining.

The interviewer should concentrate more on the questions than answers. This ensuing dynamic becomes difficult when the interviewer is using a list of questions in an unstructured or semi-structured interview. In this case, the interviewer may have to come up with new questions due to the interactive nature of communication. Wengraf (2001) spoke of double attention: “That you must be both listening to the informant’s responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and, at the same time, you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your

questions are liable to get answered within the fixed time at the level of depth and detail that you need” (p. 194).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Preliminary Review of Documentation

The preliminary review of the documentation brought a new understanding of the depth of the literature that is available and the variety of schools of thought on the subject. This finding provided a more extensive range of comprehension in attributes of art and the potential of the unconscious in everyday living and the relationship between art and the unconscious. This preliminary literature review was conducted through books, journal articles, and digital media.

The review also brought a hierarchy of new prisms for viewing the subjects and evaluating the content. It was effective in identifying the right candidates for the research. Despite these advantages, the researcher must consider that the review is subjective and relies mainly on the researcher’s and participants’ openness and biases. “The researcher determines where the emphasis lies after the data have been gathered” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 108).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Focus Groups

The focus group provides group participation which allows a different dynamic than in-depth interviews (Willis et al., 2009). Focus groups are most valuable in getting to understand people’s values, perceptions, and experiences. This finding has both practical and cost-conscious benefits, contracting researchers to choose it as a preferred method. However, there are concerns that the ‘overuse of focus groups may damage the value of the methodology. There is the perception that focus groups are easier to use in research and are therefore an inferior approach (Willis et al., 2009). The discussions in the focus group may not be in-depth enough to allow the researcher an extensive understanding of the participants’ experiences. Also, the participants may not take part actively in the discussion. Additionally, focus groups may result in a shallower

understanding of an issue than individual interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In focus groups, individual personalities in the group (more dominant and aggressive) may influence the discussion, while the social context of focus groups has an influence on “issues of disclosure and social conformity” (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 87)

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative studies can be affected by three problems: the relationship dynamic between the researcher/participant, the researcher’s subjective interpretations, and the design (Orb et al., 2001). For example, a researcher’s deception or disclosure of damaging information can occur. Moreover, research should be guided by respect for people, beneficence, and justice. This includes the recognition of participants’ rights, the right to be informed about the study, and freely deciding whether to participate in research or withdraw at any time. In qualitative research, informed consent means striking a balance between over-informing and under-informing (Kvale, 1983). Through the research process, participants must be informed that they may exercise their rights autonomously and voluntarily to accept or refuse to participate in the study. Consent is a negotiation of trust and requires continuous renegotiation (Orb et al., 2001).

The second principle that must be carefully considered is beneficence—preventing harm and doing good for others. Research strategies to collect data and selection have ethical implications. Raudonis (1992) provided an example of inclusion criteria during the recruitment of participants for a study of hospice patients’ perspectives of empathy. Patients who did not give consent were not asked to participate. The use of pseudonyms is often required. The protection of participants’ identities also applies to publications. Participants should be informed of publications of results, quotations, or other data; they could approve the use of quotations in publications. In the case of legal reporting or subpoena, participants should be informed.

Additionally, qualitative research requires confirmability—the documentation of all activities in a research study. This audit trail is there for other researchers to follow.

Regarding the ethics of the research study, my opinions, ideas, and biases did not affect the choices that were made in selecting the artist interviewees and interpreting their answers and opinions (Maxwell, 2005). However, my subjective view of this study played a significant role in the research process. Subsequently, I consistently sought the guidance of my supervisors on all aspects that were essential to the integrity of the research. The participants may not have been as precise and clear with their views and opinions, fearing any damage to their public persona and reputation. This was addressed by giving the participants complete anonymity. There was no disclosure of the participants' and interviewees' names and personal information. By going through the IRB process, I learned about boundaries with participants. I needed to use the consent form and be aware of how to collect data ethically. I also followed blueprints that I was offered by my supervisors in all my duties as the researcher and keeper of data.

Justice

Justice in qualitative research is recognizing the vulnerability of the participants and the breadth of their contributions to the study. If a researcher's analysis of the data results in a concept or a heading of a study that will be primarily based on a particular participant's contribution, that participant's contribution should be acknowledged (unless this conflicts with anonymity). Another principle of justice is listening to the voices of minority and disadvantaged groups and those who are most vulnerable, including children, prisoners, the mentally ill, and the elderly. Problems may arise when researchers try to implement justice (Orb et al., 2001). The implementation of justice should not burden the vulnerable group of participants. I believe this research and its subject illustrated the crossroads that exist between art and psychology. I hope

that, as a result of this research, there will be the creation of curriculums and courses that take advantage of such phenomena between the two disciplines and give young artists a better understanding of their creative energy and its source, as well as give psychologists new terrain to consider in pursuing therapies for the pathologies they cross.

Before contributing to the study, prospective participants read and signed a written consent release form. I also provided a written description of participants' rights. I ensured anonymity throughout the process. No deception was involved in the research process. All data generated have been preserved in a private and secure office. Pseudonyms were used for all the participants, and their anonymity was preserved. The data will be safeguarded for 3 years after the publication of the dissertation, at which time the data will be shredded and destroyed. This study was presented to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee at Teachers College, Columbia University, for approval.

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

All the interviewees were female. That was not planned, however. Every male candidate to whom I proposed this study did not have the time or inclination to sit for an hour with me to discuss the research questions in this study. All research participants were over the age of 40. My experience with younger candidates at the beginning of this process proved to be futile. In hindsight, I believe the depth of experiences that each of the interviewees proved to be valuable data for this study.

A large number (6 out of 8, 85%) of interviewees were over the age of 60, and a few (2 out of 8, 15%) were under the age of 50. A large number (6 out of 8, 85%) worked in the field of psychology, and a few (2 out of 8, 15%) were involved only in the arts. There are 2 out of 8 (15%) with a doctorate degree, and 6 out of 8 (85%) had a master's in psychology. There are 5 out of the 6 who have psychology graduate degrees worked with kids, art, and trauma. In addition, 2 out of the 8 (15%) participants were pursuing a doctoral degree. All the interviewees (100%) considered themselves to be artists and practiced art constantly. I like to mention that most of my participants happened to be also involved in the mental health industry. However, this was not by design but by accident, and I realized that this imposed a limitation on the study. Nevertheless, I do believe that there is also the possibility that the hypothesis of Wounded Warriors and the evolution of the artists' self-growth and empathy also helped this condition.

The nature of my research made reasoning about the ideas and constructs harder to analyze. During the interviews, I tried to give ample time to the participants because of the nature of the questions and the potential of depth each theme entailed. I also sent my participants the four questions a few days before the interview, but I asked them not to have their answers

written and ready because I was more interested in their answers as we sat one on one at the interview. Most abided by my guideline; however, one of the participants had written answers and stayed with them. That was the shortest interview I had.

I started to find research participants in 2019. My preliminary trials to find the right candidates convinced me that I needed volunteers who were at least 40 years old and had more life experience from which to draw. I did a series of interviews as a pilot which helped me gain more experience as a qualitative researcher. To my surprise, during the pilot, to guide and keep my interviewees on the subject, I ended up talking more than they did. As a result, I was not happy that I had spoken so much during the interviews, even though the depth of the constructs, the hypothesis, and the abstract nature of the research forced me to allow guidance. I tried to recruit male candidates and had no luck. COVID-19 brought a whole new prism of guidelines for interviewing, and I was informed that all the interviews should be done via Zoom.

I took the opportunity to find all new research participants. I kept only two of the candidates from the pilot since I was very happy with their interviews (I interviewed them again via Zoom). I found most of my participants through cohorts and by recommendations from colleagues. I knew only one of the candidates from Teachers College, and she had been my student 4 years ago. She was instrumental in helping me find additional candidates. In addition, another participant had taken one of my summer workshops 4 years ago. She lives in Jordan, but travels to the United States from time to time. I ended up with twelve interviews, but have included eight of them in this dissertation. I decided not to use the other four either because of age or qualifications.

For the focus group, I included the participants in an online certification course that I was taking through the University of Albany in Trauma and Art. I posted notices and, surprisingly, I

got 12 volunteers. Nine of the 12 initial volunteers participated in the focus group. I had asked one of the participants to facilitate the session, and she accepted. I wanted the focus group to be conducted independently from my own views as much as possible. I also asked the facilitator to include a one-word association question at the beginning and end of the session regarding the connection between Art and Psychology. I found out during the session that two of the participants had different ideas about being an artist and did not qualify; however, since I needed only six participants, I went ahead with them. I noted their lack of experience as artists in the focus group analysis. In their defense, I should mention that both of the participants were licensed therapists who used art extensively in their art therapy practice, particularly while dealing with trauma in children and young adults.

I coded every interview twice to come up with as clear a theme as possible. I arrived at seven themes or criteria for the interviews and numbered the accumulation of codes in each theme to reach a measure of emphasis in each theme to find out what was the most attributed theme and where was the highest focus of each participant.

While coding the focus group, I used the same method of coding the whole group twice. Again, I treated the focus group as one unit and did not do individual coding. I used the same themes that were generated by analyzing the interviews to create a point of comparison and analysis. The data sample was much smaller, as was the coding. There was also a big difference between where the focus of the group was on each theme, and the results were not as evenly distributed amongst themes as they had been with the interviews. There was a significant difference amongst the themes in the focus group. It is also important to note that the focus group was given more time to cover all the questions. I did offer the participants an opportunity to

leave after the first hour. To my surprise, only two left and the others stayed an additional 20 minutes.

I started the dissertation with four questions and four different criteria: self-growth, solitude and its role in creating art, collective unconscious and its role as the place for primordial images and psychic energies throughout the ages, and the emotions and sensations that practicing artists receive from art. The themes that were developed were the symbolic language of the arts that allows the artist to decipher what cannot be deciphered by words and language. This involves artists drifting to an altered state of creation in order to find the symbolic language that is also the language of psyche and psychology.

I was not comparing art and psychosis, although Jung (1940) wrote that the patient does believe the world he sees is real and the therapist should accept that and reach within that world to connect with the patient. In many ways, the artist has a different vision of the world that comes to him in the language of symbols, and they know how to decipher those symbols with brush and paint. There is a movement here as the artist is seeking a way to comprehend the altered states of their dreams, illusions, and reveries.

Creation of Themes and Coding for Data Analysis

Like many other attributions of qualitative research, coding is completely different in its nature from the units of information in quantitative research. The unit of information in quantitative research is factual and solidly represents the factual reality of it, so the representation and its relationship with other data are clear and predictable. Coding in qualitative research is more complex since with coding, the researcher tries to simplify a much more complex unit of information by taking layers and making them as clear as possible. "Coding is

the process of analyzing qualitative text data by taking them apart to see what they yield before putting the data back together in a meaningful way” (Creswell, 2015, p. 156).

Such complexity and the freedom that the researcher has in choosing his method of coding, whether it depends on repetition of the same words or connotation of the words, makes it completely at the will and understanding of the researcher of the reach and nature of the words in relationship to other words. By coding and recoding the researcher tries to cut complex information to smaller simpler units and then find similarities between the words in the meaning and spirit of the words. The researcher has complete liberty in choosing the themes that are created by bringing the codes back together to create a measure of understanding in themes (Creswell, 2015, p. 152).

I chose to code the data from the interview transcripts, and after creating the first coding for each of the interviewees based on repetition and connotation of the words, I then analyzed them again, trying to find the focus in similar words based on the repetition, meaning, and reach of the words. Once I recorded everything, I studied the recorded words and discovered themes amongst the recoded words divided into seven categories. I then analyzed the themes based on the number of the codes and the repetition in each category, trying to find which theme was more dominant than other words to measure what every theme meant to the interviewees and the importance of it to the whole of the interviews. I also measured the codes in the focus group alongside the interviews in creating the themes, and I pointed out the similarities and differences between all the interviews and the focus group as one unit.

The second level of coding tends to focus on pattern codes. A pattern code is more inferential, a sort of “meta-code.” “Pattern codes pull together material into a smaller number of more meaningful units.... A pattern code is a more abstract concept that brings together less

abstract, more descriptive codes” (Punch, 2014, p. 174). Once I analyzed the themes, I also analyzed them against the original four questions of the research to find recommended results.

Themes Based on Coding

1. Art as new language for an alternative reality, literature, reading, emerging, shadow work, painting trance, language of magic, mystery, visual sensation, physical sensation, slip stream of time, processing dreams through art, vivid dreams, illustrating symbols, self-reflection, creative imagination, impacting the process introspectively, abstract art, engage with unknown, synchronicity, unconscious, alchemy, unconscious art, dreams, imagination, unconscious, scary images, faces spirit, creative trance, symbolic infantry (30 total).
2. The discovery of art, revelation, visual sensation, took me away, the spark, beauty, truth is beauty, flow state, the journey, aesthetics, accepting the gift, the dream, calming, universal imagery, primordial imagery, it was in me, magic of creativity, unknown, thrilling, mystery, uncertainty, engage with unknown, faces emerging, scary images, exposure to art, mystery, art as an honest mirror, spider web (27 total).
3. The need for solitude and focusing, my source, individual source, solitude, conscious focus, slip stream of time, essential, depth, need solitude, aloneness, comfort in the world, solitude, emotions, internal inner feelings, organic play, sacredness, solitude, focus, being engaged, internal journey, heightened awareness, learning, personal solitude, unconscious art, dreams, stillness, quietness, focus, intention reflections, art the savior, altered states reality, altered states, darkness and silence (32 total).
4. Compensating for the reality of the environment, hence finding a world that one can control and escape to; the need for control, ugliness, destructive energy, chaos, abuse,

- survivor, homeless, awareness of your surroundings, tragedy, mother, parents, environment, safe house, damage, my refuge, saving my sanity, unsafe, violent, substance abuse, violence, volatile, escape, safety, outlet, toxic, emotional abuse, salvation (25 total).
5. Art the endless territory, the journey, reading, portal, invitation, dream, magic, mystery, slip stream of time, unknown, mystery, uncertainty, art was everything, fabric of my being, the unconscious, collective unconscious, artist being a vehicle, art is life, wholeness, gravity, darkness and silence, unconscious mythology, energy, ode of silence, poetry, music (25 total).
6. The joy and elation of art, positive, addiction to art, visual sensation, physical sensation, slip stream of time, emotional well-being, comfort in the world, magic of creativity, altered states of emotion, flow state, process, art, revelation, reborn, deep love, happiness, life force manifested by art, growth can only be through art, connection to spirit, the unconscious, the playing field of the artist, luminescence, climax of life art, social conscious, creativity, social extrovert (23 total).
7. Art as a tool to heal the society, being a mitigator, awareness of your surroundings, art helps the process, integrates, facilitating art, teaching, calming, healing process, feedback is healing, visual artist, processing, mirror, emotions, art process, abstract art, public art, being an empath, healing art, painting rocks, processing trauma, toxic energy of trauma, universal healer, natural healer, creative process, release of art, processing, trauma, purging, emotional outburst (27 total).

Individual Interview Transcripts and Analysis

S Interview

S is a 50-year-old female artist. She is famous for her drawings and gets many works commissioned. She fits the idea of an elite East Coast, New York artist. She is the only interviewee amongst our group who did does not have any psychology degree and did not practice in any psychological field. However, she was fully aware that there is a relationship between Art and Psychology.

S: I think, I think the artwork is often like a mirror that you do not really like what you see!

S: Like it gives you feedback that you do not necessarily want or like.

S: I guess the way I am understanding, self-growth is like something that would change in who you are.

S: It's plain as a day, that's what I mean, it's like a mirror you, I look at these, I am like this does not look like my work; for the past eight years I have not been drawing like this....

S is not happy with the quality of her work. She believes that she has had a regression, given that her creative work before the pandemic was far more sophisticated. She judges her own work based on the complexity of the lines. She noted that since Donald Trump became president, her work has had an angry mutant theme about it. Furthermore, since the pandemic, she has seen a regression in her work; she is drawing as she did 8 eight years ago. S also had to deal with her mother's death during the pandemic, which has had an impact on her artistic work. I thought her unconscious may be pointing her toward 8 years ago and some peculiar event or a complex that was not dealt with properly.

S: You can pretend you're doing better, and you can pretend you are going faster but the drawings speak of a different story, and I think the drawings are more accurate, so I like to make better drawings, but they are not coming out, it is like they freeze as the artist freezes.

This is where an artist without much education in psychology doing arts does trust her work, her art, her drawings to give her an accurate understanding of the turmoil inside and outside of her. Her mother has passed on. S had to move her family to her mother's house to be away from the virus that is plaguing the world. What helped her notice her dilemma were the stress and pressure involved in her work, her drawings, and her art. The work mirrors her turmoil, pushing her toward a resolution.

S: There is no growth right, so you are saying, your artwork shows you about your growth and saying, right. It showed me like after my mother died, and I was doing these old drawings like something is not right! I don't know what it is sometimes, but I know it's like a mirror that tells me if I know that I am doing old drawings!?! I am just struggling, like I am in a battle with my lines, I am tangled up!

S also sees the metamorphosis of her work right in front of her eyes. They say artists are the way they reach the riches of the collective unconscious within them, and they translate those symbolic images to become conscious of their time and measure how society reacts to the socio-politics of its time.

S: So, you do get back a very honest appraisal of what's going on. You know like when um you know I've done all this work with people seeking asylum and you know families that were separated at the border and stuff and, you know, when that all started with Trump. Like I used to, there was a while I was drawing drawings that at least to me were really beautiful. Like these beautiful kinds of delicate feral spaces. Like the palace of spider web spaces and, and then when Trump started and I was working with all these families it was, I could not make a beautiful drawing to save my life and the drawings like looked like mute and underwater um like creatures and I had been making things that had no like didn't seem to be anything. Like they weren't life forms. They were alive but they were almost like weird architecture or something, or spaces, and then suddenly like it looks like, kind of like hobbled horses and, you know, headless serpents and things like that would grow and like a, you know, a toxic lump.

S: It doesn't always seem clear to me (chuckle) or, you know, like also there's a lot of stages of making artwork that aren't clear. Like when I transition from doing sort of like beautiful faces into monsters, going from one to the other is like a messy unclear space and I don't know what's happening.

Figure 2. *Unconscious Doodling*

(The pen stays on the paper throughout the whole process and the artist does not look at the paper.)

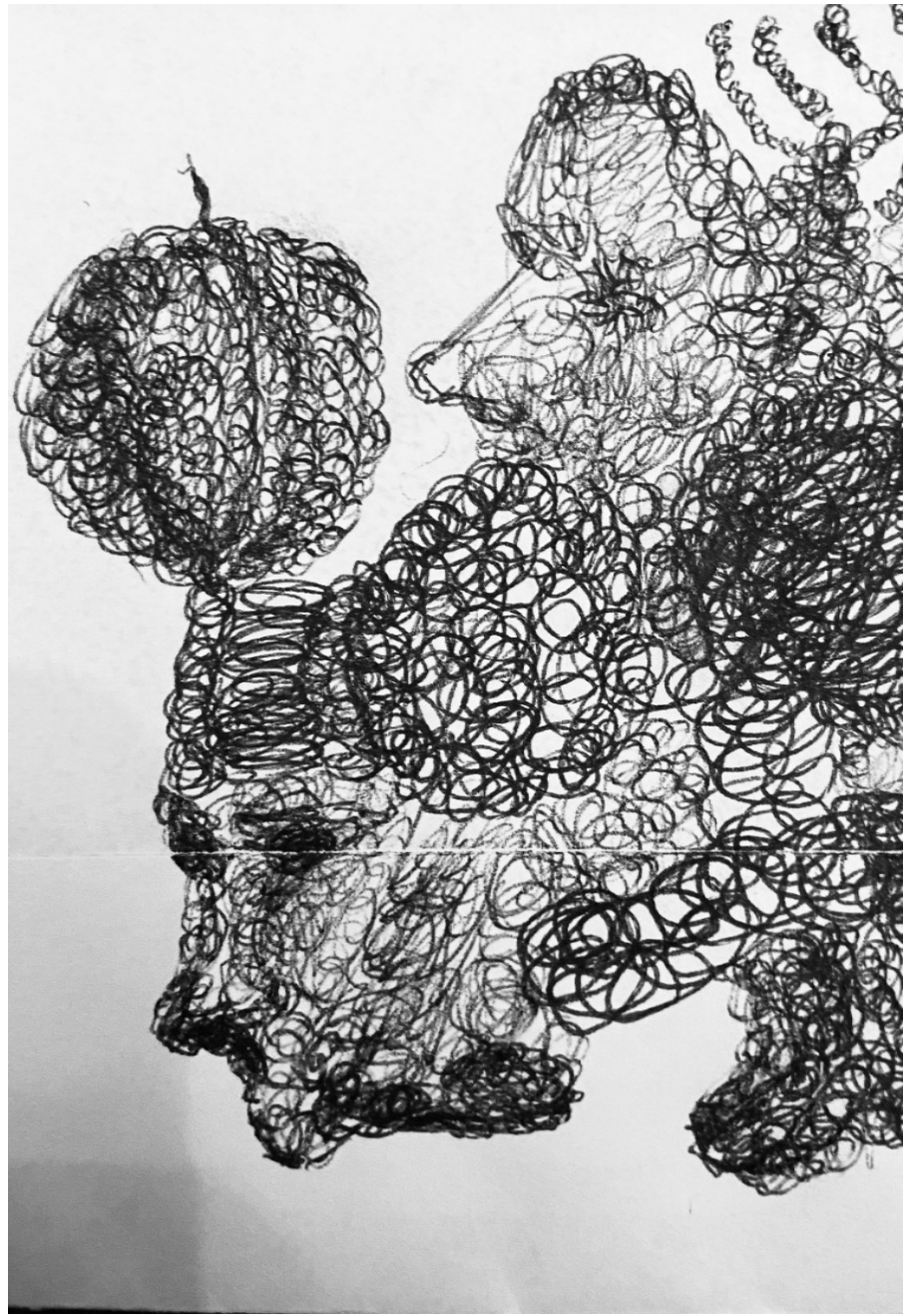
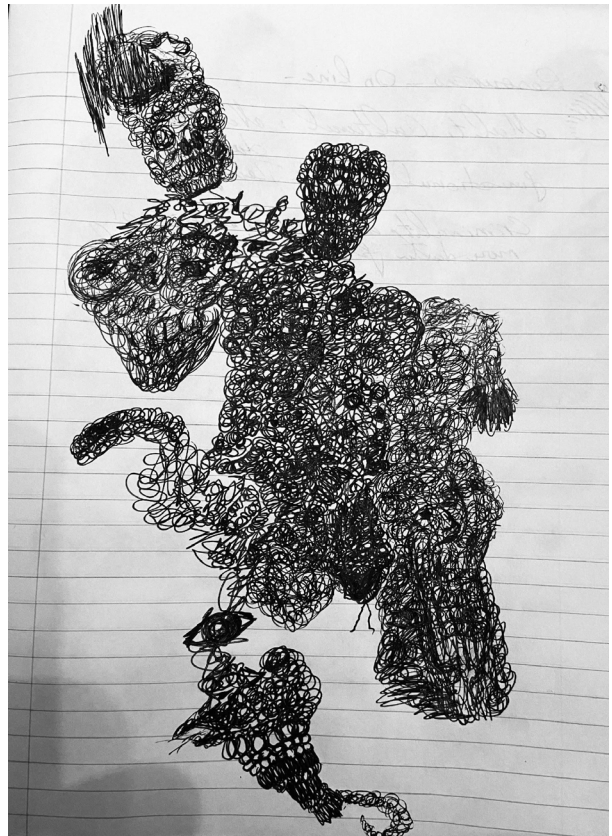
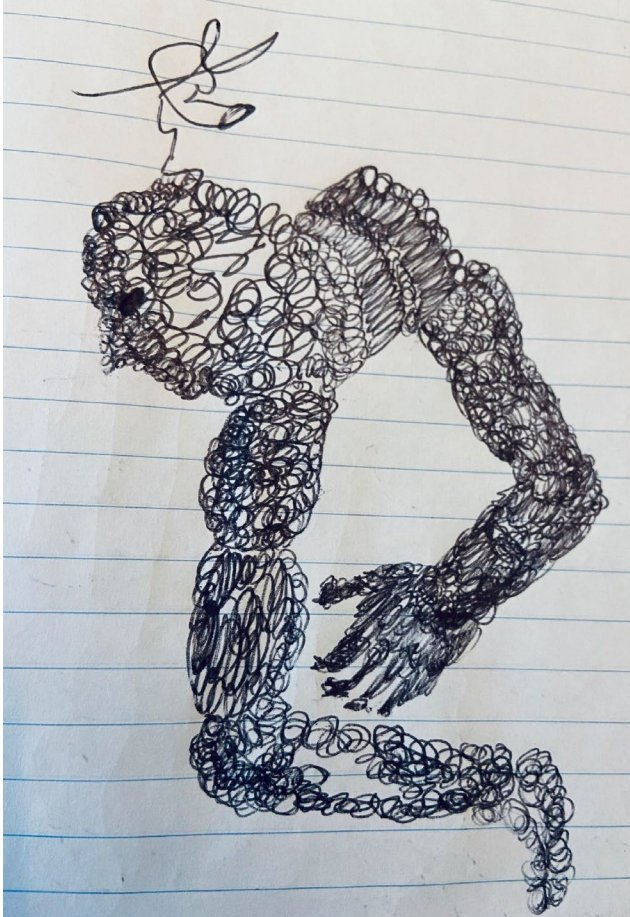


Figure 3. *Lock-up Drawings and Unconscious Doodling*
(The pen never leaves the paper.)



S has her own studio where she does most of her commissioned works. She works alone.

She rarely uses the studio at the institutions she teaches.

S: I don't know how to create art without solitude. Um it's like, I don't know it's like it's quiet enough that the stuff comes up that wouldn't come up in a crowded busy room. I guess the state of packed down, packed down and normalized in enabling psychology and your attention kind of shifts.... Yeah, it shifts and then you can hear things....

S is not completely clear on how her art impacts her emotions. It depends on the timing, how serious a piece is, and everything else that goes into each and every painting.

S: I don't know, I mean sometimes it just feels bad like I've ripped up drawings and, I mean I'm not like, I'm not trying to play this like I don't totally believe in this stereotype of an artist, but like it's just not working or like I go and they look superficial and I'm not really drawing. However, there is always that sense of release! The satisfaction of reading something original and of course the energy you spend the physical and mental energy that you contribute, add, and spend before the piece of art is there, alive and independent of the artist. An abstract thought, idea, image without any exterior physicality just a whim becomes art and the energy that procures such assembly.

S has watched her students drawing in the studio for hours and knows how they reach a high emotional state in the process and feel a release once they are done.

S: Well, I mean (sigh) my husband actually says like doing drawing for me is like the equivalent of taking Prozac for someone else. Like yeah (chuckle), like if I just go and draw regularly like, I'm a nicer person. I'm more joyful, I'm happier. I'm like things don't ruffle me and things don't get angry.... It's truly like just injecting something and it's very quick. Like if I haven't had a chance to draw in a while and I can go draw for two hours then I come back immediately almost always a happier person but it's not always like that. It's kind of like having a really intense kind of relationship where for the most part you love this person and they love you, but every so often like you blow up into these horrible fights and it's not good. Like you feel raw and kind of unearthed and...

It is obvious that S has not had any psychological training; however, being an artist, she has experienced solitude and is aware that solitude is a landscape for creativity as much as it is a place for profound thoughts and introspection. She is aware of the effects of art on her emotions and the release she receives upon drawing for a few hours. She is aware of a collective

unconscious but is not familiar with the jargon. She knows that drawing makes her disappear into her art and lose track of time. Again, S is the only one amongst my interviewees who has had no education or training in psychology.

B Interview

B is in her late 60s. She has a degree in fine arts and is also trained as a counselor to work with children who have experienced debilitating trauma in their early life and need therapeutic interventions. She uses art to reach these afflicted children. She works with nature and enjoys any kind of camping or outdoor activities.

B: I started painting when I was in college and that was '67 or '68, but um I think the art was around me all my life and so the question is: Why, what art do I want to do? Why do I want to do it? Art has always been part of my life, I guess. Art is life, so is self-growth.

I am always interested in what brought my interviewees to art. Why art? In a way, I am looking for any kind of trauma in childhood, any abuse or parental complexes. In my opinion, trauma in childhood, especially parental complexes, are the source of their victims trying to change the reality of their lives. The safe harbor becomes books that take them to an alternative reality and art that helps form a different reality.

B: Oh, my father did some art. My father was an artist who didn't practice, and he always had art books around. We had art on the walls. We had art and music...were mainly with us and also um we always had a piano...and love of nature, and for me I was in a suburban setting, Hicksville Island, a small little place, every summer we would go to Vermont where my mom's sister lived, and we would see beautiful nature.

I have known B throughout the last year and we have done some art together. She is always so serene and well-mannered that I never thought she had any complexes. It seemed that in her case, the nurturing elements of her upbringing brought her to art rather than any traumas or complexes.

B: And um, and I just loved that so it's just a deep love of all of those things and liking being happy. Having a lot of siblings, seeing them babies and growing up and enjoying them.

When we talked about solitude, B said that as an educator, she has always created art and teaching. She then talked about the solitude that comes from deep consciousness and focus, even among crowds.

B: Yes, I can do that, I can um, I can do that, that part of the self-growth thing is, it has a relationship to that 'cause it's like being strong in yourself or being confident that what you're doing is, it's what you're doing so you know getting older is definitely getting much better. With everything and with the art process. Like remember at the beginning you said something about like uh, like I wonder about myself. You know like I always do when I do Turkish marbling...

B talked about introspective thinking, wondering about life and the Self and how you are doing your art. In a way, it is in that solitude that you get the urge to pursue clarity.

B: And then you know learning as I do, I marvel at things that look like trees and then I realize you know even when you're learning how to paint you realize that the atmosphere comes right down to the ground. The sky is not as you know at the top. It's altogether and then you realize that not only that, but the trees are altogether. In other words, the tree is experiencing. We don't, it's too much for us to understand but I'm thinking I understand. I think there was a Mary Oliver poem too that talked about the trees being aware of us....

It is hard to ignore the spirituality that I saw and felt in B. She expressed it so well between her love of art, nature, and the solitude she arrives at so gracefully. This consciousness, this awareness does reach into spirituality, separate but together; we are all parts of this whole and we delve into each other symbiotically.

B: I took a walk with a friend. We met to exchange some foods that we had ordered for each other for sharing bulk orders but we met at this oak. It's 5 people around so that's five times, it's like 25' or 27' in circumference, to be out there and to be touching the trees and being with the trees and um...yes, everything. It's like movement, oxygen, and exchanging breath with the trees. I have no doubt but it's the interconnectedness of us all. I do think so when you say the solitude and the process of creating art, yeah, you can, you can say it, it does take the um....

When we arrive at the question of the collective unconscious, in most of my interviews I feel how the dialogue becomes heavy under the burden of the expanse of the world in the context of the collective unconscious. B had an easier time than most, since she has studied Carl Jung a long time ago; however, the irrationality that anyone needs to understand in order to grasp the symbolic language of Jung that dwells in the unsaid, unheard, and unseen resides in proximity to spirituality, and B is familiar with that.

B: I took part in a Native American ceremony a couple of months ago and I sat quietly for the first time in quietness for a few hours.... That kind of explains the relative truth functions inexorably within the absolute truth. Sitting there for hours, I noticed there was a crescent moon, and I was thinking of how the sun is shining on the moon. I am seeing the reflection of the sun on the moon and it's all a mirage. So, then I thought of myself as a reflection of the Dharmakaya of the absolute truth. And like a reflection of the Dharmakaya (Transformation body) but then what happened to the relative truth? Well, the relative truth is still there, it's said to be inexorable, it's a function together within each other, they cannot be separated.

We also discussed time and its unimaginable expanse and directionality. We spoke of how time is divided into smaller units so we can try to wrap our head around it. The measure of imagination creating time units—yesterday and tomorrow—to manipulate and distract us from how present time is and how lost, misguided, and bothered we can become by not having any idea of the essence of time.

B: Did you hate that when you first realized that they were cutting time into small pieces?

The last part of my interview with B turned to cover many different topics and, of course, the last question of how the process of art makes her feel. The ultimate answer, the only answer she could and would entertain, was love. “In the experience of love lies the only answer to being human, lies Sanity” (Fromm, 1939, p.144).

B: When I am creating art, I feel alive. I feel connected to some wellspring—a direct connection beyond being me, which is not in time or space, but vital, deep and moving, moving spirit within. I can return to the art, discover more, let it communicate to me what I need to know, or discover more.

There is a quiet serenity in B that comes through and reaches out to someone.

Interviewing her was most enjoyable talking about trees and nature, the collective unconscious, and absolute truth. She lives in her own private Idaho.

RT Interview

RT is an artist who is interested in public art. RT paints, sculpts, constructs installations, and creates stainless paintings. As she noted, she is a mixed media artist.

RT: From the tiniest intimate to the very large, but I am an extraordinarily strong proponent of public art. And I believe very strongly in the aesthetic of public art, you know making art accessible for all people, having it in the public realm, going back to early societies when art was more integrated into daily life with all people....

RT is also a poet writing on deeply personal topics that are as intimate and personal as the rest of her expressions in art. She also does installations, which is unique amongst my interviewees.

RT: I was a shy child. I was kind of a goody two-shoe. I was a middle child. My grandmother had miscellaneous items and you know I would, I was always doing something so it started at a young age and it became part of my personality. It also was and you've asked a lot here and there your questions include the emotional realm. It was my go-to place, creativity to, to be comfortable in the world. I was basically a shy child. I was kind of a goody two-shoe. I was the middle child.

RT talks about public art with passion, noting all the years she has been involved in it. Social justice and related issues have been important to RT for many years as she has been actively involved in activist causes for much of her life. It is hard to separate her art and life from public art and social justice. However, her love of art and public art started early and played a large role in her personal development.

RT: My self-growth. It was everything (chuckle). I would have to say it had everything to do with my growth um I loved learning. I was a good student. I was as I said an even-tempered, upbeat child. Uh I was a happy person but when I went, but from the earliest stage I was always in a creative realm and I did a lot on my own. You know it was also a place I grew enormously. I was um as a young child I would, I stay up very late at night now and I did as a young child as well.

I asked all my interviewees the question “Why art?” or “How did art find you?” These questions usually lead to pointing to art as compensation, a source for denial or a safe harbor, an alternative reality, compensation for trauma, abuse with some parental complex or an alcoholic father. It has not been like that for RT. Regarding RT’s background, she had no abusive parent or foster parent, no trauma—just the sheer drive and passion for art and activism.

RT: I would say that it was more subtle for me. Art was my refuge. It was my place, like as I said I was kind of shy, I was a little socially quieter.... It went away but, you know, I became much more confident and so on, but art was the place that I could be fully myself and it was also, it was exciting (chuckle), I mean it was, it was a place...I feel like there’s a magic in creativity...like we, I have a, I use this a lot when I write proposals or when I’m teaching, I think that the magic of creativity teaches us about the unknown, that the unknown, in creativity the unknown is thrilling.

RT also talked about the uncertainty of life, a big part of our existential angst which Rumi wrote about in his poetry, exemplified by the verse: “Where have I come from and where am I going.” RT expressed this angst as follows:

RT: I’ve been interested in uncertainty for over twenty years.... Yeah, but you know when we live our lives and we deal with uncertainty, we are scared, nervous, we are uncomfortable. When we make art, that is the prime state of mind to be in. It’s the best when you don’t know where you’re going.

The angst, tension, and energy present are referred to in Jungian Psychology as Anima for males and Animus for female. Freud called it Libido and the state of ecstasy that makes one feel animated, on fire in intervals of anguish, pain, and joy.

RT: Yeah, and when I teach my students, I teach them, I, before I teach technique or materials or whatever or themes, I teach attitude and the attitude that I want to impart to my student is to just be open, take cumulative steps and then the process takes off...on its own and that’s being engaged with the unknown. That’s what I’m calling the magic of creativity.

We had not gotten through the first question, so I asked again, and this time the answer was still vague yet much clearer.

RT: Well, I feel the same but as far as what did it have to do with my self-esteem or my self-growth? Everything. It's very much a part of the fabric of my entire being from the deepest places to the external, to my life.

The next question was about solitude, the state of solitude that we also called the state of ultimate focus and awareness—pure consciousness in time. In many ways, RT agreed with other interviewees about the core of solitude and what it eased for the artist.

RT: Well, I think it, you must work from a place of solitude to really be deeply involved in the creative process, so it has, and it is also, solitude has a lot to do with, there's a lot of perking that goes on. A lot of percolating and brainstorming and even if you're not working, you may look at something and think about it daily or on an hourly basis and so um the solitude is, is that incubator that's allowing you to be in a much in the zone in a deeper place. It just allows you to be present on that deeper level. I think it is not solitude that is total focus. And that's not to say because I think. Solitude must be balanced as well by interaction in the world, by being part of our times. You know there is so much going on in the news, for example. We're all aware of it and there's a synchronicity in our solitude. It is like everyone is nervous now. Everyone's uncertain now, you know which is part of our collective unconscious.

The discussion shifted to the pandemic, and its effect on the masses who have never been in this situation with lockdowns and loneliness. RT had a positive opinion of the effect of the pandemic and the solitude it affords us.

RT: I think the entire world or certainly the U.S. and the world, with the pandemic, I think there's a whole level of stress that everyone is communally experiencing right now and the creativity is extremely important...and the solitude to help people process it, stay grounded and stay healthy. There's something so healthy about creativity. Well, I think it's so so interesting in our past year how many people, you know, who are in, you know, when we're stuck at home have turned to creative modalities and even people who never made art before or music or whatever, people have been doing a lot, having a lot of creative experience during this pandemic.

On the subject of art and the collective unconscious, RT had a refined opinion on the topic of art and its root dwelling in the unconscious.

RT: I think we all have a personal iconography in the way we make shapes, in the way we make marks on a page or whatever art form we're working in...we have a basic syntax or like we have our own languages...whether visual and oral and textual and so I call that an iconography...our iconography typically it is, is part of that collective unconscious...you know, I have a certain way of working that I noticed when I was a

teenager. Certain, just types of movements in my work you can still see the syntax running from, from a young age to getting much older and um and I think that does tie into the collective unconscious. I've been interested in uncertainty for many, many years and the ephemerality, the fragility of life. These are themes that are in my work for a long time. when I layer elements in my installation work, sometimes I get a holographic effect but I'm not the only artist interested in that holographic effect and why did I get into that, wanting to get that effect? It's because I was interested in the interweaving different realities, I realized some years ago, that I wanted to um you know have a unification of worlds whether they were invisible or more concrete, I wanted to integrate all these different worlds and holography was a way of doing that.... But then I discover I'm not unique in this interest. There are so many people who have a similar instinct and to me that is part of the collective unconscious. That you're drawing from your time in this universe, that there are movements of you know rhythms of, of experience, rhythms of in, rhythms of issues that have to be dealt with, you know whether it's the building of a civilization, the breaking down of a civilization, worrying about the environment, you know real things that were involved in, in our lives as a society um that, that there's a synchronicity that goes on from one individual to another and that can apply to artists within the art community. It can apply to people in general in the larger community.

That brought us to individuality, a concept that is a primary focus in Jungian Psychology—the essence of the individual and the process of that individual becoming aware of chaos and irrationality. This is the core of Jung's discipline, and for everyone, though similar in principle, it is unique in experience. The only way to get to know oneself is to take on the long and the wretched process—and by wretched, I mean the upsetting and at times strange and bothersome process of individuation that exists to diminish the ego and build it back up, again, and how art makes the whole process palatable.

RT: I was always interested in what's going on that's unique inside of me. Like in my solitude. What am I processing that nobody else is privy to...and that is my unique experience and what is the commonality of all of us being out in the, in a community whether it be in New York City, you know in the world, in the U.S., in a foreign country, what is going on that we all as a community are experiencing for example, the pandemic? That's a universal experience right now. We are all experiencing it. But what's going on internally, introspectively that for each person is unique...and I am looking for that spot where these two experiences, the, the external communal and the internal private, where does that intersect and, and what makes that authentic? I think the art but to me that also connects back to this idea of the unconscious, you know the collective unconscious. I think what you just said was so interesting also. It is a dialogue that goes back and forth, it's not one direction...So, you keep asking different

questions, what is going on introspectively? That is also a reflection of what's going on out there and there's a constant interchange.

In relation to art and how we choose to express it; It is what we find in realm Of solitude, within the chaos of the collective unconscious, and the urgency of it, and irrationality of our dreams, and it is expressed in rich symbolism. How does the process come to us, and who brushes the canvas or draws the lines? What foggy images of dreams are expressed in the medium chosen to express it? We wondered about and tried the patience of words and the poverty of our vocabulary in search of the canvas, the brush, the ink, and intertwined colors. As Rumi said, "Who is that sees with my eyes and who is that hears with my ears."

RT: I was doing a lot of different kinds of teaching, but I ended up teaching a group of oncology people touched by cancer and one thing led to another uh we built the healing harbor and that's a whole story in itself but anyway because of working with that community and then I started working with every other kind of illness and disability groups.... I learned about Mandala and I, and I realized it was a wonderful modality for staying well and centered and... internal, but I also think it is a remarkably interesting example. When you talk about the collective unconscious, to me the mandala is one of the most universal art modalities or visual art expressions that has been used for centuries over time...and in every culture or so many diverse cultures around the globe, there are diverse ways of working with Mandala. So, it's totally universal. It's totally about getting into the, and you're talking about symbols and you know all of that, to me it encapsulates everything you're asking in that question.

The interview had reached the last question. The final exploration would involve delving into the emotions and sensations that creating art inspires in the artist.

RT: I would say that making art and being in a creative state um is totally calming. It's totally inspiring. It's illuminating. It's um joyful. It can be difficult. It can be frustrating and create a challenge, a good challenge but it can do that um so I would say for me though it's 99% a positive happy state. It's a, it makes me ground, it gives me grounding. It gives my life its greater purpose. It turns out in my life I did not marry; I didn't have children, which is all, which are all things I was expecting to do, and the art became my primary, it is my life worth, art is my life worth, and art is my purpose on this earth um I might say that public art is my purpose on this earth as well. And I made choices that are not on purpose. It is not like I set out to prove something or to make a statement, that was not what was going on. I lived organically and I

expected things to happen like a family, for example. I would have been a great mom, I know I would have and I would have loved having children but on the other hand by being so immersed in the art I was in that solitude state of total involvement and in some many ways, and a lot of life decisions for me have been made based on my art journey.... For me, it was such a deep experience to be in the realm of making art and art. For me, there was a lot going on with art and community, so I had my private life as an artist and my own interior creativity, but I also had a very, very and still do, a very dynamic...creative life in community. People, yes, people have actually told me that I am a different kind of mother. From the teaching and the facilitating of groups...because I have empowered many people over the years to enter the scene. I particularly think I have excelled helping people who know nothing about making art...to feel comfortable and enter that realm.

MA Interview

MA is the youngest interviewee (under 50) and the only non-American. She has a master's in psychology and is an artist. She runs two of the most progressive Pre-K and Kindergarten schools in her country and primarily reaches her students through art. Her daughter is attending college in the United States, and MA is also continuing her studies in Jungian Psychology. She started in Zurich at the CG Jung Institute and is now continuing at the CG Jung Institute of New York.

When we arrived at the first question, MA was noticeably clear on the boundaries that a researcher and participant must keep; however, she was also clear on her thoughts and how she labels them. Her master's degree in spirituality and psychology and her studies at the CG Jung Institute gave her an extremely sophisticated perspective on the questions and the answers, which in this case were much more scholarly. She also did not see herself as much as an artist but saw art as a by-product and tool for her to discover herself and heal her clients and students.

MA: You see, today I know art to be the same as self-growth, so I do not know if one can influence the other. I always say whenever we process trauma, there is, you are sort of like, you're digging and, and removing this toxic energy and this toxic energy and this toxic energy can only be replaced and really, it's an intrinsic natural way. It happens naturally and I have seen it. It is replaced with this libidinal life force that manifests

itself in art so in many ways I think the universal here is, is art. That is our spirit language so in a way it is the universal healer so when. you say, when you ask what is the influence of art on self-growth? Again, I say you know growth can only be through art because that is the true nature of spirit and anything that mars this relationship of connection with spirit is what we experience in life. I like to think of art, my relations, my personal relation with art is not just with, with the brush and, and the color...it is beyond that. It's really that, that creative trance that we put ourselves into and allow ourselves to, to also mean into the process. I've been through a lot of trauma in my life, you know in my childhood, the least of which is the civil war and everything that came with it but there was a lot of times with you know when I, when we were sheltering in place, when we can't do anything, when we're getting bombed and I mean we're talking about years of that uh I didn't know it then but now I know it that there was a lot of art in my life and it's the only thing that carried me into the, the realm that we don't see....

MA's answer appealed to my biases about the effect of trauma in our childhood that changes the reality of who we are and what life is. She comes from a country that has had civil war for the last 40 years and art has been her savior. Her statements about art and self-growth being the same reflect her education and understanding of Jung. I mentioned the altered states and a different realm that trauma introduces to us to nurture our growth within the reality we abhor.

MA: Exactly, it's almost as if you're in this world but really not of this, I mean you're not of this world and that connection I think was my major realization that I am more than just my body, my mind, that spiritual connection that kept me alive even at a time when I tried to end my life so I think that creative process, we call it art, call it trying to be nice to write as well, as writing is an art for me....my relationship was formed in color. It began to deepen when I started processing my trauma. It's almost as if it is, it's morphed from that, from a trance into, it's almost like looking at the black and white you know picture and suddenly you start seeing the hues and the colors....

MA: I remember a very profound moment in my life. I had spent 1½ months in India meditating and all of that and on the last day, on the last day when I had to leave after 1½ of, of real, of pilgrimage, I could not stop myself from, from emotional outburst... purging and just I do not, I did not know where it was coming from. It was just coming all out but at that moment and, and, and at the same time, I was looking around me and I had never seen trees greener than I had seen. I had never seen that blue in the sky so when I'm this, when I hadn't seen almost the sunshine, I could see the how, I don't know the, the luminescence is what...I, I could see people in such different I, I cannot describe it....

Figure 4. painting “Emergence”

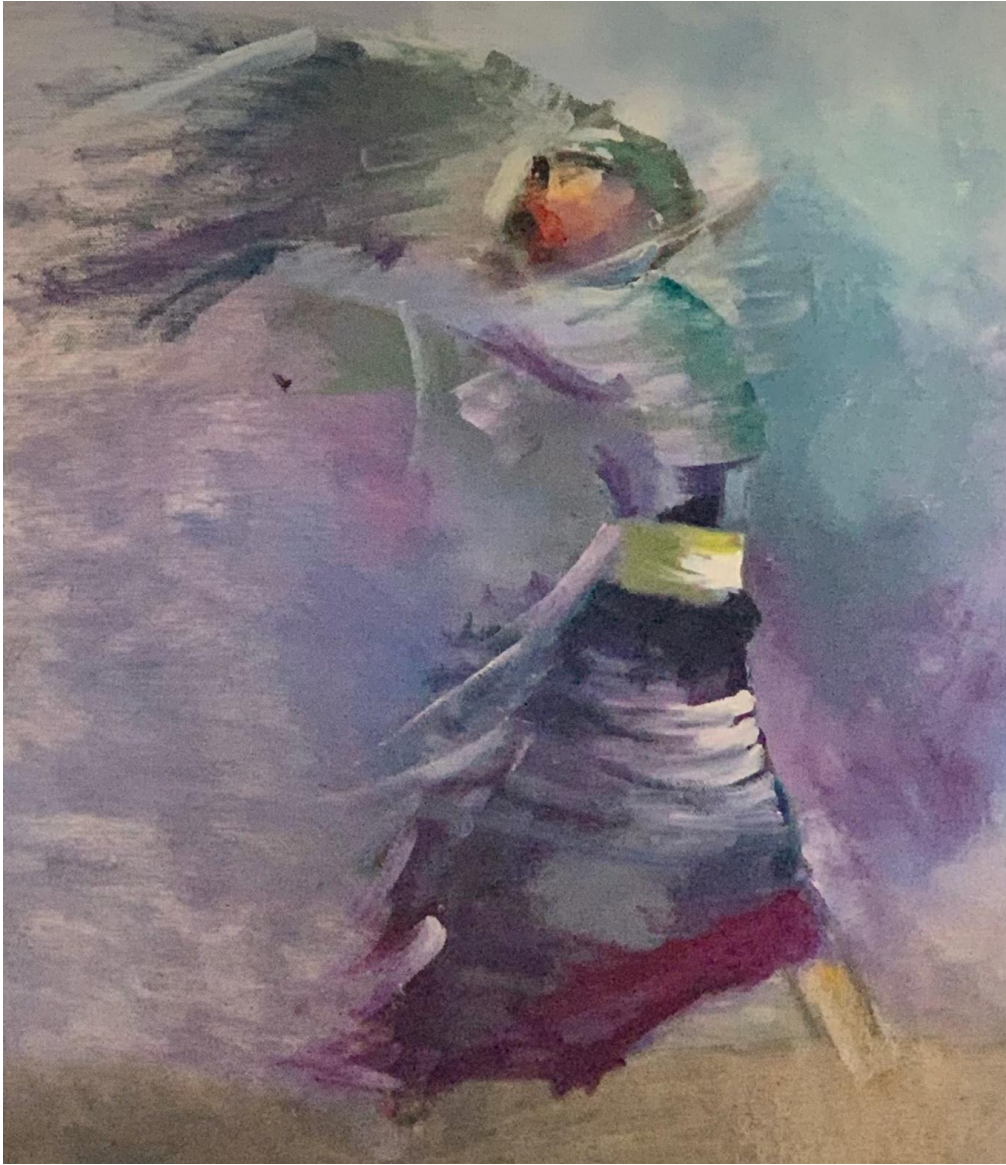


Figure 5. Painting “What time is it”



India has been the source of many cathartic experiences. India has its own colors and hues like any other country; however, there is such a chaos of colors, sounds, and scents that it dominates one's senses. Artists develop a certain openness or vulnerabilities toward unique and unexpected happenings. Going from India to the stillness and focus of solitude, MA had to reach even deeper.

MA: Yeah, you cannot have one without the other. Yeah, and so when we say we are in the presence of spirit then we are in the presence of beauty and color and essence and that's art. There is no, again distinction, there is no differentiation I think uh when you're in presence of this, of this, I do not know wholeness, you are in the presence of art and so, and so therefore again, we go back to the unconscious and tapping into the collective unconscious and that's where we connect with you know the geometry of life, the art of life, the art of the universe, so, so the relationship between soli—solitude and creating art is, is a direct relationship. It's one source, one pact.

MA: Just complete silence. Oh yes, and you know what I recreated this, when I'm in New York, it's too loud for me and there was a time when I had to do training. They have something called the sensory deprivation tank...I was staying at a hotel and I remember that way, I went to a sense deprivation tank and I just like four or five times, I was there for two weeks just for silence. Yeah, I love this question because honesty and this why I love Jung, why I love Carl Jung and, and Carl Jung says that in solitude you find a fountain of healing which really makes life worth living, that's what he says right and the more we wake our energy in talking and connecting with people (chuckle) then it's like you know you need days of silence to just, just detox from all of this energy so when, when we are in solitude we go back to the, that leads to the first question, we're in spirit in the presence of spirit and, and the Sufis talk a lot about this, you know, They have this nest so you are in the presence of the grandness of the spirit and so....

Although there is a close connection between the research questions, the themes covered in each individual question contain their own body of literature. The next topic of discussion was collective unconscious.

MA: Well, because collective unconscious is really (sigh) our place, ours, the place of our spirit in, in source so the collective unconscious is how you and I and somebody else in, in you know whether here or, or, or this, this, this life or previous life, the thread that we all share and, and it's, if it's, for me the unconscious, the collective unconscious is fascinating because then we go back to myth, mythology, we go back to you know uh different...alchemy. We go back to you know I spend a lot of time thinking about pyramids and the geometry of earth so, so we tap into that how

different people you know same things back in the time when, when there was no communication, and we see it in the art of the first men you know, and a different drive and Jung saw it in different children all over the world when there was no travel among them. There is the art as, the symbolism that was...so if we see also, I, I took a course also in union psychology, but we spoke about the first art and the first art was found in a cave that is now I think so, so and what is the stat? The believe was that they had access to mushrooms or something, some plant that gave them access to the unconscious mind and that began the process of art as we know it but the interesting thing was that across you know various locations on earth, people were drawing and using symbols that were you know one in the same...so, so that is the mystery. This is where art becomes the key that unlocks the mystery of life that we all know are open, our sole purpose is to understand it. Who am I? What am I? How do I fit in this world? And what the collective unconscious does to us through art? You get a glimpse into that fabric that, that...

With the question of how creating art makes one feel and affects your emotions, it seemed we were on the same page, so close, yet different. Throughout the interview process, the research questions I asked appeared to inspire MA to delve more deeply into the topics covered, allowing for a meaningful flow of dialogue and valuable insights into the data collection.

MA: You know in many ways, every artist relates to, to the statement. I disappear, not in the sense that I disappear but, but the, the, I, I present the world disappears...I remember the masks we did so this is when my mask is on the side and then I, I, I allow a full spectrum of, of my you know you want to call it re-emotions to sort of surface or to connect with, with, with the work um so, so yeah this is, I mean it's very, this is simply exactly what, what's art, what the artistic process does. It allows us to drop this eye, this self that we have you know created, yes, uh huh um and, and to be fully in the presence of this grand self, the capital Self. And that capital Self has the full spectrum of you know whatever you want to call it emotions, emotions and so spectrum of the old angers of being so, so yes this is, this is what it's about.

RA Interview

RA lives in New York and is a socially conscious artist. RA works with diverse groups of children, healing them through art. She works with abused immigrant girls, incarcerated youth, a children's home in Poughkeepsie, emergency foster care, residential homes with people who have severe and ongoing mental illness, people with neurodegenerative disorders such as

Parkinson's, Huntington's and ALS, and Jewish family services working with Holocaust survivors. The program she teaches is Art for Healing.

RA: I have a background in ceramics. I did ceramics um for many years. I did it um professionally and made a living doing that...for eighteen years and I did sculpture jewelry and um Japanese-inspired vases um and then I got into the Arts for Healing and I have been doing that for eight years and, but I do my own work at home and printmaking and I do some crafting as well. I think...needle baskets and make prints.

One common theme that arose from the interviews was the humbling and inspiring work that many of the interviewees are doing within the community. Their contribution to their local organizations that support the needy and forgotten kids in the system is admirable. In response to the first question, RA directed the conversation to the world of dreams.

RA: I process my dreams in my artwork. I use the imagery that I see because I have very vivid dreams and I write them down in the morning. So, I process my dreams and I illustrate the different symbols in the artwork, and I use that as a vehicle for self-reflection. Often, I won't even know until I, you know I will wake up from a dream and I'll not understand anything about it. I'll be like "Well, that was very bizarre," but then when I start doing artwork around it, um I start to understand.... I talk a little bit more about that in, in you know how it affects my emotional well-being, but it feels like um it is maintenance and I feel like...such an important part of my life. It's like exercise or vitamins or food. Like I feel like it's part of who I am, it is part of what makes me whole and I can't really function without it. It's a, it doesn't feel like a choice...

RA appeared to be an individual who takes life seriously and works hard at excelling in her craft every day. She made a great impression, talking in a clear strong voice and, at the same time, with an ease about her as we came to the second question of solitude and processing art. As the interview progressed, she looked more at ease and responded with concise answers.

RA: Working in solitude is definitely essential to my process. I feel like my work is, is sort of like a meditation and I feel that I cannot achieve the same depth uh with others present because I find it a distraction um and I would say the exception to that for me would be if I'm learning a technique...you know, a painting technique or a sculpture technique, and then I enjoy the other people around because there's a nice exchange and we, we feed off each other's energy and I love that but in terms of creating my own work, it's essential that I'm working in solitude and, and...well, just, just, just being in my own company.

I tried to bring focus and awareness to the dialogue, but RA would not have any of it. With this subject, she related solitude to aloneness and that was how she experienced her solitude. She had come prepared, which also pointed out the seriousness of her character. She had researched the questions that I supplied all my interviewees before the interviews. She had written the answer and kept the text in front of her. She also asked for a shorter interview—we had 45 minutes. I welcomed her professionalism, although I often prefer more organic and in-the-moment dialogue. Her art was also more measured and planned. Ceramic printmaking is very technique-oriented. The collective unconscious was a bit too abstract for her and she talked about her reservations about that topic.

RA: Well, I think it, you know in relationship to my own work, I, I did a body of work, I think I might have, it was on my website um if you took a look at that. It was a ceramic sculpture, and they were abstract uh wall sculptures and I did the series over the course of a year or two, and I had no idea where this work was coming from. I did a show with the work and then people were telling me what the work meant to them and it was all the same, it was all the same, and then, so it was sort of through other people's interpretation of my work that I started to understand it and so like what was, there was a um a, there was universal imagery even though it was abstract people would recognize the images as familiar to them...and recognizable um familiar and recognizable without that, without it being literal. The body of work I was referring to, the sculpture um a lot of people were seeing it as um Eskimo um artifacts and uh, and then later I looked at the Eskimo artifacts and I saw exactly what they were talking about. That's what I was going to say, at the risk of sounding new age or something, I feel like I am channeling.

Although the subject was a bit more abstract than RA was used to, she came out of it with a better understanding of the hypothesis. By the end, she was not sure if she had answered the question fully. I reassured her that what was important was that we both had more options and alternatives to the question of the collective unconscious. In answering the question about what creating art makes one feel, she started again with a concise statement:

RA: It's often a very healing process.... Um and as I was saying about my dreams, I often make very meaningful connections as I'm creating the work that I would not have otherwise...I would never have known that a was related to b in my dream until I

started putting it on paper and then suddenly, I have this flood of information. All these connections. I never would have, never would have put it together and then often um I will change it. I'll change, so in processing my dreams for example, um I'll bring the elements from the dream onto the page, and it could be an incredibly sad or unsettling dream and then I will change it to have the outcome that I want it to have. I'll add an element or two...but just I think through the connections that are made, you know when I'm putting this imagery on paper and then I'm having these thoughts and feelings about what it means to me um metaphorically or literally and then I'll give it the desired outcome.

I was not very clear about her answer and why she had to change any of her dream work toward a desired outcome, but I knew that we all process our art, dreams, and lives differently and that is what makes us individuals—separate but together. I had the shortest interview with RA; she actually told me before the interview that she would not be able to keep a dialogue for more than 15 minutes. At 35 minutes, we had done an excellent job. I had the answers to my interview and research questions.

NB Interview

NB is a Ph.D. scholar who has been a teacher all her life. She is a second-generation Italian American, with an Italian father who had to work hard to raise her large family. He also managed to create art on the side. Her mother was a wonderful person who lived for art, a free spirit who brought all that was beautiful aesthetically into the house. NB reported that she has lived like an Italian native; every day was a celebration, whatever was going on. She has been teaching the healing effects of art on trauma specifically in young children. She also works as a therapist with the same group of traumatized children.

NB: Art making takes me to my source and the individual source is the universal energy source I believe is the connection between the two so within/without kind of, and that's the art is the vehicle for the um the art is the vehicle for that. We call it a flow state, Staying open to that is very important for me, yeah. It is a journey, as much as the destination, so the portal is part of the journey and an invitation, right, you see an opening and that's the invitation. It nourishes my, it nourishes my being, it nourishes my spiritual being, it nourishes my sense of hope and...the journey to the art to the source.

NB had some of her art hanging on the walls of her office, and there are piles of her student's art and artifacts, including pieces of wood and gobs of clay. She cannot wait to hold her courses in trauma and art in her studio in person again. She misses the energy and flow of meeting her students in person.

NB: The personal growth, I don't know, I really think that every single experience in life is personal growth. I think depression is personal growth. Revelation is personal growth; illumination is personal growth. The inspiration is personal growth, tragedy is personal growth. I don't see anything in my life...art helps to process it and to integrate it for me. Or it is like an integrative uh activity. It integrates all that is so much that's happening simultaneously in life and it kind of integrates, I think primarily it, it's about beauty...uh beauty as relation so authenticity and beauty are relation to color and shape, form, and destiny (chuckle) and divine inspiration and um so I think primarily it is the eyes, the sensation, the color, and the shape so the visual is extraordinarily strong in my, in my paradigm the vision is very strong. It doesn't necessarily mean others...but it's visual for me and it is uh.... So, but for me it is all what I am saying, it's art and self-growth and um experience and it's a flow. So, to me there really is no separation. I mean I am, the only thing I lack in taking part as much as I want in, in what uh what the arts give me is time because I'm devoted to my clients and I'm devoted to my family and I am devoted to my responsibilities uh to the collective so I, I try to facilitate...as much art as I can. That is really my, my biggest art form is my teaching and, and using art.... An access um the um state, the states or the gifts (chuckle) that arts give for self-growth and I'm a firm believer in that.

Figure 6. painting *Hanging Art*



Once again, as a researcher, I was made aware of my own biases. I am personally intrigued by the idea of what brings an individual to art. Is it damage, so the light can get in? As Rumi said, “I ask, Why art? What brings you to art?”

NB: Um, I think the aesthetics that my mother created um in her being. You know she was just an exemplified beauty. Not just physical beauty although she was physically beautiful...but uh her way of being was just so beautiful and so riveting.... There was a lot of ugliness in my environment. There was a lot of uh destructive energy in my environment growing up but like a shining light you know my mother was (chuckle), made up for it with her beauty, you know with her beauty with a sense of beauty, with her devotion to beauty, with her exemplification of beauty and...she gave me a bar, you know, this is, this is the world I want to be in you know this place where, where beauty reigns (chuckle) it brought me deeper, art was the subset of beauty, beauty as, truth is beauty right for that? It was off the page, you know. It was a walk at midnight you know where my mother would point to the sky and say, “See what they’re missing?” All those people asleep, see all those lights, no lights in any of the apartments around. There are no lights in any of the houses. They’re all asleep...and she’d point to the moon and the stars and say, “See what they’re missing.”

There were forces around NB, the ugliness of displacement, that had affected her parents and NB to look in different ways than almost everybody else—being an alien in one’s own country. Art to me is a sign of compensation, art is an equalizer, so there must be incapacities.

NB: Yes, well my mother and my father said, “You are an artist,” and it was only, I only had two colored pencils to my name, I mean I didn’t have a whole lot so (chuckle), now I have a studio you know full of brushes and paints and you know...but only, then I only had these two uh Venus Paradise coloring pencils, um one was turquoise, and one was a shocking pink. And with those /two little colors (chuckle) I, I would draw, you know, spirals and paisley and like flower shapes, but not real flowers and trees. I would do trees a lot...I studied trees a lot, I looked at trees a lot and so just producing those and then my father...my father was a draftsman, he was a carpenter and a mechanic, and he could build anything out of wood or fix anything, so his skill at drawing was superb. He could visualize it on paper and then make, build it so I would look at those sketches and I would look at his hands.... They had in the olden days they had um paint-by-number (chuckle)... My father had a matador with a red cape and a bull charging...a very large paint-by-number, and it was oil paint that they used on these, so it was a canvas, but it was paint-by-number and he would work on this once in a while when he was around... and when he wasn’t around, I would go in and I would stare at this matador and I would look really longingly at those paints and the paint brushes (chuckle) and the most I would allow myself to do because he told me, he told everybody, do not touch that...um I would open the little paint containers and I would smell the linseed, you know, the oil paint, the linseed oil, and then look at the

color inside the linseed oil and really examine the different um, and put it back and, you know, wish I could, I could do it but, you know, I was so young, I don't even know if I knew what the numbers were for or, you know, it was just a, a seminal experience about you know the magic of creating a different world, a different universe using um paints.

NB: For my brothers and sisters, they're a different story. It's in the memoir, when my memoir's finished...you can just read about them, but um I think that the abuse that they suffered was so great that there was really, it was really impossible to scale that wall of mitigation properly and because I was beautiful and was cute and I was um alive and had a spark that hadn't been stamped out of me. Again my parents noticed that and then they helped preserve it and my older brothers and sisters helped to preserve that.... There's definitely the survivor guilt in all that. But to go back to your question, solitude was very sought after in my family for obvious reasons, ten people, all vying for food, all vying for attention, all vying for attention, all vying for, you know, the basic natural hierarchy because we were homeless many times, right, so we were, we had to deal with those hierarchies of food, clothing, shelter in a significant way so um in term of solitude it was, there was very little solitude. But for me, I'm telling you my experience, once I opened that book, I went through that solitude.

We talked further about how love of teaching helped her to become more of an extrovert, although she is completely an introvert and solitude for her is more than deep consciousness. She also needs the aloneness of her solitude, to a point that she has to put aside time for solitude, not only for the sake of her art but for her clarity and stillness. We then came across the question of the collective unconscious.

NB: Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as it relates to emergence of introspective art, collective unconscious, I trust it totally. Whatever comes up I'm totally, I totally trust it, like a dream. The other night I had a dream that there were, I looked at the window and down below in the back portion of the um area that I was looking at was a natural scene was a stream and along the stream were I think four or five blue herons. Now blue herons are very solitary...in my experience anyway (chuckle) and I live in the woods. I live in the country. I see blue herons, they're always around, but they're alone so it was just one of these like what? You know when I woke up, like what? So, uh and figuring that out you know why I saw a cluster of individuals, of very individually oriented or solitary creatures together and um it would be the same thing if I were painting. I don't consider myself a representational painter but whatever comes out, whatever it looks like to me gives me. It's also looking, it's also accepting the gift that is like the dream like the heron in a group. What is this gift telling me? And uh how is it that I'm having these images come up in my painting right now. about my unconscious. ... It is like having a conversation with myself for me. It is the way I would say how. it is that I am having these, this dream of

a solitary bird um in a collective (chuckle) and that's me, that's exactly who I am, I'm a solitary person. I am an introvert and I've always been in a collective even if I am not on zoom or in a group um after COVID or before COVID, I am thinking about the collective. Like what do I have to do to prepare for this event on Saturday, and what do I have to do post-Saturday for my students, and what do I have to do for my clients, and how do I have to follow up so I am always like connected to others. And I sometimes would like to release, but it's hard to release when so many people need, are in need, and it's such a real, it's a noticeably big responsibility so it's hard to release....

I did not interrupt her while NB was expressing what she felt the need to say, trying to cover all the angles—there were so many angles to her comments and such complexity. There were mirrors on the walls and one can see how one can take oneself on this trip to bountiful. We then talked about the process of healing and the elements that come together to facilitate the process.

NB: I try to focus like on who I can help and um art is healing. The process of making art is healing. The image is healing. I believe that the feedback that the person gives about their art is healing. I believe that the feedback I give about art is healing. I just don't think that there is anything that could go wrong um if your, you are supportive um in art, in art making and that the person knows that they are being supported. I am talking therapeutically now.... I do not know. It is magic. Some things in the world are just magic. Some things in the world are just Mysteries. I accept the mystery. I accept that I do not have an answer to everything and that's what gives me ultimately that's what gives me creativity. It also gives me the...the zone and the power to see, or enter the slip stream of time. That is the mystery, what if we're, what if we're a seed? What if we're a seed and we have to go through this maturation process, all the theories about what we are, how we are as humans, but I think we are um for me what a human is a um, is a hooked potential that connects and channels divinity, you know the divine energy, whatever that is to whoever you're talking to and, and we do not know anything else. You know like you always say, there are no rules (chuckle), you know. I will say it right back to you, you know there's no rule so...now what is art? You know, what is art? So then, Issa Yoke, the researcher that I quote a lot uh what is art? What is art for? She says, "It's for survival, necessary for survival," so if we, if your theory about art brings you to the unconscious and that is what's going to save you.... It's a lot to say because art says what words alone can't say...words can say plenty, words can say plenty, you know our ancestors you know thirty, forty thousand years ago, many of them couldn't speak.... There was no language. It was sign language but there was no vocal cord. That, this whole thing is an evolutionary uh miracle (pointing at her throat and voice box).... Yeah, why, why were the caves, why were the caves being able to be painted so evocatively when there were no words? Because they were able to do what words couldn't do (chuckle).

We talked further about Art, symbols, the unsaid, the unheard, and the unseen and unlearning, and somehow slipped and fell up to the higher ground.

MT Interview

MT is a doctoral student, an art educator, a painter, and a potter. She has been a teacher in the New York education system for over 40 years. She is also studying trauma and art as a part of the Art Therapy discipline. She has her own pottery oven and painting studio. In addition, she is a singer/songwriter with regular gigs at night, mostly close to where she lives, playing her guitar and singing her own songs. She has devoted fans that follow her from one venue to another. She also spends most of her time in nature outside. MT is a rebel fighting the system for social justice for the last 20 years. She did not respond well to the first question; she took it to the territory she was well familiar with—social justice.

MT: Artists have a quite different (understanding about their art being connected to their growth. Excuse me (cough), because um we are taught to disconnect from our art within all training schools and colleges and also out there in the professional world of art where you earn the badge of being called an artist. Um it usually is the definition of skill base which is not about growth and it's about do you sell your wares or your wares being valued by others and that's a disconnection between artists and self-growth as well so being an educator and being an artist who has gone through the educational routes over all these years and being in part education, nowhere in any of my training and nowhere in all my forty years of teaching did we really ever allow artists, so I'm part in that because that's what came to me as being in being to be educated and also being a teacher and educating that it was dis, disconnected about self-growth and more termed as what mediums and materials were you exploring and the removal of self usually was stuck with social subjects or rebellion or tagging onto some other issue instead of self unless somebody really was very aware and wanted to do pictures of grief or, you know, motherhood or whatever, but I, personally I feel that that has not been part of my training as a student or as being a teacher facilitating which is very unfortunate so the piece, the artists who do plug into self-growth and awareness. Is it emotional? Is it awareness of society around them that they can bring certain issues? So, identity, is it the identity of self within culture? Looking to be looking for people who you know not only do reflections of themselves but within their history, their culture um so growth is a big word that I would tease apart more and the acknowledgement that in the art world, within education or in the artist's world where we call, we label somebody an artist um usually to my understanding are usually not tagged into that description.

I had to explain to MT that I wanted to know about her own personal growth, what goes inside her, and tried to open the question further and take it away from any socio-political field.

MT: But when you asked about artists, I have to go into the artist that I know of and so my own self-growth as an artist, I think again I would go back to growth. During adolescence it was um a certain exploring with materials about pubescence and identity and angst and not being able to uh clearly see what teenage hood looked like in a reflection of materials you know being very, so that growth I remember two pictures, making a couple pictures um and then in college never doing a facial portrait or a body portrait because I was not in my own skin so that growth was the exploring and trying to grow into age changing. Um and then growth as far as um personal growth throughout, it is funny, because you know if I look at a timeline um there is an artist, is her name Alice? Alice Martin who does this timeline throughout and I remember looking at these white squares and going oh, 1960, uh 1972, I was in 8th grade and oh I could picture who I was and then you know '81, oh, I was in college and I was doing this, oh, and then in...and also when I got to like '91 and from '91 on was a blur of self because now I was a mother of three children, and how is it a big thing that all of a sudden my art making was not my own anymore, it was making art with my children, although I did a lot of ceramics and stuff, there was no, there was mediums, materials, conquering a form to make it do what I want but there was no growth. There was a production of pieces um, but I would say earlier years of childhood, adolescence, college, there was growth in reflecting of trying to frame the needs what I, who I was through materials and then was afterwards during young motherhood and then really for a long, long time 'til I was a student at TC and started doing pieces that reflected emotions. Again, they were not again internal um, so I was dabbling and the only within the past couple years um have I really dug into using materials to explore feelings, inner grief, angst, love, happiness, joy and I you know it wasn't really until recently.

MT got a bit more personal but needed to present a picture of what she was going through and this was the whole picture. Her story was incredibly detailed as I tried to get more direct answers; however, she answered all the questions with the same fervor and themes. Artists usually have a macro view of the world that is more complex than others, and that was the reason I chose coding in a more detailed way, so my readers can get as much data to interpret as possible. I knew I would not be able to honor the depth of their vision in just one word or one sentence. We moved on to the second question.

MT: Hmm, wow. Well, when I got up just a second ago to want to go check the kiln, I saw a stack of paintings in my dining room and the light was coming through, shining on this one section of a painting that I painted during the time I was in your class and it caught me in such a, it, in such a way that I was like, oh my God, look how beautiful that little section is of that painting and it's like I made them, they're stored, they're against the wall and for a moment I was back in the solitude of my old studio at Oakwood Boulevard where the bedroom upstairs where I was a young mother and I had babies and a husband there and that was a master bedroom turned into a painting studio and I just painted for hours and hours and hours and I, that solitude I had never had in creating and that little glimpse just now at that painting as I was walking inside. There is a sacredness about that time because I had never really painted a lot before, and I was allowed to live and breathe in that space for as long as I wanted. I would crash out on, I had a guest bed, and I told my husband "I'm staying here, I'm still painting" and he'd go, "Okay, all right, just let me know, let me know if you get un-grossed," but never have I been allowed to be that engaged and having, shutting my phone off and just having music playing, safe gone. I was truly, truly for the first time in solitude, a safe solitude without the interference of others in the studio or other influences. I really know if I wanted to share something. If I did not, it was ugly, if it was gorgeous, whatever, it really was a very internal journey and during that time also was a response to a lot of your assignments. You know, I would respond and do a painting; there is one of all the shards in the dark that had been painted for an hour. Being able to sit in that solitude and, and I didn't feel that I had to come and get graded by you either. All that work there, I did for me and I lost my mother during that time so me being in there and having materials to make sense of what was happening; her death and the time after that, truly all by myself and you know I think my husband only came there once. My daughter, Chelsea, who is the middle child, she was in Virginia and the oldest daughter who's a painter, uh she was in Charleston so truly nobody came in there except for one or two friends um, but otherwise it was an integration rectangle that talked about a segment of time where we felt growth, there was expansion and, you know, and I have to say so much came up too of was I happy, was there, you know, whatever problems in my life, they all came to a very heightened awareness because of that solitude.

I admire how MT has kept her relationship with the creative process to make sense of her life constantly at each stage of her growth—the way she found her solitude and the space for art while being a mother, a wife, a teacher, and a rebel, and keeping it all balanced. MT used art more than anything to digest all the other existential everydayness and mundane colorless repetitions of living. She changed her medium to be a beginner again and even rotated her mediums. I also appreciated that she brought such accessibility to her art by creating a space for her own studio.

MT: I think because I come from the world of studio instruction that is not solitude and I do feel that most of us go through experiences of wanting to learn and have the skills like learning how to play piano or whatever and I cannot say in all the studios I have been in and I could name you know so many I had solitude in my art making there. It was not for the right purpose that I was creating. It was not for self, it was for a grade, it was for applause, it was for recognition that I could make something and...and that's why I cry now at Lucy's floor in that class because she had asked me to paint and I had the brush and I was mixing colors and I was like "Well, I don't know, what am I doing here? I'm painting, mixing beautiful colors with no agenda and that, that was what cracked me open because I was not making art for making it, oh, what's going on?"

MT was also conscious of her own solitude, her own art, and the different experience there is between her being an art educator and an artist. She has her own personal experience of art, that is sacred, and once aware of it, she tries to free her students from the bondage that systematic models for all education have put on the education system and her students by teaching them to create art for themselves within the boundaries of consciousness.

MT: I can only speak from where my own energy is and, you know, where, where I've been, I'm very, very conscious of the subject because I'm teaching expressive art to the college level and one thing I've learned over the past couple years, you know, you get graded as a teacher, you know, and you feel the comments and I've been teaching for a long time, and when I all of a sudden stopped uh grading and giving everybody an A in the beginning and I kept, and I keep reminding them constantly "Don't make it for me, don't make it for me," and gave my students permission to not worry about a grade and to express and to take the pressure off my, my lens looking at it, that could be a whole thesis for myself because it, it's night and day, it is night and day. I gave, I gave everybody A's and then I can't believe what I am watching right, and I must stop for a second. There is a hawk that is swooping down and, and the dogs are running after it and it just came so low to the ground right now. I do not know if it is trying to get at the dogs. The dogs are bigger though. Let me let the dogs in because I just had a hawk about 15' away from me that you know and that's unusual (chuckle) and the dogs so I, I beg your forgiveness. Hold on. I just want...

The subject of collective unconscious has often entailed the most intimate and complex dialogues I have had with my interviewees. MT lost her mother, her husband (to lung cancer), her brother, and a very close sister-in-law during the last 3 years. Art has been there every step to help her through her grief. Her discussion about how she has experienced all that, especially her

husband losing his battle with cancer, was the most harrowing to me. How she processed all the pain shows her resolve, strength in herself, and the power of her art.

MT: Collective unconscious is about dreams and imagination and all the uh fabric components, all that is in our subconscious that is like the cogs of the wheel behind that we cannot see and through the materials and through art and we can flavor that. We can expose it. We can shine light on it so I think that I'm lost, I haven't really made connections I was thinking intentionally that um I'm going to go into that realm and try to see what comes out, although in your class, you know, there was faces and all these different things that were coming up, so it made me aware that there were a lot of, there were energies at work in my subconscious of that dream of the possibilities and again the fabric that's underneath so um yeah for myself I, I, I think that some of that has scared me. When I was in your class and I was seeing faces and the paintings...you know I am going to be honest. Some of your paintings scare me and I know that you don't, I am telling the truth, I know that you...I think that is beautiful that we could all scare each other with all this art...subconscious but um there were faces that kept coming out in my big paintings and I would go "oh why?" what would, and I just shut it off and I was trying to paint and start. What are you doing? You would, I would start redoing that shape and in..., it is not a good energy. It comes out of scary energy. You know get a shadow.... And I ended up painting with all these shard-like things painted in blackness and right after...I knew that was my Lyme Disease...that I am suffering with. I knew that was the enemy floating in my blood. Yes, you know I was just in the basement as you were saying and there is this painting, there is a painting that I have down there that I took, it is a metamorphosis and there was this artist, I was studying online who was doing these beautiful roses and I signed up for this online painting course. I paid all this money for it and never even, never even opened it up to start it um, and I was trying to duplicate her beautiful, luscious canvases of these flowers, so I started doing these flowers and, you know, you just look at it and you add more and more, more, and this is you know painting in this space here. My husband was on the couch there with cancer and going through chemo and they were long, long months. You know, it felt like years, but it was only really from March to July, so we are talking that I am painting a thing trying to, trying to be happy and paint beautiful flowers.... So, what happened is I am painting these flowers and I start adding increasingly more and my husband walks in and he is losing a lot of weight and getting fragile, and he looked at it and he asked, "Are you painting cancer?" And I was. The flowers had morphed into uh cancer cells that were splitting and dividing, and they were purply red, ugly, they were cancer and once he said that, in that moment, I was like "Oh my God, I, I have painted cancer," and it was that subconscious collective, that whole thing come out. And I tried to doctor it up. I tried to paint over it, I tried to do everything. I put, I said well go with it now, all right so if you have this painting of cancer, I ended up doing a decal of a beautiful butterfly and putting it in there and try, well, that thing just kept coming out ugly and cancer constantly. There was no way to transform it. It wanted to be there. I couldn't escape it. And I continued an attempt after that to find, you know, this is to be very, you know, we're talking about process here um, that really scared me. That was deep in that I felt like "Wow, my husband saw me painting cancer, yes that's really part of good healing, huh?" And, and I,

there was a little guilt, there was a little like what, you know, because you are trying. When you are trying to deal with cancer and healing, and I try to focus on the positive and you know doing all this reading and watching the movies/. Heal and just trying to do all this positive healing energy and still murmuring underneath is this cancer. I said, "Okay, I need to, when's the happiest memories," and I thought of my child, childness with being at summer camp and buying, my mother gives me fifty cents and the hot dog truck was coming and we'd buy the white paper with the dots and the pixie sticks and all the candy and it just, go to the happy, she was a child going to summer camp and just being with friends and there was not a care in the world. So I made this 6' x 4' painting of candies and you know that was, that was my um intentional take charge of that cancer painting and try to heal and help myself feel better and I went to the senses of what was your favorite candy. And it was the cantaloupe lifesaver, you know, the tropical flavors and, and so I ended up painting gumballs and other abstracts, but the lusciousness of the colors were so powerful for me as an artist to try to paint them, and so going in that deep, deep cancer painting to get was my sense of trying to find some control over it 'cause if I could paint a cancer painting, I think there would have been a lot of psychological damage.... I'd say to somebody counting on you to be strength and be a light in this darkness...of hope 'cause they're freaking out that they might die, you don't, you don't have that luxury to explore.... I didn't, I think that that has to, I'm just speaking for what I feel.... That was a private thing. That was not something I wanted to share with my husband. Oh no, I think that it scared the shit out of him in plain English. I think it was adding benefit to the wound. It was when you're dealing with cancer and you know could this person.... That visual evidence of that, you may die...and yes, he uh yeah, his facial expression did. His reaction to it. Are you painting cancer? It wasn't "Aw, MT look at that beautiful figure there." No, it was, it was actually a reality check for both of us that there is this ugly self-splitting disease that's attacking both of us right now. He had a hip problem, they were telling him he had arthritis and it was him that said, "Listen, I want to quit smoking and I'd like to find out what's really going on in my hip, can you give me a chest x-ray?" and the doctor said, "Oh, you just got a cold," and he was the one who felt like "I better, there's something wrong with my hip," so it was never his lungs, it was never breathing. It manifested...yeah, well, then at the end that is, you know, he ended up getting pneumonia, but um no, he was going to live forever.

What MT said was harrowing to me. It weighed heavily on me. The next question was all about emotions: "How does your art make you feel?" There is also the manifestation of trauma and pain in her art that brings her some healing, no matter how hard it is to face it. What happened there was the benevolence of the process that makes the artist aware of the potency of her trauma and allows a conscious awareness of it. The first step toward healing is to come face to face with the damage and accept it and its emotional cost. Art brings deliverance by opening

the wound rather than leaving it to fester. The healing part of art is one of the themes developed from the interviews, and so is the emotional release in art.

MT: That's an interesting question because I think for myself there is a depth and an exploration in the emotion that I do that I have expelled it and I usually switch to something else after. I will switch to a different medium almost taking an exhale that okay that journey is not complete if I felt that I have expressed that emotion or experienced it in its, its longevity of what I needed to know and feel then I, I have exhausted it and I move to a different material. I do not return to usually the same material and it is very strange you know like I'll go build with rock. I will do it with clay and I, I have recently looked at it going I am putting money into my studio now for clay, am I going to be bored and switch again? So, I think from what I'm interpreting this there is, there's a skipping around for me because of the emotionalism that I almost have closed the chapter and don't want to interfere or contaminate or try to reduplicate or open that.... It is a completion of an experience. The work itself becomes an artifact of that and I move onto the next experience. I have about sixty paintings sitting under blankets that I very, very rarely ever go back and look at or there are half of them, and it is about forty and about half of them need to be redone and I do not feel inspired at all to go back to that canvas, and I will paint them over and redo, start a new journey, or I'll give them away for somebody else to paint over them. It is like, it is a journey for me, it is a process.... I don't connect to them? Oh no, I very deeply connect with them, but then it's an artifact after. The emotion is done.... Well, how, how do artists do very emotional cellular work? They separate after the outside artifact.... There are pieces that I absolutely love and would never give away or sell, and I must display them as part of who I am in my environment, but then there is and again maybe it is that voice. You know, when I'm in class I have taught; I've been nonstop, you know, on all these different courses for the past three or four years. One thing I keep saying is, I keep getting into the critical artist's head that I have to, you know, I have the judgment from outside is it nice, is it applaudable, is it, you know and even I, I know voices within my own family, oh my, in a way that's not skill, come on paint a real painting or something and that is the world giving critique to whether is it skilled or not. Do they like it? It's just objective, so I...was in the studio and the kiln was open and my pieces came out and they were on the table and there were three or four people who came over to me and like "Wow" and, and, you know, and I felt very awkward because it kind of went back into that artist head.

Afterward, MA went back to the first question. She knew she had not answered the first question based on the prompt and was trying to justify her reaction by asking me if she was too argumentative. I gave her the same answer my mentor once gave me, when I asked her if I am manic in the way I get so enthusiastic about a subject. I explained to MA that she is passionate

about things that matter her. She lives passionately, creates art passionately, and interviews passionately. It is simply her personality.

SF Interview

SF is a very distinguished scholar and a candidate for a Ph.D. in Transpersonal Psychology. She is a key researcher and organizer for a well-respected lab on trauma research. She is also working on a trauma and healing-related project regarding COVID-19. I had sent her a copy of the research questions in advance.

SF: Well, for me my art which is my music, my song writing, my poetry. I have actually always been a teacher and when I first really started to develop it. I mean my thoughts came I was age 11, but my true channel if you will be opened at the age of 13 and I attributed my song and my poetry to saving my sanity in a highly unsafe home, because my home expressed in an extremely constant way what I was experiencing but was unable to talk about because of the code of silence in the home. I mean, it was very noisy, but the code is not speaking truth and so in terms of self-growth, I think the three elements that came together for me were my music primarily. Poetry came first and the music came second meaning just putting the song to melon. My virtual awakening because I found yoga at that time in my social consciousness. Those came together to self-growth in a way that allowed me to conduit all of my creativity and the opportunity to integrate my world and to provide a mirror for me of what I was seeing externally and what I was experiencing internally and so it kept me whole, that's what I mean by my sanity. Without that, I don't think I could have withstood the increased privity of my world.

The interview had begun with SF being comfortable with herself and who she was, so that she did not appear to show any apprehension in directly responding to the questions. She was an ideal candidate for the interview, especially appealing to my own beliefs about early trauma and its effect on the life of the artist.

SF: I'm going to give you a nuanced answer to that meaning um, so my dad was a filmmaker, and he had a beautiful voice. He was a radio announcer. He became a filmmaker and did a lot of voice over work, commercials, some international films that went at their best to late night movies and we always say he developed the first martial arts movie to do that, the first and the worst (chuckle). So, I grew up playing with my father. We would do these very elaborate sightings like karate matches, you know, 'cause that didn't affect me by ages, so even for my matches that would be esoteric, literally nonverbal other than the sound, you know, the kiosk, and it was utterly

delightful because it gave me a chance to play with a man who was extremely violent. My father was very very violent with my siblings, taking my brothers. He was not violent with me, he was just a terrifying man as a friend and, you know, that um many of the trauma researchers talk about, yes, there is the trauma which if you want the checklist, I have got it. You know, substance abuse, violence, incest, mental illness, you know, I mean I've got it pretty much all in my family, but the biggest problem is the child's perception taken as the child, have the lack of patience, so now picture this very big volatile charismatic father who I could tame through the arts to play, through baking, through bread making, through acting, through uh my intelligence and my love and care, so had I had potentially, even we don't know. Had I had a safer home I might have become a scientist 'cause there was a talk you could be an actress and scientist, that was it for me because I loved science. I absolutely loved the study of the mind, so for me because the lack of safety intellect was a protected factor for sure. Learning, doing well in school and getting rewarded for that, but it didn't provide an escape. It didn't provide safety. It didn't supply the playground. It didn't provide the space for the oxygen in a very fiery restricted home, so the gravitational pull towards the expressive part in a way probably was my first part because that's what I did with my dad. That was a malleable play that allowed me to (a) experience safety, (b) the so-called tamed wild beast, because he was a delightful man there was no one more delightful and if I were a source of delight, I would play and then it was fun. It was just fun.

Despite the many tragedies and adversities, she had to overcome, SF appeared to be at peace with it all. She was animated and calm. The words came out as she intended them to. There was such awareness and clarity to her statement, highlighting the skills of a bright scholar.

SF: They never said that um I was really smart, and they noted that, but the true gifted parts were never really noticed other than like I said toward music and art and so on, but I never received any reinforcement in the environment um, but then, you know, the question of trauma is an interesting one because we know from trauma that trauma can breed um resiliency, right? That'd be willing to happen in the environments craft and, you know, I've spent many, many, many, many, many years uh from the early '90s, I would say, when we first started to get known studies, and so for me I was always looking to um find the resources in my environment that would allow me an outlet because it was a very restrained type environment and, you know, from violence. I mean, my father was rarely typically violent with my mother, but extremely emotionally abusive and we would have a cycle. So, the cycle was my dad would be sent back to cook and you know Chinese and Japanese all kinds of stuff. We'd have this weekend of fun and cooking, and by Sunday night the explosion was right, so it was always a pattern and the explosion resulted in, creating violence in verbal ones....

I asked about the toxicity of the environment that her father had created and how damaging it was to be a part of it.

SF: Right here and the destruction of my, my brothers and so...I mean here is the unusual thing is you know growing up Jewish. Um my father was very aggressive. I mean that was part of the violence but very, very expressive to me very welcome. I got a good Daddy, right? My mother is not so much, but the thing is the code in the family, if you are talking about trauma, the code in the family was when my father would go around Sunday nights who do you want to work with your mother or your father, you never could say "Mom." You always knew there was a right answer to tame the beast and so what does that do to the voice and the expressiveness, so that's a constriction and then, yes, you're right, the fear and the terror and the, you know, I won't go too deep into it because it's quite a sordid story of, of losing both of my brothers at young ages, but the expressive quality of my voice was my salvation and I happened to have a nice singing voice so I could sing and the fact that I would write songs; however, those songs were deeply psychological (chuckle), they were not something for my family to hear because I told the truth of what was going on. I told the truth with this idol ideation man. I told the truth of the violent cycle. The truth of the destruction of my oldest brother. I told the truth and it freaked them out. It absolutely freaked them out, so that's why I saw my poems were less about saying sort of commercial type of adding in for success and much more about my trauma.

Again, this was so in tune with my beliefs on the whole idea of childhood trauma relating to how art becomes a portal, a release, and ultimately a form of therapy. I asked about the therapeutic notions of her art and where she would have ended up without it.

SF: The therapy I would have checked out, I would probably have been schizophrenic. I mean my brother was schizophrenic, so it's not that far to imagine. Let me, let me say this because now you know you are disclosing this kind of information, we are in Lucy's class together. I would assume and I'm going to make it very clear in a group that this is very confidential....

I assured SF of the confidentiality of the interview again. I believe that she had not thought that she would reveal so much, and for a minute, she had to be reassured. I reminded her that the research was sanctioned by IRB and I had sent a confidentiality form which she had signed. That put her at ease. Afterward, we came to the question of solitude.

SF: Hmm. Yeah, I love that question. For me, without the amount of time I spend with myself, I could never create. Let me put it in the reverse, which is I really enjoy people, but I get my energy from being alone. I am a situational extrovert so, you know, I host parties, gatherings (chuckle) and conversation one-on-one can inspire me. You know, my intimate relationships with family inspire me; however, my main inspiration comes from deep from the inner world, meditation, illumination, allowing myself to be open to messages. I tend not to be inspired so much externally other than

as I said the relations and conversations can be very inspiring. Nature inspires me...and like 90% of the time...that is going to be, you know, forgivable heights in nature, but 90% of the time I much prefer being myself with my dogs. You know, it's amazing. You know, we share that or a few very close friends like I do not enjoy being in nature with many people because nature is one of my main sources of inspiration. You know, interplay between um and this is interesting, I have found that there is also, speaking of nature and the cycles of growth and feeding and digestion, the solitude that we're talking about is the digestion, it's the metabolizing, it's the integrating, the infiltrating, it's the assimilating. It's the ability to take something and create something from it so there is that creative sort of the process that requires solitude, but the food that feeds us can very often be and very often is for me usually, I guess too many, three directions. One is intellectual so that means stimulation of the mind and learning of other teachers and whether that's that grows inside or, you know, the low end of Jung's or whether it's you know the ideas that are coming out now or the vision of a charmer, the second channel around that very closely related is the first and, you know, how to make distinctions between first intellectual, creative. They're all overlapping, but the spiritual, I work with a beautiful scholar who wrote is the one that wrote that book on the course collective trauma, and I'm fortunate enough to be a student of his and directly receive his teachings in relation to questions I have, and so that is amazing and being in community with people. You know, the spiritual community from him, so that's the second sort of food channel, and the third of course is the arts. You know hearing Henry's quote today, I was listening to him and he says, "Hatred creates identity because it illuminates the borders of what we are in our thought and that just the profundity of something like that is understanding or rural and understand the great divide or..." so art is both nourishing and listening to the music, and by the way love, I love music from around the globe. I always have, you know, just to listen to modal scales, you know, from where you hear, you know, the Athenian songs from the, you know, the chorus, you know, the African harp or any of that, it just makes the brain feel and hear differently, so I will say that solitude is the digestion of the ability to take in nourishment and food from the outside world in a beautiful way, spiritual, intellectual, creative with conversation intimacy and transform, transmogrify that into these that become sort of the transformed the informed, the transformed, the informed, in the formed and then through that it's connected right back to form these lessons.

There is a unique dyad that often takes place amongst artists, particularly when they talk to each other. In an intimate gathering of like-minded artists, the content of the dialogue is as abstract as it could be since artists barely have a foot on the ground, and that is because they need that one foot to have the tool to express themselves. However, together in a conversation, since it is not a conversation but a stream of consciousness, the artists can often still finish each other's thoughts. However, one cannot ask a question and expect just a full sentence—instead, one

should expect two paragraphs until the artist is getting close to answering. We had come to the collective unconscious, the most abstract question of all the questions asked during the interview.

SF: I mean, I think that's essentially two different concepts, right? The notion of collective unconscious is imparted and how do we tap into that and introspective art. My sense is and always has been that.... Yeah, my sense and this is how I've always felt, Javad, at my best in the creative process is that the song comes through and I'm sure you've heard this many times, so my understanding even at a young age and then the more, I explore the notion of like the trauma is like an unconscious collective um voice, is that I see myself as a vessel, as an instrument.... Yes, absolutely, and that the instrument that I have becomes more and more clear to the degree that I can surface the results from trauma that's the inherent pattern in the reception of universal energy. Part of the trauma is to be able to teach, so when I say the interferent pattern, it's noticing honor and not attempting to get rid of it, but rather include it, include it in the receptivity because, you know, in my particular case, I don't perceive ever being free from trauma. I don't even know what that would be you know from the shadow for.... It's integration and so as a vessel, as an instrument, I'm constantly fine tuning, fine tuning, fine tuning, and expanding my range so that I can pick up a greater, a greater, and greater frequency, and so that's not all about distance, it's much more about, you know, the quantum, the notion, the more I tune in because if you go to a therapist, the transformation facilitator, my job is to feel and then co-regulate and load my nervous system to that of the people that I employ so that together we create a coherent face with which...ideally as we begin to really create these coherent, we become a much more finely turned receptor which takes us back to collective unconscious for universal messages, and so when I feel there is truth and there's that true note, here's what I think of it all. When you hear something that's a true note, it doesn't fall flat, it doesn't feel forced. The true note is when what you say actually is the same as what I feel or what I would say and vice versa. Or when I hear somebody sing, look at it, I mean the poem that she recited the other day so that we have the courage to see the light, to be the light. Now how many times have you said that line to yourself on some level? Because I know I have, and if it wasn't the exact wording it was see the light, be the light, it rang true because it feels as though it came from my inner core. To me, that's the truth of the collective unconscious. That as far as we truly are channeling, there may be permutations of my life or my particular experience in life, but the true note that gets you, lends color, unbelievable poetry and song.... We own it. We hear it not for the first time, even the first time, that is what Jung talked about.

SF had much more to say. She understood the purpose of the question and shared her thoughts on the topic of the collective unconscious.

SF: I think of the instrument as a crystal, it's a musical instrument but think about how many times crystals are used in instrumentation including radio signals and all that so what does a crystal do? A crystal receives light and transmits light and then depending on the facets it breaks it into presenting shape, colors, frequencies, right to hear

crystals. You can travel inside crystals. It depends how you want to relate to this, and I think for me I see my evolutionary journey as skinless as the increased intentionality and awareness of broader and broader and broader bands of frequencies, and by that, I mean that I hear my body, I hear my liver. I have my gut. I can hear you; I can hear your nervous system. I can hear people who are not physically present with me. I can more and more as I develop a transmission from the let's call it in my case, I see it as altitude. So where is the transmission emanating from? What color is it? What sound is it? What frequency? What's the feeling? How does it transmit messages? How does it energetically interact with my purpose in life? With my particular receptions so that's your statement about this travel itself through symbolic infantry. The wolf howling at the moon. A tree is moving in the breeze. The rock that is actually a sentience being absorbing energy from the stars. All of those things simply are but how do we receive it and is there going to be seen as evolutionary as you know so I'll just say this one more thing, that has many indigenous cultures who have already felt my frequency in such high receptor and we have become so clouded so that the collective unconscious has so much noise to get through in order to be received, so I don't think evolution as a time element because I actually think you know many of the indigenous cultures are far, far more advanced in their ability to actually be immunity and creative talking and be in collective consciousness and the unconsciousness, but I do think in our role today, the call is to reduce the noise, create the filament, allow the receptivity, and the more we do that evolutionarily, the more we hear collectively the music!

That was probably the most comprehensive answer I had during the interview process regarding that question. SF's response was well thought out and articulated through an abundance of words and ideas. The next question was the last question of the interview: How does art make you feel?

SF: You know, I don't see any artistic or creative process without emotion because we are beings in physical form. So, what do we have? We have bonds. So, we have a physical perception. We have energy if we're alive, this is the definition of live, right its energy, coming from our heart since we know the heart is a bigger, intelligence organ than the brain in fact and has to communicate with the brain and that energy emotion is emotion and then we have and then if we work at it, we have awareness of those things. Of our physical, emotional and mental space which is consciousness, awareness, will travel. So, the act of artistic creation to me is (ringing phone) is consciousness. It's actually, it can be a moment in time where what is coming through is the ability to unify because of emotional methods at stake, not always as in my case, and listen to it for me to be aware of what that moment is going to be for me. So, if you have emotion, you have got no art. How could you have art without emotion? You know this very, very well, which is many, many artists talk about the ability to make people feel.... I was listening to this interview yesterday on NPR or the other day, by the man who wrote Lincoln in the Bardo, and just had a new book, something like uh swimming in the pond in the rain, about four Russian actors. something about art and

writing and, you know, the question came up between what's an anecdote and what's a story because this man kept to Syracuse, you know, the writer's program, and it was the most simple beautiful explanation. He said, "The Hudson, no I'm sorry, the king and the queen died" anecdote, the king and the queen died of grief.

We talked a bit more. I thanked her for her kindness and generosity. I also told her I enjoyed the interview and her ability to express herself so eloquently and honestly.

Focus Group Transcript and Analysis

For the focus group component of data collection, I intended to recruit six participants. Fortunately, I was able to exceed expectations and found nine participants. All the participants were uniquely different individuals than the ones included in the interview group; however, they were from the same fields, including art, art education, and art therapy. We did not focus on the participants individually; instead, we highlighted the totality of the group, which would be our measure in cross-analyzation.

I did not run the focus group myself as I tend to dominate the discussion. I was present in the group to manage the direction and time of the discussion. The group started with word association. The first prompt was the relationship between art and psyche. Afterward, all the participants answered the four questions that are the core questions of the research conducted in this dissertation:

1. How do artists describe the influence of their art on their self-growth?
2. How do artists experience the relationship between solitude and the process of creating art?
3. In what ways do artists characterize Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as it relates to the emergence of introspective art?
4. How do artists describe the impacts of the artistic process on their emotions?

As the focus group facilitator, Elizabeth was the one asking the questions and running the group. She is pointed out as E for Elizabeth, and initials are used throughout the analysis to help with the transcription.

The words shared in answering the question regarding the relationship between art and psyche were as follows: mutual connection, interdependence, connection, healing quality, complimentary, healing quality, vehicle augment at the station, intertwined, connections and benefits, lifeline.

What one can assess from the answers is that the participants saw the relationship between Art and Psychology or psyche as a close, even intertwined relationship. There were also elements of healing, growth, and betterment in the words. It seems that there was a positive sentiment throughout the responses, with “mutual connection” and “complementary” emphasizing the positivity of the relationship and experience. Moreover, all the group members were aware that there is a relationship between art and psyche, which they saw as a positive phenomenon based on their word associations.

In answering the first question on self-growth, K became aware of a slow psychological and spiritual growth in her after taking a course on trauma and healing. We are always learning, by living a life. John O’Donohue, the Irish philosopher, went as far as considering living a life as an art by itself—the way one must improvise and maneuver around unexpected hardship. K became aware of healing art in 2015 and tries to focus on it; now she sees it as an ongoing process. That is how her one-word answer confirmed that art is a lifeline.

A viewed herself in the context of a harmonious relationship between mind, body, and soul—all connected and grown in harmony. Her artistic expression, besides what she does in her therapy with students and clients, revolves around dance and movement. This brings her to

altered states and, in many ways, whirling dervishes used movement to transcend altered states and ecstatic plateaus. A also does yoga and sees that as a form of enriching her psyche and body.

M had a more intimate notion of art—she sees it as innately flowing. It is in the individual, grows within the flow of life, and brings self-growth by accommodating a different reality and language. M also sees it as an intimate relationship that is felt with nature—the conscious awareness of what is seen within nature and in becoming one with it, within its being and its flow. M has come to draw Mandalas since 2015. More than anything, Mandalas made her focus, calm down, and get in touch with her inner world. She has noticed how it has helped her growth.

K emotionally said how her relationship with art has been lifelong, and when she stopped for a while, she ended up being hospitalized. Therefore, for her, it is more than a choice—her life depends on it.

K: I landed as a result of not doing it and having a psychiatrist say, “If you want to recover and you know you want to stay out of your addiction, you must do your art. You must put it first no matter what, in front of money, in front of everything,” and that was certainly sobering with a young child (chuckle), And so it’s been a struggle and it’s a battle for me, you know, because when I was 5 somebody made a fuss about a drawing it.

K now uses her art to teach at-risk youth and further her own growth. She is a lifelong painter and is experimenting with clay.

E has had a sudden and wild experience with art. It was too fast and too impulsive. Since then, E has taken a step back to learn art academically. She has a master’s in Fine Arts and is also a therapist. Her art has become the main vehicle for her to engage in the therapeutic process with her clients.

It seemed that the participants in the focus group all agreed art has helped with their process of self-growth in some way or other. Next, regarding the second question, the group responded to the role of solitude in their art making.

C loved the question and discussed how solitude allows her to do little things at the studio:

C: I do feel the solitude of the world like pushing back and I'm in this kind of vortex of a different world, and it's just me or if it's just whatever's being created in the moment and I'm, it's beautiful because I actually am, am almost removed from it and it becomes a life force that's coming out or whether it's through um a different media and I love the quietness of that.

E needs to be alone to experience solitude. She cannot reach it in the studio around others, so she must work on it to reach it herself; however, once there, she feels very much the way C described. She also mentioned that she had to come to terms with the perfectionism in her and now she tries to enjoy the process and not worry about the outcome.

M has a more spiritual and holistic view of solitude, believing that once one is there, everything—even cooking—one does becomes art:

M: I would say that solitude and creative art for me is that space where it doesn't matter what you're doing okay, you can be eating your food and that can be an art and when you go to that space of solitude, the mind steps away and then you are it and you are not it because you're able to convert that solitude into your best feature. Is when that feature um over expresses the creativity of art in you by showing you that you are eating and you are tasting and you're seeing and you're smelling what's in your plate and the same is in the canvas.

M then talked about the eternal beauty of solitude and the silence it brings to her and taking her to an alternative realm. However, during the lockdown, she has not been enjoying her forced solitude. She cannot work, she feels blocked, and she hears these voices in her head that are lamenting and doubting all she does. She misses her art making while in solitude, and it seemed nothing else mattered except what she was doing creatively.

V likes the studio scene, and she likes finding her solitude and art amongst her cohort and the whole composition of the studio, the smell and sound of it—something about it inspires her.

V: I have to admit that although for me ultimate solitude is walking by myself in nature, or in my room in a reverie, still I have done my most mysterious and unique works in the studio either by myself or even with others in a class. Somehow my Anima edges me and I become giddy and high. They say creativity is intellect at play and I guess that comes through for me!

K is a loner who almost enjoys her solitude too much. Once she is in the studio, she feels distracted. She could start doodling and soon she is lost in it.

K: I kind of work without solitude uh and I don't have much. I manage to avoid it by right now being overly busy teaching full time uh and doing two forms of education. You know a certificate program and a (chuckle) thesis, um so it's a love/hate thing with solitude but it's, it's so critical to my life. I have to, if I'm around people too much I just feel like I'm going to just explode, and I want to go off and be by myself.

Regarding the third question, we explored the collective unconscious, its meaning, and its relationship to art. As typically happens with questions on the collective unconscious, everyone has their own ideas of it, and many people have the wrong idea about the existence of the collective unconscious and its function. I stepped in to clarify a few concepts and E as facilitator read the question again.

V is a clinical social worker and a school social worker. She also facilitates workshops on the side. She described her idea of the collective unconscious as a place with a plethora of images that are all symbolic and what everyone sees in these symbols depends on their symbolic education or knowledge. This involves how they interpret it with their own symbolic language through deconstructing and reconstructing to give symbols a voice and character to be expressed through art. This works since art is also represented by symbols, shedding light on complexes and uncovering their shadows, which are all affected by one's commotion to the universe, to life, to nature and oneself; that becomes the magic one brings to the group and community.

CL provided one of the best answers I received through the interviews and focus group:

CL: The magic happens within you and you share it with your group collectively which multiplies the sensations. They're also larger wheels in motion that defy how we go around our lives thinking and planning and it all changes in one second. We call it an accident, it is the flow and the elaborate nature of uncertainty, that's when we move the conscious away and the unconscious comes up and has um a purpose, a void, and when we do the introspection in what I'm going to say is that one day I remember I forgot the names for the participants and automatically in that moment I said, "Okay, paper and colored pencils." Everybody, write your name but write it with your full self in the moment. Pay attention on how you move your hands and the pencil and you know delineate the letters and start being aware of what you feel in your physical body, in your stomach, in this and that and what memories comes about and from that accident of forgetting the peoples' name tags, name tags, came something beautiful. It was a moment of healing where each of the participants were able to bring from that unconscious point something to the consciousness, to heal about in that very moment and it was, it was a lesson definitely so what I see it is like a gateway that if you're open to it, you will open up the space, your unconscious will open up the space to bring healing when it's appropriate and when people are together can experience in the learning and it's a moment of growth and it's, I mean people don't have to say anything, you just see the space, I mean feel the space, be in the space, look at the expression of everyone and it's just amazing.

According to John O'donahue(2007) "It is strange being here, Everything lives in mystery". The Irish philosopher in the beginning of his book *Annam Cara (Soul Friend)* said it was all a mystery. Carl Jung also said, "Life has no rules and that is its mystery!"

C believed that we all share a lot in our gatherings, since we share what comes from our interior life, and there are always similarities when we gather and similarities between how we express ourselves in our art. It seems it all streams from the same place—the collective unconscious.

M makes unique jewelry that looks ancient. She has always been proud of her craft, especially since she went on a trip to the Metropolitan Museum and visited the antique jewelry and artifacts wing. Suddenly she discovered amazing similarities between her craft and those ancient artifacts in the museum. She had never seen Egyptian artifacts and jewelry before she started making her jewelry. She may have received inspiration from the collective unconscious.

C finds the collective unconscious much more of a private experience between her and herself, in her solitude while she is doing art. She is also amazed how different she is from her siblings. There are no artistic or spiritual tendencies in any of them. She found only a cousin in her ancestral tree who was an artist, and he was ostracized by the rest of the family and left. Specifically, since her art is self-learned and she has not had any academic or classic training, C believes she has received her gift from her uncle. She was able to go to the studio and share the joy that came to her with her students, and she thinks there is healing in doing art and sharing it.

E talked about what has changed in her own art. She always enjoyed making puppets; however, since the lockdown, she has been making puppets from tree branches. Furthermore, she vocalized them by making videos that she uses in her therapy work with children. She said she does not know where her inspirations come from, but they arrive and each one is different. The culprit may be the collective unconscious.

There is an agreement among the group that there is a collective unconscious whereby artists receive original inspiration for their artistic creations; some believe they get there in groups and studios, while others connect it to solitude and art.

We arrived at the fourth and last question regarding the emotions one experiences while creating art. CL talked about birthing, as the emotions percolate inside, unannounced, like a volcano. In Jungian psychology, one is regarded as an artist if and only if one's art is authentic. One is not judged for its quality, only originality. The other artists who mainly master copying are mere technicians. There is nothing new to their craft, so birthing is the process of giving birth to what comes from deep inside someone and is unique, which is then reflected in the artistic process.

K was disappointed with herself in school. She was not impressed by her own work in comparison to her cohort's art. One day, she decided to just paint and take anything she liked and add it to her piece like a collage. That piece became the most important work she had ever created. Her teachers discussed her artwork with her—and that had never happened before. She sold the piece but has regretted selling it. K also talked about the pain of coming back to art and the joy of the process, how one must move through pain and then the joy will find one. For K, the pain was the voice of the inner critic and its ruthless doubts. The only way out was by practicing art, working tirelessly, and moving through it. As a result, there are extremes—extreme joy or extreme pain.

V went ever deeper with the whole question of the emotions:

V: We were talking about birth and we're talking about integrating the lessons of the right brain, so I will say that this process or this impacts me as an artist in the emotions. It's like copulation, to create life, right, so it's like this impact becomes a process of birthing an emotional state, a new emotional state. It's deeper, it's cleaner, it's a lighter space to be where healing takes place. Um I have seen this process as coming into the silence, being the silence and at the same time having the experience I mean a mirror looking at something without judgment and from there that mirror itself, that image that is reflected in front of me having that 'ah' space that it turns into a funny code where you can see something beyond of what your limited mind has shown me in life so and that has burst, you know, from the copulating and having this experience, going through this process. Sometimes you're thankful, sometimes it's like the labor pain, but at the end there is something new, something beautiful, something that we just recreate. It's a new life within ourselves that can happen every day.

Everyone grew quiet as V talked about the unexpected range of emotions that find and flow through an artist, but at the end the whole process, no matter how one goes through it, is beautiful and invigorating. CL talked about art being a vessel that brings all these emotions to an individual who is going through making art. She then summed up: "Oh my gosh, anyway it's been, the process is definitely, the emotions are there and, and so to accept them and realize like um it was sad that you come out the other side better for it."

The last word associations for the focus group were integration, connective healing, life-affirming, inseparable, biographical, dense gateway, journey, and destination. Overall, what came through was the complementary nature of Psychology and Art, and how inseparable and intertwined they are.

Coding and Data Analysis Discussion

Art starts where language fails in visual arts. This is the same way that in the absence of consciousness (when the mind steps away), the unconscious erupts and takes over the perceptions and reality of those moments. The coding that introduced the themes and terms: emerging, shadow work, painting trance, language of magic, mystery, visual sensation, physical sensation, slip stream of time, processing dreams through art, vivid dreams, illustrating symbols, self-reflection, creative imagination, impacting the process introspectively, abstract art, engage with unknown, synchronicity, unconscious, alchemy, unconscious art, dreams, imagination, unconscious, scary images, faces spirit, creative trance, symbolic infantry; in focus group coding; drawing mandalas, vortex of a different world, quietness, mind steps away, converting the solitude, silence, unveil yourself, forced solitude, hearing the voices, void, artistic process.

The first theme of art as a new language came up with the highest number of coded words: 30 in the interviews and 20 in the focus group. In the interview, this was the second most popular theme after solitude, which was mentioned 32 times. However, if we compare the totality of interviews and focus groups, art as an alternative language was the theme with the most codes. Exploring the effect of solitude was a very close second; however, the theme of realizing and presuming the real possibility of art as an alternative language for artists was on the mind of the interviewees and the focus group the most. What each word meant within the group

context, depth, and importance of each theme suggested that the idea was explored or accepted among artists.

The second theme was the discovery of art. During the interview process, I asked my interviewees directly and early in the interview: Why Art? How did you discover art? There were 27 codes for this theme for the interviews and 16 for focus groups. With a total of 43 codes, this theme shared the second highest total number of all themes. There is such an innate desire in human beings to express themselves that there are depictions of animals in prehistoric caves. Interestingly, these human beings, the cave dwellers, used to depict animals since they did not have any language. The voice box was not evolved or sophisticated enough to pronounce words, but they could draw and communicate. The words were created, and the language allowed for better communication. Now we have reached such evolution in our ability to analyze the lives we live that there is a need for instinctual living and expressions that the language we have does not fully embody or express—specifically the English language. There are over 90 words for ‘love’ in Sanskrit, over 80 in Persian, three in Greek, and one in English (Johnson, 2004). The artist comes to discover art for its unique emergence and presence and for its need for a new language and for solitude.

The next theme revolved around the need for solitude among the interviewees. This was the theme with the largest coding. There were 33 codes in this theme, the most in the interviews. However, the number dropped in the focus group to 11 and a total of 43 codes, which shared the second highest total with the discovery of art. There is a difference between solitude and aloneness. One could be in solitude within a crowd. In other words, one does not need to be alone to experience solitude. As presented in the coding, it is more of a pure awareness and conscious, it is deep focus. It is the psyche finding itself. If creativity is the intellect at play,

intellect needs that pure consciousness and focus. Solitude is often part of being in a creative state. Solitude also is essential for living a full life because it provides a source of power and creativity; by taking up the challenge of enduring loneliness, we prove to ourselves that we are strong. “We come face-to-face with the creative energies that are within” (Sela-Smith 2002, p.14)

The human soul needs joy. In the ecstasy that art and spirituality offered in the Dance of the Dervishes, the transcendence of classical music, or the poetry of Rumi and Hafez, there is an understanding that bares the truth and beauty of art. Human beings need that discovery, surprise, and elation that art provides, and the lack of it could be cumbersome. We need art so truth does not kill us, said Nietzsche. Art makes life palatable by bringing that joy, that elation into our daily lives.

To my surprise, that became a theme with 23 codes in the interviews and 12 in the focus group. One of my interviewees gets up early in the morning and does pottery at her home studio. She left a message for me a day after the interview, telling me how at sunrise she was doing her pottery and, in a singular moment, she had a reverie and was taken away to the days when she was 8 and used to play with mud making figures, and how her mother used to call her back to the house. She had heard her mother’s voice and was all shaken and crying, yet the joy of it was with her for a long while.

I told her about the Fisher King and Parsifal, and how the Fisher King had a painful wound but could not Die, so he is in agony. The only way he can heal is by meeting Parsifal, the innocent fool who mirrors the innocent and playful nature of our childhood. I told my interviewee she had seen her Parsifal (Johnson, 2005). Individuals need the joy of synchronicity

and flow in their lives; they need the high that comes from reading an original piece of art, where one can become so focused that they lose track of time.

The founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) went to Jung looking for a solution for alcoholism. Jung told him it is *spiritus contra spiritum*. It is missing the elation of spirituality that brings a man or woman to alcohol. The only remedy is to bring them to elation of spirituality. That became part of the foundation of the 12-step program. The soul needs a few crucial elements: a meaningful, purposeful life, and the joys and ecstasy of a different world. On these themes, there were 23 codes in the interviews and 12 in the focus group.

Art, the endless territory—this is where it is important to return to the collective unconscious. Albert Einstein said that imagination is more important than intellect. Imagination is the possibility of all the other realms and realities that can be imagined and that is the closest thing to the collective unconscious. If we agree that art finds its roots and horizons in the collective unconscious, there we have the endless possibilities of art. It is in the fluidity of thoughts, or the lack of it—the paint and the brush; one small change of direction and the whole picture changes; one note falls into a different octave or different tempo and the rhythm changes. With the weight and character, the heaviness or girth of a word in a poem, there is a different rhyme. It is the flow and the fluidity of the collective unconscious and the tools it utilizes that makes art boundless. Art invents and reinvents itself repeatedly, and it is the individual originality of new words, rhythms, hues, or notes that reinvigorate art. For these themes, there were 25 codes in the interviews and seven in the focus group.

The Greeks used art to bring catharsis—relief through art, music, masks and drama, arts and musical thoughts. The ancient Greek people believed that emotion and sensations can reach deep within the psyche and surface complexes for emotional release. Art therapy in different

disciplines has been used to deal with trauma and abuse with children and to communicate with children on the spectrum or those experiencing mental illness. The practice has been growing and becoming more sophisticated throughout the school system. Among my participants, 6 out of 8 (85%) were artists who also worked as social workers and licensed counselors using art to reach children and young adults.

There were 27 codes in the interviews section with the theme Art as a tool to heal society, and there were 11 codes for the focus group. This total made the category the third highest in number of codes. Art therapy has become one of the fastest growing disciplines in Psychology and has been recognized, sanctioned, and licensed by many states.

There were also many statements by the participants such as Art is everything, Life is art, Art is life, Art is everything, and Art saved my life. At least three of the participants made that statement. While I believe in that, the sentiment was not mentioned often enough to become a theme.

Chapter V

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a researcher, I was aware of the limitations of this study and took the following steps to shed light on them. The sample size of the research was a major limitation. Marshall and Rossman (2006) stated, “All proposed research projects have limitations; none is perfectly designed” (p. 138). Data collection, which also depends completely on the subjective views of the interviewees, can affect its generalizability to others. However, Marshall and Rossman also stated that all researchers and studies are bounded by their particular context. I chose the interview as the most effective method of research since it allowed a certain level of trust to be cultivated and allowed me to receive much more data from the subject (than, for example, a survey). COVID-19 and the necessity of remote (Zoom/Skype) interviewing also changed the dynamic and made it a bit more limited in its depth and substance. Using remote communication had an effect on the focus group for similar reasons. Furthermore, due to the availability of participants who volunteered for this study, there was a lack of variety in gender. Additionally, 85% of the artists were involved in counseling and psychology already, with two holding doctorate degrees in Art, Trauma, and Art Therapy. However, I like to regard that as a positive factor in this research, since the nature of the research does demand a higher understanding of psychology and the relationship between psychology and art.

Another distinct feature and limitation of this study was that all except one of the research participants had a degree in Psychology. As a result, their knowledge of interplay between Art and Psychology was informed by their robust education in the field, alongside their artistic practice. While this allowed for a vibrant data collection and analysis process, it also is

not reflective of all artists' experience, given that many artists do not have a background in psychology.

Conclusion

The holistic, abstract, and personal nature of the topic made qualitative research the most effective method and practical choice for the research presented in this dissertation. The criteria for participation in the research study included that candidates should recognize themselves as artists and practice their art as a major part of their lives. Oftentimes, the artists were also educators, counselors, or art therapists. The artists also had to be over the age 40, as explained, and they were all female due to the availability of only female volunteers.

The interviews were conducted on Zoom and audio-recorded simultaneously, and the focus group was conducted on Zoom. The recordings were transcribed, analyzed, and coded to create themes that were shared amongst the interviewees and focus group participants. Once the themes were created, I analyzed them against the original four research questions to find commonalities and relevant insights.

The results showed there is a deep connection between Art and Psychology. Direct phrases expressed in the interviews included: "Art saved my life," "Art is everything," and the relationship as something "inseparable," "intertwined," "lifeline," "art heals," and "art transcends." Six out of the eight interviewees held a master's in psychology and work/ed as healers in one way or another, using their gift of art in service of others, specifically among children and, more specifically, children who are recovering from trauma or were disenfranchised in some way by society. What could be a higher calling and what makes these artists choose to be in service of others? There it is a self-realization that convinced many of the

research participants that a life is best spent in service of others, and art has been a big part of that realization.

I see that much is to be learned in the crossroads of Art and Psychology, and I specifically recommend more attention paid by all disciplines to having mandatory courses in Art and Psychology at all levels and particular attention by art departments to create courses in the psychology of art.

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