

What Makes Art Good?

A Case Study of Children's Aesthetic Responses to Art Works

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Abstract

This study explores what 10-12-year-old students say they like and value in works of visual art. As the participants talk about their own and other people's art works they are formulating and expressing aesthetic responses and beginning to shape their individual aesthetic awareness. Because of the age of the participants, the exploration is framed in terms of "what makes art good".

The research was prompted by the introduction and implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum (2007), which not only positions art as a core area of learning, but also outlines values and key competencies that characterise a constructivist approach to knowledge. Such an approach requires active engagement by learners and suggests that it is important for teachers to understand their students' values and views. However, in the field of art education there is little published material that examines the views and reactions of students. A broadly qualitative approach to the case study was taken, drawing particularly on phenomenography and narrative.

The study found that 10-12 year-old students do actively make judgements about art works, and while there are common themes that occur repeatedly, the bases of such judgement vary from student to student. The study also found students' ways of approaching art-making varied, with some, for example, concerned predominantly with the technical process while others were more interested in imagery or narrative intention.

The thesis argues that it is important for teachers to be aware of how their students individually process their aesthetic responses in order to develop relevant and appropriate programmes.

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The Night Walkers
(Taff)

Chapter One

Why is it Important to Know What Students Think About Art?

I don't know. I just looked around and found stuff and thought maybe I can make something out of all of this stuff. So I just kept on experimenting with levels and balance and stuff... So I found that piece of wood...and I made it so it's all balanced - completely balanced you can see... I don't want it to be completely perfect. Like the Mona Lisa isn't perfect but people still like it... It's just the principle of it - the Mona Lisa doesn't look perfect, but it's still worth millions of dollars... I sort of played around with it – and that looks good. (Taylor, in the workshop)

Taylor, a participant in this research project, is describing a sculpture that he is making. He talks about his intentions, his search for materials, aspects of his process, the piece's relation to so-called 'high art', and his evaluation that it "looks good."

This study is concerned with what Year 6 and 7 students think makes works of visual art 'good'. In other words, it examines how these students construe their aesthetic response to their own work and to that of others. An aesthetic response is both individually subjective and socially constructed. Abbs (1987) describes aesthetics as "a distinct category of understanding", a mode of knowing that is both "sensual" and "cognitive" (p. 85). Dewey (1934) states that works of art acquire their aesthetic meaning through complex interactions between the watcher and the watched. Greenwood (2010a) discusses the aesthetic as a complex and dynamic process that is temporarily and culturally located. In the epigraph above, Taylor seems to base his response both on a sensory, kinetic pleasure in the balance of the work and on a sense of satisfaction with his process of construction. He also notes and approves the flaws in the materials he has selected, relating such flaws to what he sees as a classical authority, the Mona Lisa. The individual students interviewed in this study varied considerably in the features they selected as their focus in talking about

their own and other people's work, as they did in their ease of finding ways to express what they liked and disliked. The range and nature of their responses is the content of this study.

Educational Context of the Research

The research took the form of a case study of groups of students from three Northland primary schools. While the educational context and challenges are located in New Zealand, the findings may well have resonances with issues being debated internationally. This section summarises key elements of the New Zealand educational context, highlighting issues that gave rise to and focused this study. Later in the chapter current practices in primary art teaching will be discussed further.

The initial motivation for this investigation came from the development and introduction of the then recently introduced New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), in which the arts are mandated as an essential learning area. The important implication to note here is that collectively the arts now have equal status to the other core subjects, and that learning in each of the arts disciplines needs to be effectively assessed. The curriculum document also places strong emphasis on inquiry and meaning making in the arts as well as in other subjects. This emphasis finds parallels in a number of other curriculum statements internationally. The importance of the arts is also emphasised in the UNESCO Road Map (UNESCO, 2006) which places access to the arts and art education among fundamental human rights. The content and implications of the curriculum document are more fully explored in Chapter Two, as are the UNESCO Road Map and several national curricula of several other countries.

Primary classroom teachers face a range of challenges to meet the demands of the curriculum. In terms of teaching the arts, these include the need for a wide range of medium-specific knowledge and skills, and processes for helping their students develop aesthetic awareness. Teachers also need to find sound and meaningful methods for assessing students' learning.

Both the literature and informal 'teacher talk' identify a gap in the confidence and skills base of many primary teachers in shaping, delivering and assessing rich programmes in each of the arts. However, while several research studies (for example

Byres, 2006; Alter, Hays & O'Hara, 2009) focus on teachers' attitudes and practices in arts education, there is little research that focuses on students' perspectives and understandings of what makes individual works of art enjoyable and worthwhile. This study addresses aspects of this gap.

As this study was in its final stages there was a major shift in government educational priorities. Ministerial emphasis is now on the development of literacy and numeracy, and there has been a curtailment of funding for professional development in other subject areas. Normative assessment against national standards is being introduced in literacy and numeracy, despite resistance from many teachers, principals, boards of trustees and teachers' unions. The introduction of national standards highlights a polarising tension between quantitative and normative measurement of learning, and the promotion and evaluation of learning as an individual, complex and situated engagement.

An element that seems to be missing in both the curriculum's holistic approach to the arts and the current debates about national standards is knowledge of how students themselves regard their creative work. It was this gap that gave the focus to my research. I wanted to find out what students thought about their own art, how they regarded other people's art, and in particular on what basis they decided whether or not a specific piece of art was good. This focus leads to the formulation of my research question.

The Research Question

To me as a researcher the question is:

How do students formulate and express their aesthetic response to their own work and to that done by others?

Because of the age of the participants I needed to express this question in terms that would be readily accessible to them. Aesthetics is a concept that many adults would struggle to define and is a term few ten and eleven year olds would have met. So I reframed the question to: *What elements of their own and other people's art and art-making do students like and value?* And finally I simplified it to a phrase that the participants themselves were likely to use: *What makes this particular piece of art good?*

Shape of the Study

The project posed this question within a semi-structured interview framework to sixteen students from three schools. All three groups were asked to bring two art works that they thought were “good” to a group interview - one they had made themselves and one made by someone else. They explained their choices in the interview, and then were presented with a range of other art works and asked to choose one they thought was “good” and one they thought was not. Again they were asked to explain and give reasons for their choices.

In addition, the participants from one of the schools were brought into an art workshop in which they could choose their medium and work on any project of their own choice. They were invited to talk about their choices and intentions as they worked.

Year 6 and Year 7 students were chosen for several reasons. These years are at the transition from primary school to intermediate, and the students will have been working with the curriculum for a number of years. They will have a sense of what doing art at school means to them. Before Year 7 few students have specialist art teachers and for the most part only those at a specifically intermediate school will have them at Year 7. In this study students from School B had worked with specialist art teachers for part of the year.

While the students in any class may be working at a wide range of curriculum levels, the curriculum document suggests that students in Year 6 – 7 will typically straddle the overlapping levels 3 and 4 in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 45). Whereas earlier levels involve introducing the arts, Levels 3 and 4 ask that students “apply knowledge,” “generate and develop visual ideas,” “describe how images communicate ideas” and “investigate the purposes of objects and images” in terms of cultures and contexts. (Ministry of Education, 2007, unnumbered foldout pages).

In addition, taking Piaget’s theory of development as a guide, students of this age are in the later phase of the concrete operational stage, in which they are expected to show evidence of organised logical thought (Piaget in Cooney, Cross, & Truck,

1993, p. 249). In terms of their overall language development, they are increasingly able to articulate ideas, judgements and evaluations.

Vision of the Curriculum

This investigation is concerned with how students perceive and make their judgements, both about their own work and about that of others. However, as background to the study it is important to briefly review the intentions of the curriculum and the common classroom practice of teachers.

The overall curriculum framework (Ministry of Education, 2007) identifies a number of principles, values and key competencies that are to pervade all school learning. These are summed up in a vision statement that gives primacy to the development of young people as active and confident lifelong learners. In its introduction to the learning area of the arts the curriculum document (p. 20) states:

Learning in, through, and about the arts stimulates creative action and response by engaging and connecting thinking, imagination, senses, and feelings... As students express and interpret ideas within creative, aesthetic, and technological frameworks, their confidence to take risks is increased... In the arts, students learn to work both independently and collaboratively to construct meanings, produce works, and respond to and value others' contributions. They learn to use imagination to engage with unexpected outcomes and to explore multiple solutions... Through the use of creative and intuitive thought and action, learners in the arts are able to view their world from new perspectives.

The vision described is broad in its aspirations and set out as an ideal. Practice starts with the knowledge and resources that teachers already have.

A Sketch of Current Practice

While all primary teachers are expected to teach the four arts disciplines nominated in the curriculum (dance, drama, music and visual art), most of them have been trained as generalists. Studies such as, for example, that by Byres (2006) indicate that while teachers are aware of the range of ways that the curriculum expects them to approach

art, many settle for teaching the skills and styles of work they already know.

Drawing, painting and clay modelling are the most common visual art activities seen in classrooms.

Some teachers seek to integrate art across the curriculum - for instance asking students to make a collage of fish as part of a study of marine reserves or looking at Aboriginal art as part of an Australia-centred study. Too often such integration involves the production of illustrative materials, sometimes replicated from templates, and does not encourage students to engage critically or creatively, nor advance the teaching of specific art skills or aesthetic reflection. Teachers often confess that they feel pushed beyond the limits of their competence and confidence in teaching the arts. At its worst, but perhaps all too frequently, art teaching is something that happens to fill in a Friday afternoon, when students seem to be tired after a week's serious learning in other curriculum areas.

Byres' study also highlighted how uncomfortable many teachers feel about assessing learning in visual art. Her finding resonates with my own experience and with the feedback I hear from my colleagues. Reports to parents often fall back on comments such as "X's drawing is really good", "Y has shown great improvement" and "Z sometimes does good work but needs to focus more". When teachers do look for more specific criteria against which to make their evaluative judgements, they often fall back on the aesthetic values they themselves hold and may even feel uncomfortable with art works that differ from those that were typically valued in their own family.

When teachers seek to go beyond their own preferences, they will typically turn to the exemplars on the Ministry resource site, Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI), which offers suggestions on the kind of evaluative comments that might be made on particular samples of student art. Where teachers have no other means of assessing their students' skills development or art intentions, such exemplars tend to be taken as normative.

Some teachers have difficulty in separating art process from art products. They may not know what developmental elements to encourage in the art work of students, and they may have little sense of where art-making fits into the overall development of a student's learning or their personal value system. Nevertheless

most teachers want to support their students and would like to learn to teach and assess the arts more effectively.

Schools buy art resources that match their understandings of what is useful in art education. Their policies and cultural values as well as established community attitudes form approximate boundaries of how they see the usefulness of art education. Superficial understandings of the concepts, processes and values of art may lead to inadequate resources being developed. Exploring what children think about and value in art is only one aspect of what would be useful for teachers to understand. However, it is an important aspect and worthy of study in its own right.

My Location Within this Study

A researcher's position within a study is never neutral. Therefore it is important to identify my own position and my assumptions and values. In broad terms I came to this study as a teacher, a parent and a casual sculptural artist as well as a researcher. My own thinking about art has been shaped by growing up within the environment of a professional artist. Since birth I lived within a studio pottery and as a preschooler I had access to my father's studio while he worked in it. Over the years his interests shifted to include bronze, steel, wood, bone, and more recently paint and canvas.

As a child I used these materials freely because they were part of my normal world. Distinctions between high art, craft and other elements of visual/kinetic culture did not occur until later in my life. In fact I could say that my interest in mechanics to a large extent grew out of my exposure to art materials and the processes of designing and making. In addition, many of our family friends were also practicing artists of different kinds and a large part of my growing life has involved exposure to their work in progress and to their exhibitions and performances. I still tend to focus on art as a process of making.

I am now a teacher and aware of tensions between student-centred and individually meaningful learning, and the demands of large classes, time constraints, multiple curriculum requirements and pressures of reporting. I also see myself as part of a community of teachers who are looking for better ways to work and better ways to understand and meet the needs of our students. In these terms the research is part of that search: it adds to my own understandings of what students think, and of how to

teach art. The research also forms a contribution to my community of colleagues in professional dialogues about developing better art education.

I am an emergent researcher. As I explain in the methodology chapter, this project reflects my own journey in finding the best ways to explore students' perceptions. I began with a relatively traditional phenomenographic approach but found I needed to expand this to include a more narrative approach to track the participants' thinking in the workshop. I developed my understandings of the methods as well as the findings as the project progressed. Key aspects of that development are noted in the concluding chapter.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter One details the reasons for and the focus of this study, poses the central research question, describes the issues underpinning arts education in primary schools and locates me as the researcher within this study.

Chapter Two reviews the literature, focusing on studies of the New Zealand Curriculum, discussions about the value of children's voice in learning, theorisations of art and its value in children's learning, and research into children's perceptions of art and art-making.

Chapter Three details the methodological approach. It places this study within a qualitative framework and explains the phenomenographic approach I initially used and the reasons why I later expanded it to a more narrative approach. It outlines the choice of participants and the process of investigation.

Chapters Four and Five report the findings. The ways participants in the first two groups expressed their aesthetic responses form the substance of Chapter Four. The feedback from the third group took a somewhat different turn and this is discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six sets out the conclusions. This summarises the findings and discusses their implications for classroom teaching practice.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews key works in the literature that inform and locate this study. As has been suggested in the introductory chapter, little research has been reported regarding young students' views about art or their expression of emerging aesthetic awareness. Therefore the review scans the broader related fields. An investigation of what students like and value in art and art-making falls at the intersection of several interrelated topics: theories of art and its value in children's learning, expectations of curriculum, engagement with student voice. In each of these areas there are some reports of research and a larger body of theoretical discussion. The chapter examines significant writings in each of these areas and draws connections between the ideas in the literature and the current research project.

Art and Learning

There is a wide range of literature, popular as well as academic, involving discussions about the meaning and nature of art. Here I select a number of writings that have relevance to this study.

A cluster of writings concerns the role of art in education. In one of the few works that discuss research methods in arts education, Taylor (1996) proposes a range of research approaches, but insists that research in arts education is most useful when it is about describing particular aspects of the quality of the learning that takes place (p. 14, p. 39). He cites Laurel Richardson's (1994) concept of crystallisation as a more useful alternative to the concept of triangulation for "rendering truths and trustworthiness in the post-modern era" (p. 43). The concept of crystallisation is one I have adopted in this project as I search for a deepened understanding of how students make judgements about art works.

One of the earliest New Zealand studies of art education is Elwyn Richardson's *In the Early World* (1964). This is an account of a teacher's work using the arts as the basis for his teaching across the curriculum. While Richardson had a

particular interest in pottery and used it as a basis for teaching mathematics and science, he also drew liberally on other art forms. Richardson was an innovator in teaching rather than a researcher, but his work could be construed as a research project using a methodology of reflective practice. Richardson describes ways in which art motivated the learning of his students and gave it a meaningful context. He records a number of incidents when children described their enjoyment of art and what they learnt through it. Richardson's writing is a description of his practice in which he set up an integrated and experiential approach to learning based on the arts. He does not align his experience with other research or theories of learning. However, he offers valuable insights into the processes and discoveries that occurred in the learning environments he created. His study makes a strong case that children value art and art-making.

Eisner (1998, 2002) provides a detailed discussion of the relationship between art and cognition. In *The Enlightened Eye* (1998) he argues that art is one of the multiple ways in which the world can be known, and that since knowledge is made and not simply discovered, the selection of form is particularly important. In *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002) he again examines the relationship between cognition and art. He explains that while we know the world through our senses, these senses are mediated by the tools of culture, including the arts. He argues that "acts of representation", a key function of art, involve three cognitive processes: "inscribing, editing and communication" (p. 7). In this work he also tracks the art development of children through a number of examples and describes elements of how learning occurs in the visual arts. The close relationship between cognition and art that Eisner proposes suggests that it is important for teachers to know how their students already think before they plan to develop cognitive skills. While Eisner uses examples of students' work to illustrate a theory of conceptual development, this project focuses on students' opinion about art. Chapter Six will discuss the relation between the two areas.

Perkins (1994) offers a further examination of the relationship between arts and the development of intelligence. He proposes three kinds of intelligence that go beyond what he calls the "monolithic theory of intellect" (p. 11) proposed by IQ. These are firstly neural intelligence, which encompasses not only the intelligences generally measured by IQ testing but also all the other intelligences situated in the

neural system such as Gardner's (1983) range of seven intelligences, secondly experiential intelligence which involves the "contribution of intuitively applied prior experience" (p. 13) and lastly reflective intelligence which involves the "contribution of mindful self-management and strategic deployment of one's intellectual resources" (p. 14). He argues that "thoughtful looking at art...provides an excellent setting for the development of better thinking" (p. 3). Perkins finds that "young and inexperienced viewers tend to focus on the content [of art] and find their reactions shaped in large part by it" (p. 17). Perkins is principally concerned with offering structures that teachers can use to develop their students' "reflective intelligence". Like Eisner, Perkins offers a comprehensive theory of aesthetic development. The relationship to students' perceptions and opinions is discussed in the final chapter.

Parsons (1987) proposes a theory of development in the art domain that parallels Piaget's (1977) account of cognitive development and Kohlberg's (1984) account of moral development. Parsons argues that children understand art in a developmental sequence and that where "individual people wind up in this sequence depends on what kinds of art their encounter and how far they are encouraged to think about them" (p. 5). The findings of this study examine how a particular group of students think about the kinds of art they make and encounter. Chapter Six will argue that teachers need to be aware of such development and use it to scaffold their teaching.

In 2007, Bresler edited a handbook of research in arts education which reports a wide spectrum of studies across all the arts in education. Bresler positions contemporary art education within a context of border crossing (p. xvii), which allows the juxtaposition of artist genres and styles as well as cross-fertilisation between disciplines, not only within the arts but also in other fields of knowledge. Within the handbook Thompson discusses child centred-approaches to art education, emphasising that children's art-making should emerge from and reflect children's lived experiences. She advocates research *with* children "in the settings and circumstances in which their cultural lives become public" (p. 909). Sullivan examines creativity as research practice in the visual arts. He argues that creativity "lends itself to detailed and systemic inquiry and has the potential to yield new knowledge" (p. 1191). He adds "this ensemble of investigation, imagination, critical insight, and the opportunity to see things differently is a characteristic of inquiry in

the arts” (Ibid). Both these reports may be read as an advocacy for involving the student voice in arts education research.

Several other recent studies consider, at least obliquely, the ways young people form views about art and the relationship this has to their learning. Catterall and Peppler (2007) report a research study into the effects of sustained visual arts instruction on inner city nine-year-olds in two American cities. They report the students made significant gains and reported significant relationships “between participation in high-quality visual arts education and what children believe about themselves and their future prospects” (p. 544). Popovich (2006) outlines an approach to an American art curriculum that is interdisciplinary and that looks at “children’s interest as the centre of learning and personal experiences as a method to draw meaning” (p. 38). She asserts that it is “imperative that students should have time and opportunities to reflect on content and processes” (p. 37). Rose, Jolley and Burkitt (2006), report a study of fourteen-year-old children, their parents and teachers that investigated attitudes and practices that influence children’s learning experiences. They found a strong relation between what the children valued in their drawings and what they believed adults valued most. They found that support from adults “generally seems to be aimed at achieving visually realistic drawings and frequently takes the form of providing images for the child to copy” (p. 347). If, as this third study suggests, adults tend to mould children’s art work, it seems that the potential developmental value of students’ personal and reflective explorations may well be reduced. This theme is addressed further in Chapter Six.

Art, Popular Culture and Education

A recurring theme in the literature is a distinction (or the lack of one) between art and popular culture, both in art education and the wider field of art. A number of writers question what they see as an artificial limitation of art by a focus on traditional art forms such as painting or sculpture and an exclusion of popular visual media, such as poster designs, record labels and graffiti. Such a distinction is seen by some authors as damaging in arts education. For example, Pearson (2001) argues that most teachers approach art too narrowly and that students need to be encouraged to explore more widely what it might mean to ‘know art’. He suggests that art education should seek

to “illuminate the kind of existence art has in social life” (p. 66), and argues that there are no clear value systems that define whether works will be socially recognised or not, that the whims of human interests are what allocates value (p. 80). He suggests that art educators need to develop art education theory from cultural theory and semiotic theory as well as from artefact-based concepts of aesthetics (p. 75). Chalmers (2001) follows a similar argument when he advocates a broad platform of visual culture as the basis of art education, stating that visual culture can “be seen and understood as a way of communicating that is as ordinary as everyday speech” (p. 149). Some of the participants in the present study did make conscious distinctions between so-called ‘real’ art and popular art, but a blur between such distinctions was clearly evident in their responses to particular works.

Duncum and Bracey (2001) present a collection of essays from art educators who also question easy classifications of what constitutes art. Duncum (2001) argues that art can no longer be regarded as a special domain (p. 15). He suggests that schools need to approach art as visual culture and include images from daily mass media as well as from so called high art (p. 31). Freedman (2001a) examines aesthetics and the problem of meaning in art education, and suggests it is no longer useful to make a strong distinction between fine art and popular culture (p. 36). She further suggests that concern with aesthetics in an arts curriculum needs to be seen as a way of making meaningful connections within the real world (p. 45). These two essays challenge the practice of many classroom art teachers and prompted me to include works from popular culture in my research design.

Graffiti art is frequently positioned in the literature as a challenge to hierarchical notions of art. In *Wall and Piece* (2006), Banksy, the popular graffiti artist, debunks the art works enfranchised by galleries as capitalist privilege, stating:

Art is like no other culture because its success is not made by its audience. The public fill concert halls and cinemas every day, we read novels by the millions and buy records by the billions. We the people affect the making and the quality of most of our culture, but not our art. The Art we look at is made by only a select few. A small group create, promote, purchase, exhibit and decide the

success of Art... When you go to an Art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires (p. 160).

He juxtaposes gallery art with his own graffiti, offering the latter as provocative and passionate visual work that does not need to be legitimised by the establishment.

Stewart (2006) acknowledges graffiti as a vigorous and diverse form of art that has become an integral part of urban environments and that constitutes a striving for voice, stating, “Graffiti highlights the fact that a city is dynamic and that it reflects a tension between the needs of those who live, work, govern and play within its precincts” (p. 93).

Silva (2006) also addresses the degree to which art values are socio-economically determined. She reports a research project that found that some differences in taste can be connected to social divisions of income and education and that others “appear to relate to...social class, such as ethnicity, age and gender” (p. 141).

In different ways these writers position art and knowing about art as something that is unstable and open to negotiation. Banksy and Stewart, in particular, position art in the popular domain. If such a broad definition of art is used as a platform for art education, then perhaps it is the teacher’s task to make students more aware of their own responses to art rather than inducting them into predetermined structures for art appreciation. Within the reviewed literature there is evidence of a gap between theoretical perspectives - which argue for a widening of understandings of art to include popular culture and for validation of children’s lived experience and choices about art-making - and continuing classroom and home practice that proposes normative templates for art-making and imposes adult choice. How this dialogue relates to the findings of my research project is a topic examined in Chapter Six.

The New Zealand Curriculum

The New Zealand curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2007) contains an extended explication of the content and context of children’s learning. The schematic overview presents a framework that identifies a vision, a set of overarching principles

and values, a number of key competencies, and the specification of eight learning areas (p. 7).

The *vision* statement sets the goal for New Zealand education as the development of “young people who will be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners” (p. 7). It further spells out the vision for young people in terms of being “creative, energetic and enterprising” people, who will “seize opportunities offered by new technologies,” who will “continue to develop values, knowledge and competencies that will enable them to live full and active lives,” and who will be “confident actively involved lifelong learners” (p. 8). Many of the qualities in the vision statement are further defined, and the definitions are particularly relevant to this study. Definitions of *confident* include the idea that students will be “positive in their own identity,” “motivated,” “resourceful,” “enterprising and entrepreneurial.” Definitions of *connected* include “effective users of communication tools.” Definitions of *actively involved* include “participants in a range of life contexts” and definitions of *lifelong learners* include “critical and creative thinkers,” “active seekers and users of creative knowledge,” and “informed decision makers” (p. 8). Chapter Six examines how students’ emergent aesthetic responses contribute to the realisation of the curriculum vision.

The *principles* of the curriculum are defined as “foundations of curriculum decision making” (p. 9). Such foundations contain beliefs about what is “important and desirable” in children’s learning. These comprise “high expectations, the Treaty of Waitangi, cultural diversity, inclusion, learning to learn, community engagement, coherence, future focus” (p. 7). The document offers further definitions of each of these concepts. For example, *learning to learn* is explained in terms of encouraging “all students to reflect on their own learning processes,” *coherence* involves making “links within and across learning areas” and *high expectations* involves empowering “all students to learn and achieve personal excellence regardless of their individual circumstances” (p. 9).

The curriculum mandates a number of *values* which are to be “encouraged, modelled and explored” (p. 10). These are “excellence, innovation, inquiry and curiosity, diversity, equity, community and participation, ecological sustainability, integrity, respect” (p. 7), but the curriculum notes that “the list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive” (p. 10). It emphasises that learning experiences should encourage

students to “learn about [and] express their own values,” learn about “different kinds of values [including] cultural and aesthetic values,” and “critically analyse values and actions based on them” (p. 10). This statement of values is clearly relevant to the current research study in that the study seeks to explore the values students hold about art and art making and suggests that awareness of such values is very important to effective teaching in the visual arts.

The *key competencies* are characterised as “capabilities for living and lifelong learning” (p. 12). Five capabilities are identified in the curriculum: “thinking, using language symbols and text, managing self, relating to others, participating and contributing” (p. 12). Because I will later argue the importance of understanding students’ perceptions and values in terms of effective classroom teaching, it is useful to note how the curriculum document further explicates these key competencies. *Thinking*, it states, “is about using creative, critical, and metacognitive processes to make sense of information, experiences, and ideas” (p. 12). Thus, it suggests, schooling should help students to “actively seek, use, and create knowledge,” and “reflect on their own learning, draw on personal knowledge and intuitions, ask questions, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions” (p. 12). *Using language symbols and text* is explained in terms of “working with and making meaning of the codes in which knowledge is expressed” (p. 12). Schooling should enable students to identify how choices of such codes affect people’s understanding and responses, and ability to confidently use such codes for their purposes. *Managing self* is associated with “self-motivation” and “self-assessment” (p. 12). Schooling should enable students to “establish personal goals, make plans, manage projects and set high standards” (p. 12). *Relating to others* includes “the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate and share ideas” (p. 12). *Participating and contributing* concerns “being actively involved in communities”, which includes “family, whanau and school and those based...on a common interest or culture” (p. 13).

Although the curriculum document is relatively new and still in the process of implementation, there is a small but growing body of New Zealand literature that examines its implications. Andreotti (2009) examines the implications of the New Zealand curriculum in terms of the knowledge society and post-modernity. Her discussion is an initial report of a research project working with teacher educators

seeking to critically analyse and implement the New Zealand curriculum across the range of nominated learning areas. She locates the approach to learning represented by the curriculum document within a poststructuralist orientation to knowledge that embraces complexity, multiplicity and resistance to closure. She cites international descriptions of change and knowledge management (OECD, 2000; UNESCO, 2005) that call for shifts in perception of education, knowledge and learning. She argues that such shifts involve understanding about knowledge itself and its partiality and situatedness (Gilbert, 2005; Andreotti & Sousa, 2008). She advocates the value of regarding knowledge as “a verb” - that is of regarding knowledge as socially and collectively constructed, in constant need of development and replacement, and to be evaluated not in terms of its truth, but for its usefulness to specific purposes. Andreotti’s discussion is significant for my study because of the emphasis it places on knowledge construction and the individual making of meaning.

Greenwood (2010b) offers a detailed analysis of the values, principles and key competencies in the curriculum document. She examines how the use of process drama can be applied to meet a wide range of the curriculum’s expectations across a range of content fields in the eight specific learning areas. In particular she explores how the principle of cultural diversity might be addressed through several subject areas and in terms of each of the values and competencies. Fraser, Price and Henderson (2008) have developed a framework for teaching across the arts, illustrated by practical examples. Their discussions provide examples of how the processes of art-making can be manipulated to provoke student-centred learning that meets curriculum expectations.

Comparisons have been drawn between the values, principles and key competencies in the New Zealand curriculum and the aims of curriculum documents of other countries. For instance, Greenwood and Sæbo (2009) note a high degree of alignment between the values and competencies - and their implications for approaches to learning - in the New Zealand curriculum and those of the Norwegian Core Curriculum (1994) as well as in the European Union’s (2006) statement of key competencies for lifelong learning. The suggestion is that studies that address the goals of New Zealand curriculum may well have useful implications for schooling in other countries.

The UNESCO Road Map

The UNESCO *Road Map for Arts Education* (2006) affirms the importance of creativity and “the human right to cultural participation” in the life of every child. It cites Articles 22 and 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which state that everyone “is entitled to realisation of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality” and that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality.” The Road Map asserts that “humans all have creative potential,” and cites research support for the premise that “introducing learners to artistic processes...cultivates in each individual a sense of creativity and initiative, a fertile imagination, emotional intelligence and a moral ‘compass’, a capacity for critical reflection, a sense of autonomy, and freedom of thought and action.”

The Road Map argues that children and adults “need to progressively learn to understand, appreciate and experience artistic expressions by which fellow humans – often called artists – explore, and share insights on, various aspects of existence and coexistence.” Its definition of art as a range of processes by which human beings explore life and communicate to each other locates art-making as a fundamental human drive to understand the world. It emphasises that the labels put on various types of art expressions are culturally related.

The Road Map advocates “three complementary pedagogical streams: study of artistic works, direct contact with artistic works (such as concerts, exhibitions, books and films), and engaging in arts practices. It states there is “also a need to focus on the use of new technologies [such as electronic art and new media] in artistic creation.” The Road Map further notes, however, that “computer art is not widely taught in schools...because while teachers of the fine arts, for example, are highly motivated to teach computer art in their classrooms, they often lack experience, pedagogical training, and resources.”

The Road Map is an advisory rather than mandatory document. However, it constitutes an international commitment to the importance of creativity in the arts in education and thus it sets international goals for arts education that align strongly with the overall direction of the New Zealand curriculum.

The Arts Curriculum

The particular purposes of the arts curriculum is addressed in two complementary documents: the previously discussed framework document (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the earlier but still current *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000). The framework states that “through engaging in the visual arts, students learn how to discern, participate in, and celebrate their own and others’ visual worlds. Visual arts learning begins with children’s curiosity and delight in their senses and in stories and extends to communication of complex ideas and concepts” (2007, p. 21). This statement is formative because it places the emphasis on incremental development of skills and understandings and it is student-centred because it emphasises the individual production of meaning. The 2000 arts document contains a more detailed discussion of achievement goals in visual arts at each year level and suggestions for implementing programmes in the arts. The document emphasises the importance of a dynamic cycle of action and reflection that “unites theory and practice” (p. 89). Integration of reflection with action is highly relevant to the central research question in this study. As students articulate their understandings of their own and other people’s art they are developing emergent theories about art and linking them to practice.

Four strands of learning are defined in visual art (as in the other arts) in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000; 2007): understanding the visual arts in context, developing practical knowledge in the visual arts, developing ideas in the visual arts, and communicating and interpreting in the visual arts (p. 220). Each of these strands forms the basis for discussion of participants’ responses in Chapters Four and Five.

There is also a relevant body of writing that addresses difficulties experienced by teachers in meeting the demands of the art curriculum. Here I briefly review several of the New Zealand writings and some Australian work that is relevant to New Zealand. As noted in Chapter One, Byres (2006) reports that assessment in art is an area that many primary teachers admit to finding difficult. They often fall back on their own value judgements about what makes good art and what is not so good. Byres reported that teachers are more confident in assessing students’ skills and knowledge than the other three strands of the arts curriculum, and therefore their reports would focus on achievement in this strand only. The participants in her study

explained that most primary teachers are trained as generalists and very few are art specialists. Some of her participants felt personally uncomfortable with art works that differed from those they had studied previously. Some had difficulty in separating art process from art products. Her conclusions are relevant to this study because the assessment of skills and knowledge is interdependent with judgements about the meaning and purpose of the art. Assessing the strand that asks students to express and interpret ideas in art involves similar value judgements on the part of the teacher.

Similarly Ashton (1999) reports a study of generalist primary teachers in Australia who found themselves expected to teach a complex and detailed visual arts curriculum. Many of the teachers reported unease and a sense of having inadequate training in the specialist area. They said that the few hours they had spent studying visual arts in their initial teacher education programme were often their only experience in art-making and they were conscious not only of their own lack of knowledge but also of their uncertainty about how to foster their students' learning in this area.

Alter, Hays and O'Hara (2009) report a research project that explored Australian primary teachers' perceptions of creative arts education. It showed that the participants' own experiences in various art disciplines impacted on their role as teachers, since they tended to rely on teaching only the skills in which they had themselves excelled. It also showed that little attention was given to cognitive aspects of learning in the arts, and that the focus was rather on doing. Many of the teachers in the Australian study commented that they felt overwhelmed by the demands of teaching both the content knowledge and the skills in all the arts subjects. All the teachers in the study considered that the arts education they themselves had received failed to prepare them sufficiently to teach the full curriculum.

Two further research studies that focus on the primary school are particularly relevant to the current investigation. Maras (2003) describes her explorations of how children reason in art. Of interest to the present study is her view that "learning is essentially concerned with building and renovating theories of mind," and she believes teachers will teach better if they understand "the kinds of intuitive theories children start with" (p. 7). The teacher's role is to create circumstances in which "children can build more complex theories about ideas and objects and use these to

explain their understanding” (p. 7). The present study offers an example of the kinds of theories children start with.

Richards (2003) examined the relationship between children’s art confidence and the messages they give and receive. Richards surveyed, interviewed and observed 136 children aged four to nine in a New Zealand community. Among her findings are the following: children regard scribbling (p. 4) as bad drawing; girls tend to portray subjects that, according to her research, were considered more suitable as art subjects, like people, scenery, cats, dogs and horses, whereas boys prefer to draw scenes of action and violence, which “were not generally accepted [by their teachers] as art forms” (p. 6). She also found that “teachers were more confident in managing and praising children than in teaching or promoting specific art skills” (p. 6). She found that children “develop their own critical voice and develop sets of criteria” that include “staying within the lines, colouring in properly...drawing things the *proper* way and making no *mistakes*” (p. 6; original italics). Her findings have interesting parallels in statements made by some of the participants in the present study.

Richards also found that while teachers generally encouraged positive emotional responses to art, classroom art experiences were not always positive. She notes that “[some] children were socially isolated, ignored, or criticised by peers” (p. 7). In these cases art is a negative rather than a positive learning experience and does not encourage a student’s creativity or risk taking. Some of the participants in the current study reported similar experiences. In considering the implications of her research Richards recommends that “children and teachers would benefit from developing art based language and critiquing skills” (p. 8). Her conclusion threw up further questions, such as: What art language do students need to develop? What understandings of art give rise to such language? How can teachers encourage critiquing skills in their students? What attitudes to art underlie what is actually done in the classroom? While Richards is more concerned with the development of art confidence than with the content of value judgements about art, her research provided a valuable platform for my study because she represents the voices of children talking about their art.

An advocacy of the arts curriculum is provided by an investigation, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, of how students learn in the arts and of the factors that contribute to effective teaching in this area of the curriculum. The

research was led by the national co-ordinators of the professional development project that accompanied the introduction of the new arts curriculum in 2000. Many of the project facilitators took on the role of researchers. In their report, Holland & O'Connor (2004) state that "students learn in the arts in an environment of 'structured chaos' in which critical reflection and deeper understandings of their lives can occur," that "the arts provide pedagogical contexts where more human and negotiated relationships can exist," and that they "provide co-constructed learning environments in which students and teachers have permission to experiment and learn from each other" (p. 3).

Holland & O'Connor found that while students at a young age confidently give and accept opinions about each other's work, "during the junior and middle years of schooling students seem to transfer their power to offer and accept opinions on their work to their teacher" (p. 38). The authors noted that the positive aspects that they identified of learning through the arts take place when teachers have the knowledge and skills to facilitate them. The authors identified limitations to their project including constraints of time and the divided role held by many in the team as researchers and as facilitators of the implementation of the arts curriculum. They emphasised the need for more research in the field. While their conclusions are positive in their evaluation of the impact of education in the arts, the evidence they offer is only anecdotal. Moreover, their divided role as leaders of the arts implementation project and researchers poses questions about the validity of their enthusiastic conclusions.

A further relevant study was conducted at secondary school level by Anderson (2003) who researched teachers' understandings of art assessment at Year 11. She tracked the historic development of arts curricula and the shifting values that informed it. She approached her fieldwork from the perspective of the classroom teacher and shows how teachers get caught between their desire to encourage creativity and the external pressures of assessment. Anderson interviewed six secondary classroom teachers of art and recorded their concerns about juggling the demands of formative and summative assessment, evaluating talent and application, and formulating their own judgements about what makes good art. She recorded their tensions with the existing examination system.

Byres (2006) has also examined the relationship between teachers' assessments and interpretations of school curricula, in this case at primary level. She found that the teachers interviewed did not claim to have specific criteria on which to base their assessments. She found that while they were familiar with the strands of the arts curriculum, few if any considered all the strands in their teaching. Another area of her study of interest is the distinction between different aspects of what educators talk about as "curriculum". She noted that the term is used in at least three different ways: as defined in nationally mandated documents, as endorsed in school planning schemes, and as implemented by individual teachers in their classrooms. She found that the three did not always match.

In the field of music, Barry (2006) examined the listening responses of Year 6 students. Her study highlights the importance of the stories the students derived from the music they listened to. Her study also noted the significance of the relationships that children form with music and established the importance of the different perspectives in cultural setting from which music appreciation can be viewed.

Children's Voice in Learning

The present study is interested in capturing students' views and understandings and in discussing their value and importance. Therefore a brief review of the literature concerning 'student voice', in learning generally as well as in art is relevant.

The importance of learners' interests and opinions is not a new theme in educational literature. Comenius, the seventeenth-century scholar credited with founding modern theories of didactics, stressed the importance of suiting teaching to different learning styles. "If we attempt to counteract a natural disinclination we are fighting against nature and such effort is useless," he stated (Comenius, 1986, p. 333). He advocated what in modern terms might be called a multimodal curriculum that adapted to different kinds of intellect and different attitudes to learning. Early in the twentieth century Dewey (1916) emphasised the role of children's problem solving as an element of educative development. He understood that all human association is part of the process of learning and stressed the importance of inquiry, discussion and shared experience. The goal of education, for Dewey, is growth which involves the

ability to relate experiences and use them. Thus learning is an active and constructivist process.

Freire, for example, stressed the importance of basing teaching firmly within the current interests of learners. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972) situates learning within a process of liberation that involves learners identifying learning content and processes that relate to their perceived problems. In a New Zealand context Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963) recounts how she taught reading to children in an impoverished rural community by choosing the words they were interested in, regardless of difficulty.

The value of children's voices in research is a relatively new theme but is addressed in a variety of research studies. For example, Maguire (2005) argues for involving children in research of multiple language contexts. She uses a telling incident to locate her discussion:

Interviewer: What would you do if you were in charge of making a good bilingual program?

Child: Give kids choice.

Interviewer: Give kids choice. Tell me a little more about...

Child: For example, last week my teacher told us we had to write a story about how bunnies live. Quite frankly, I don't know how bunnies live. Do you know how bunnies live? And do you really care? (p. 1).

The story highlights not only the importance of relevance to the learner but also the child's ability to identify and articulate what is relevant and what is not. Maguire emphasises that young bilingual children can be "competent and valuable informants" and they "frequently have different views of situations than adults who have power over them" (p. 2). Although she is addressing the field of language learning, a similar argument could be made for considering children as artists and making a commitment to understanding their perspectives.

Lewis and Porter (2004) undertook research on the value of children's voice in the field of learning disabilities. Firstly, they noted the reasons frequently given for including children's voice; among these are democratic participation and compliance with current preference for participatory research practices. Secondly, they acknowledge the difficulties involved in gaining the views of children with learning

disabilities. They explore a range of ways for exploring the views of such children that extend beyond interviews, including observations, and using drawing and photographic prompts. These suggestions supported the exploration of further ways of eliciting the views of participants in the present study rather than simply interviewing them.

There are a number of studies that report the use of children's voices as an intrinsic part of the research design. One such project is that by Netherwood, Buchanan, Palmer, Stocker and Down (2009) which involved place-based learning examining the stewardship and care of special places in Western Australia. An explicit goal of the project was to start from "where the children are at" (p 83). Formosinho and Araujo (2004) report a study of children in two different preschool studies that examined children's perceptions concerning the way adults react to their behaviour. In that study the children were not treated as objects or subjects of the research but as participants in the process. They were positioned as social actors, people who can comment on their social role and can expect their voices to be heard.

Two further works make interesting comment on the use of children's voices. Hughes (2004) notes that much research into children's voice continues to be derived from and directed by adult interests. He relates the use of children's voice to the emergent theory of social learning. A doctoral thesis by Boone (2008) examined the experiences of four to six-year-old children seeing their art on display for the first time. Despite clear evidence of children's strong views, she found that decisions about the display of art work continue to rest with adults. She emphasised the importance of offering children the opportunity to share their views and the need for parents and educators to learn how to encourage and support their expression. The present study suggests that students' emerging notions of what they like in art are a useful platform for classroom teaching.

A closely related theme to that of student voice is the concept of learning disposition. Carr and Claxton (2004) divide learning potential into two categories: capabilities and disposition. They state that capabilities are necessary but not sufficient. Children as well as older learners need to be disposed to learn and willing to take learning opportunities. Carr and Claxton state "education for lifelong learning has to attend to the cultivating of a positive learning disposition as well as of effective learning skills" (p. 106), and "attention to student voice is one significant step in the

cultivation of learning disposition” (p. 106). The present study argues the importance of attending to student voice in cultivating positive learning disposition in art.

The literature relevant to my methodological approach is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Methodology: A Qualitative Approach

The research question involves the exploration of what children think about and value in art and the investigation is primarily an empirical rather than a theoretical one. The research is concerned with what students say about what they like in art and with what they show about their interest in art-making and the choices they make while doing art. To a lesser extent there is a focus on aligning their actions and articulated experiences with theories in the literature about young people's conceptualisations in art. Although this project does not involve tracking the long-term development of participants' aesthetic awareness or their progress in art learning, it does seek to add to a body of knowledge about children's perceptions of art. And it is hoped that this will facilitate teachers' capacity to effectively foster student-directed teaching in visual art.

Consequently I turned to a qualitative approach as the overarching methodological approach to this project, and to phenomenography as the specific direction within it. Phenomenography is a research methodology that investigates the qualitatively different ways in which people think about something or experience something (Marton, 1981; 1986; 1994). Phenomenography shares some of the characteristics identified in more general discussions of qualitative research as well as having specific features of its own. This chapter discusses the general concept of qualitative research and the specific approach used in phenomenography. I will then detail how the data was obtained, how it was analysed and how I have chosen to report the findings.

Overview of Qualitative Research and Phenomenography

Theorists typically explain that the term qualitative is an umbrella term covering a range of research strategies. Bogdan and Biklen (2003), for example, identify the following three characteristics of qualitative research: research questions are framed in order to understand topics in their complexity and context; researchers are concerned with understanding behaviour from the subject's own frame of reference;

and the data collected is detailed in description and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that a qualitative approach involves a commitment to study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Both Denzin and Lincoln and Bogdan and Biklen stress that research design is a continuous process within a qualitative project; the researcher needs to continually adapt the research approach to fit emerging understandings of complex situations. Denzin and Lincoln further describe the role of the qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur* (2005, p. 2-6), one who adds different tools and methods to the investigation and interpretation of the research puzzle as it unfolds. In other words, “choices regarding which interpretative practices to employ are not necessarily made in advance” (2005, p. 4).

In phenomenographic research, as Ornek (2008 p. 2) explains, the researcher studies “how people experience a given phenomenon”. Put simply, phenomenography is concerned with the relationships that people have with the world around them. Marton explains that “phenomenography is the empirical study of the differing ways in which people experience, perceive, apprehend, understand, and conceptualise various phenomena in and aspects of the world around us” (Marton 1994, p. 225).

This broad approach fits the research question in that I am seeking to explore what a group of young students think about art and their own art-making and how they process their ideas. I recognise the need to undertake this research in a setting that is as natural and familiar to the participants as possible and to interpret and report the participants’ understandings in terms of the meanings they themselves give them. The opportunity to develop an evolving design is constrained by the fact that this study constitutes a masters thesis and so is limited in terms of time and scope. Nevertheless, within those constraints I have followed the practice of the bricoleur, seeking to adapt my investigative and analytical approach to fit the evolving shape of this project.

Qualitative approaches to research emphasise that researchers cannot separate themselves completely from what is being researched. Geertz (1988), for example, states that it is important for the involvement and the subjectivity of the researcher to be openly acknowledged. Therefore, I have found it important to track my journey as a researcher as well as report on what the participants have done and said. In the

introductory chapter I briefly discussed my location within this study. In this chapter I will comment further on my developing understanding of the research project and how that impacted on the way I collected data and how I have chosen to report my findings. In broad terms it can be said that the investigation takes the form of a case study (Skate 2005) in which open-ended interviews and observation were used.

A Case Study

Stake explains that the “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (2005, p. 443). This project investigated the aesthetic responses of a group of 10-12-year-olds; it examined their choices, views and judgements in terms of their understandings of art and art-making. I worked with students who were reported by their teachers to be interested in art. I wanted to know how these children evaluate their own art and that of others and I used the methods of interviews and observation.

Stake distinguishes between three kinds of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and multiple. An intrinsic case study, he notes, is undertaken because of its own particular interest. For example, this could be a particular child or a particular classroom. An instrumental case study is studied “to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation” (p. 445). A multiple case or collective study is an “instrumental case study extended to several cases...that may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristics” (p. 446). Skate stresses that there are no hard-and-fast lines between the categories; they differ rather in terms of a sense of focus.

Because the investigation involved the views and judgements of a cluster of Year 6 – 7 students, not all from the same school, the research falls into Skate’s category of a multiple case study. It may be further defined as predominantly instrumental, since there is less interest in these children as particular individuals than as members of an age group. However, a qualitative paradigm stresses that findings from one situation cannot be immediately generalised to other situations. Therefore, this case study does provide an interesting example of how children in the age group think and talk about art, but the thoughts and attitudes of the group of participants

studied are not intended to be presented as statistically representative of the age group as a whole.

Specifically, this case study consists of sixteen students from three schools. The students from two of the schools participated in group interviews. Students from the third school participated in a workshop and a group interview.

Selecting the Participants

Of the sixteen participants there were eight boys and eight girls, from three different schools which in the study I identify as schools A, B and C. The three schools were selected because they represented a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, and because the principals agreed to allow their students to participate. Interviews were undertaken in school time as much as possible. This imposed a constraint on how long students could be released from classes. Consequently, one-hour-long interviews were held with groups of two or three students.

Delamont (1992), talking about the importance of gaining access to the research field, points out that access is not simply negotiated once and then settled for the whole of the fieldwork: “access is a process, not a simple decision” (p. 80). Initially access was negotiated by talking to the principals and classroom teachers of the schools selected. I needed to rely on teachers to explain the project to their students, call for interest, and select students who they considered had a strong interest in art. I was able to meet with the students before the interviews took place and explain the process we would follow. In addition, I also needed to win the trust of the students interviewed to ensure the maximum openness in the interview sessions.

Ethics approval was obtained prior to conducting research with the students. Such research has a number of ethical requirements which are different from standard classroom teaching. The first requirement was that the participants were informed that the research was taking place and that they were given the choice about whether or not they wanted to take part. Informed consent was obtained from participants and their parents. The second requirement was that the participants’ anonymity was preserved in any sharing of the data. Students were asked to select pseudonyms to be used to safeguard anonymity. Those pseudonyms are used in this report.

The number of participants was the result of the need to balance the desire for a wide group against the constraints of time and the need to gain individual permissions.

Collecting the Data

Marton (1994) states that the principal method of collecting data in phenomenographic studies has been the interview. He acknowledges that how something is experienced can be expressed in different ways: “the way a person acts expresses how things appear to them... Group interviews, observations, drawings, written responses and historical documents have been used as the main source of information” (1994, p. 4427). Nevertheless, the preferred method has been the interview. The reason is that “the more we make things that are unthematized and implicit into objects of reflection, and hence thematized and explicit, the more fully do we explore awareness” (p. 4427). The interview is precisely a process that encourages participants to be explicit about their attitudes and values. Marton explains that “the interview has to be carried out as a dialogue” and that the subject’s experiences are “jointly constituted by interviewer and interviewee”. He further notes that “these experiences, understandings, are neither there prior to the interview, ready to be ‘read off’, nor are they only situational social constructions. They are aspects of the subject’s awareness that change from being unreflected to being reflected.” Accordingly I planned to talk to students about their work and their reactions to work by others. In addition, because I wanted to be able to explore attitudes in greater depth, I planned to set up a practical workshop and observe a smaller number of students while they were working and talk to them about the process.

In practice the initial plan needed to be slightly modified because of the programme schedule of the third school. It turned out that I could not interview these students until after the date arranged for the workshop. This allowed me to approach this third group of participants a little differently, as I will explain below.

In all the interviews the approach involved a number of semi-structured questions based on the prompts of selected art works followed by opportunities to further explore what had been said. The objective was to elicit participants’ explanatory stories about art works they selected. The semi-structured aspect of the

interview led participants into the discussion. The unstructured aspect allowed them to take some control of the discussion. Unstructured interviewing is advocated (Fontana and Frey, 1994) to avoid “objectifying” those who are interviewed. Fontana and Frey cite Douglas (1985) who argues that, “forgetting the rules in creative interviewing allows research subjects to express themselves more freely, and thus have a greater voice both in the research process and in the research report” (p. 368). They also cite Fine (1983) who argues that interviewers should also be allowed to give their own views. If they do not, she says, “what seems to be a conversation is really a one-way pseudo-conversation, raising the ethical dilemma of studying people for opportunistic reasons” (p. 4). Marton (1994) also stressed the value of an evolving structure to the interview: “This type of interview should not have too many questions made up in advance, and nor should there be too many details determined in advance. Most questions follow from what the subject says. The point is to establish the phenomenon as experienced and to explore its different aspects jointly and as fully as possible... [Often] a concrete case makes up the point of departure...the experimenter then tries to encourage the subjects to reflect on the text, the situation or the problem, and often also on their way of dealing with it” (p. 4427-8). Bowden (2000) explains the importance of open-ended questions in the interview in terms of allowing “the interviewees to decide on those aspects of the question that appear most relevant to them” (p. 8). Such questions, he says, “are designed to be diagnostic, to reveal the different ways of understanding the phenomenon within that context” (p. 8).

In preparation for the interview participants were asked to bring an item of their own work that they liked (a reproduced image or an original) and an item of work by another artist that they liked, and to be prepared to tell me why they liked them. What was meant by the artist was not specified, as their interpretation of that role might provide useful information. I also brought a range of art works (reproductions and originals) and asked students to select one they liked and one they disliked and explain their choice. These served as concrete prompts for the semi-structured aspects of the interviews. The items I brought included reproductions of well-known art works, a cast bronze sculpture by a local artist, and a greenstone patu. (Images of these are attached in Appendix A). These works were chosen so that participants could respond to three-dimensional properties and texture as well as to two-dimensional images.

A video camera was used to record the interviews in order to track individual voices within the group and also to be able to interpret body language and expression as well as the actual words said. In addition I kept a field journal to record my observations and growing understandings.

The workshop was set up in School C where I had been able to arrange the use of a community art shed. A local artist, who had previously worked as a master artist in the school under the Artists in Schools scheme, was invited to come in as a facilitator. His brief was to run a workshop that allowed students to pursue their interests rather than lead them in a specific project. A colleague was also engaged to video the workshop and to talk to the students about their work. The involvement of these two people allowed me to take the role of observer. The workshop was set up with a range of materials including paint, paper, crayons, dye, pencils, clay, chisels, plaster and fabric. As in the other two schools, the participants were selected because of their interest in art, but this time they needed to be available to participate in a four-hour workshop that extended beyond the school day.

In the interviews with students from all the schools, I talked with the participants outside the working context of their art room and they were asked to reflect on completed works. In the workshop with School C, I was also able to observe students making their art works, talk to them about their intentions and successive choices, and discuss their satisfaction (or otherwise) with their results and their possible plans for future work.

Scheduling pressures in this third school led to successive postponements of the interviews that had been organised. Consequently the participants took part in the workshop first and were interviewed about their selected art works several weeks later. This sequence resulted in richer discussions, and I was able to reconsider the way I analysed the data that arose and the way I could best report it. The process was an important part of my own development in understanding both the research question and the research method.

Table 1 summarises the processes used in each school and lists the participants (using pseudonyms). It also gives the decile rating¹ of each school.

¹ New Zealand schools are graded on a ten-point scale according to the socioeconomic status of the contributing community. 10 is the highest rating.

Table 1: Schools, participants and procedures

	School A	School B	School C
Group interview	√	√	√
Artist workshop			√
Participants	Jazz Cari May Tahi Tai	Peter Charlie Tom Faye Lee Tess	Bam Taff Taylor Lucy Patten
Decile rating	2	4	9

Analysis of the Data

A contextual and evolutionary approach to analysis is valued not only in phenomenography but also in the wider field of qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain the process of analysing data in qualitative research in terms of interpreting materials that arise in the investigation rather than in terms of fitting data into pre established categories. Marton (1994) stresses that analysis in a phenomenographic study “is not a measurement but a discovery procedure” (p. 2249). In both explanations the emphasis is on analysis as a way for exploring and interpreting data rather than on applying pre-existing codification.

The process of interpreting the data in this project began during the interviews themselves. As we talked, I was constantly exploring and clarifying meanings and using emergent understandings to prompt further comments. Fontana and Frey (2005) point out that a degree of interpretation by the researcher is an inevitable part of the interview process. In this respect they cite Gubrium and Holstein (2002) who describe the interview as a “contextually based, mutually accomplished story that is achieved through collaboration between researcher and the respondent” (Fontana and Frey 2005, p. 714). Their explanation parallels Marton’s description of the interview as a form of dialogue (Marton, 1994).

Following the interviews, key impressions were recorded in my field journal as a form of debriefing. This allowed me to start noting similarities and differences in responses and to start identifying themes. The opportunity to present a report on some of the data from the first set of interviews in a formal seminar prompted a further round of interpretative grouping of themes. Padgett (2004) points out that this is consistent with a grounded approach where conceptualisation is derived inductively from the data. Padgett describes the process as constantly revising interpretation, whereby ideas and analytic themes and theories are developed and formed throughout the research project. Taylor & Bogdan (1998) stress that “data analysis is an ongoing process in qualitative research” (p. 141). Similarly, Marton (1994) notes that “the different steps in the phenomenographic analysis have to be taken interactively”. He emphasises that “as each consecutive step has implications not only for the steps that follow but also for the steps that precede it, the analysis has to go through several runs in which the different steps are considered to some extent simultaneously” (Marton, 1994, p. 4428).

After the completion of the first round of interviews I looked for emergent themes, and began to develop groupings and clusters of comments to illustrate and further tease out these themes. I started with a number of broad categorisations of participants’ comments, particularly noting similarities and differences in responses. Then I looked for broader themes that characterised the variation in how what was thought of as ‘good’ in an art work was experienced, conceptualised and communicated. These themes included narratives, personal associations, imagery, sensual response, colour and texture, and process.

As I continued sorting through the data, discussing it with critical colleagues, and relating it to ideas addressed in the literature, I continued to look at the participants’ comments from different perspectives and to read for their subtext as well as for their surface content. I particularly valued the challenge offered by the appointed respondent to my seminar who warned me against overlaying students’ opinions with my own interpretations and so negating the value of eliciting and recording students’ voices (Scott, 2008). In my reporting, therefore, I have sought to retain the immediacy of what each student said.

One of the problems I had to resolve in the analysis of the data was what to do with themes and issues that initially appeared to be irrelevant to the research question.

One such theme concerned what participants liked about various teachers. At first I tended to set this data aside. However as the analysis progressed I noted the wide range of difference in the expressive tools used by participants when talking about their art work. All the participants had been selected because their teachers considered they had a strong interest in art, and on the basis of our communication in the interviews it was clear that all the participants liked art and enjoyed making it. However, their comments demonstrated a widely varying range of skills in describing art and its features. There appeared to be a strong correlation between the expressive skills the participants evidenced in their discussion and the comments they made about their art-learning experiences. For this reason I decided to retain this cluster of data in the report. This is in keeping with Marton's statement (1994) that decisions of relevance may need to be reconsidered in the continuing course of analysis. It is also in keeping with Bogdan and Biklen's overarching definition of qualitative research as a means of understanding topics in their complexity and context (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003).

After finishing analysing the interviews from the first two schools according to themes it seemed that something was missing from the study. Although the occurrence of themes across the group as a whole did indicate and illustrate a range of perspectives that 10-12-year-old students bring to their valuations of art, the clustering of themes did not show much detail about the way individual students processed their experiences, perceptions and valuations. By the time this initial analysis was completed the workshop had occurred and its video record had been transcribed. I saw there was potential usefulness in approaching the analysis of the third cluster of participants in a different way. I decided to track the narrative of each of their personal projects within the workshop, with particular attention to the decisions they made and to the explanations they gave for such decisions. I then linked the subsequent interview to each of these narratives. This process allowed for a search of congruencies and dissonances in each participant's approach to art and art-making as well as noting parallels to the themes identified in the first clusters of interviews. This approach aligned with Ornek's advocacy of a "think aloud" approach to interviewing in phenomenographic research (2008, p. 11). Ornek concludes that the goal is for the interviewer to ask questions that prompt the students to think aloud - that is, talk about what he or she is thinking as they work.

The concept of reliability is interpreted differently within various research paradigms. In regard to phenomenographic analysis Marton (1994) addresses the question of reliability in terms of usefulness rather than in terms of accuracy of measurement. He considered the question of whether another researcher examining the same data would arrive at the same results and he suggests that the question is misleading because it implies analysis is a kind of measurement procedure. He affirms the view that analysis in a phenomenographic project is “not a measurement but a discovery procedure” (1994, p. 4429), stating “the discovery does not have to be replicable, but once the outcome space of a phenomenon has been revealed, it should be communicated in such a way that other researchers could recognise instances of the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question” (1994, p. 4429). There is a strong parallel between Marton’s explanation and Richardson’s proposal (1994) that crystallisation is a better way of assessing validity within qualitative research than triangulation. Crystallisation acknowledges there is no single truth and it can be understood as a tool for considering multiple clusters of data that lead to richer understandings of a situation. Implicit in this approach is an acknowledgement that all clusters will be situated and partial. Thus crystallisation provides us with “a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic” (Richardson 1994 p. 522). Janesick takes up Richardson’s metaphor and describes the qualitative researcher’s work as the “need to capture the lived experience of individuals and their stories, much like the choreographer who crafts a dance” (2002, p. 71). My intention is to offer facets of crystallisation through the two approaches I used in analysing and reporting the data. Accordingly, a thematic approach was retained in the analysis and reporting of the data from Schools A and B, but the contextual and evolutionary nature of students’ thinking are highlighted in the analysis and reporting of School C.

Reporting the Data

In keeping with the discussion above, the findings are reported in two separate chapters. Chapter Four reports the first clusters of interviews in Schools A and B in terms of the themes that arose across the group as a whole. The discussion is prefaced with a description of the participants and their schools, and concludes by relating the themes to the expectations of the New Zealand curriculum, and to the day-to-day

work of classroom teachers of art. In this chapter a further layer of interpretation of each of the themes is drawn from relevant literature.

Chapter Five reports the findings from both the workshop and the interviews with the workshop participants in terms of five narratives, each of which tracks the work, choices and explanations of each of the individuals. This approach allows for what Geertz (1988) describes as thick or rich description, that is description that conveys the complexity and texture of what the participants say and the contexts in which they express their views. Where relevant, the discussion of these five students' work draws connections with the themes discussed in the previous chapter. The discussion is prefaced by describing the workshop in further detail. The chapter concludes by relating the narratives to the values and principles of the New Zealand curriculum and to the description of arts education within it.

Throughout the reporting, as already noted, I have sought to retain a strong sense of the participants' voices. This is in keeping with the intention of the central research question, which investigates students' perceptions, understandings and opinions. Because of this focus the study has sought to maintain a 'bottom up' approach to the report of the findings rather than a 'top down' one. That is, the discussion builds on the themes that emerge from the participants' discussions and relates them to what is found in the literature rather than drawing themes from the literature and using them to analyse the participants' comments.

In the concluding chapter, the data is further examined in terms of implications for teaching. The exploration of such implications is an important part of a phenomenographic approach, because it is a methodology that originated in an educational context, and the findings of phenomenographic research projects are expected to have strong implications for teaching (Marton 1994; Trigwell, Prosser & Taylor 1994). Bowden (2000) proposes a particular focus in phenomenographic research that he calls developmental phenomenography, describing his own research as developmental because "it is undertaken with the purpose of using the outcomes to help the subjects of the research, usually students, or others like them to learn" (p. 4). Accordingly the findings from this research are related to the challenges facing classroom teachers of visual art.

Chapter Four

Schools A and B: Aesthetic Responses from Participants

This chapter discusses the results from first cluster of interviews; two groups from School A, and two groups from School B. They are differentiated from the interviews from School C, which took part in a slightly different context, yielded what proved to be richer data and are discussed in the next chapter.

As explained in the methodology chapter, the schools selected students on the basis of their interest in art. Each participant was asked to bring a piece of their own art that they thought was ‘good’ and a piece by someone else that they thought was ‘good’. In addition, I brought in a range of art works from which the participants were asked to choose the one they liked and one they disliked. The pages that follow summarise the participants’ backgrounds in art and report the main themes that emerged from the discussions. The relationship of these themes to the New Zealand curriculum and to art education literature is examined, and possible implications for art teaching in the upper primary school are explored. Finally I explain why it was decided to take a slightly different approach to the second cluster of interviews.

The Participants’ Background Experience in Art

Each group interview began with a discussion of participants’ previous experience of art. The initial purpose for beginning in this way was to get the participants talking openly and confidently. However, analysis of this section of the interviews highlighted significant differences in experience. The relationship of these differences to differences in expressive language proved to be significant and will be discussed later in this chapter.

All the participants in this cluster affirmed that they really enjoyed making art and each of them had some intention to carry on with further explorations of art. However, participants from the two schools named quite different kinds of experience when they talked about how they became interested in art.

The video recording shows that participants from School A were hesitant when they talked about previous experiences with art-making. They discussed it in

terms of “enter[ing] colouring competitions” (May), “scribbling” and “bombing” (Tahi), “start[ing] because my mates were doing it” (Tai), “just sort of a hobby” (Jaz), and “sort of” interested until recently (Carli). May explained that her mother does “Maori art”, most of her family do “some art” and her sister “designs clothes”. Tahi described his experience of drawing with his mother: “My Mum, she can copy stuff. She’ll look at that and she’ll just draw it exactly like that... If my Mum drew a car I’ll tell her that I’ll draw the rims. I’ll pimp the car out.” Tai talked about his admiration for his brother’s art: “He designs for people’s twenty-firsts, like posters.” Jaz reported that some of her cousins “draw people and, like, [do] paintings and sculpture sometimes,” and that “some of the adults do carvings...like pounamu necklaces.” Carli indicated that no one else in her family does any art.

The video recording shows that participants from School B were considerably more confident in talking about their own interests in art. Each reported an interest in art reaching back to their earliest memories, and of experiences in kindergarten or special classes. Fay recalled “making clay animals [at kindergarten], and I think mine was a bird... I like working with clay.” She explained that her father is an architect, and that architecture is “kind of art work.” Her older sister also “likes painting and sketching.” Lee described a programme she attended at age seven: “I went to this clay-making course in the holidays and I made a really good bit of art that I didn’t think I was capable of, and that’s when it snapped in my head, I really liked this.” Lee reported that her brother “loves art” and she herself sees art as “a way to express yourself without doing anything with your body; it just comes out in your mind.” Tess remembered kindergarten experiences where “there were many pencils and paper and glue and we were allowed to do collages.” She explained her parents sometimes paint and said, “I think my parents are good at art but they don’t think that.” She recalled seeing “some really good art works...in Germany.” Charlie recalled “working with the play dough” at kindergarten. He explained that his older brother paints and that he likes “doing art and stuff because you get to be creative and use your imagination and get to show what you can do, what is inside your imagination.” Peter recalled that when he was about three years old he used to do a “bit of clay, like just do a few art classes.” Peter further explained that his mother “does quite a lot of mosaic stuff.” In talking about his own enjoyment in art he said, “I just like looking at my finished product and seeing how good I am.” Tom stated

that others in his family also do art and his father “is kind of building stuff” and that he himself “just like[s] painting and stuff.”

There were marked differences between the two schools, both in the types of earlier art experiences and in the fluency and confidence of their expression when talking about art. I will discuss these differences and their possible relation to socio-economic factors later in this chapter.

What Participants Thought Made Art ‘Good’

The various themes that arose in the participants’ discussion of what they valued in their own and other people’s art can be grouped into four broad categories as follows: impact on the senses and the imagination, making meaning through telling a story, appreciation of technical art skills, and admiration of qualities that set art apart.

Impact on the Senses and the Imagination

Many of the participants responded to the pleasure of physical touch or movement. Sometimes the response was only a physical one - the video camera captured moments when a participant would stroke the greenstone or the bronze sculpture. However some of the participants commented on their sensual responses.

A sensual response to colour was reported by many of the participants. For example, May identified the use of colour as the feature she liked best about her art classes. In particular she said, “I like the pastel ones... I love, like, pastel and doing blending.” Tess had a similar response: “I think I like the colours of art.” In speaking of the work she had chosen to bring in, Fay said, “I chose this because I like the colour of it.” She explained that the colour of another work dragged her in straight away. Tai accounted for his choice of the patu as the work he liked in terms of colour: “Colours... It’s bright... It’s just cool.” Several other participants identified colour as an important part of their response to particular art works even though there were other features they spoke of as being more significant. For example, Peter was proud of the effect he had gained by mixing “the three main primary colours” and gaining patterns of darkness and light. He also liked the way different colours came out in the patu. Tahī responded to “the different colours” in Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*,

as did Carli. Absence of striking colour was sometimes identified as a reason for rejecting particular art works. For example, Charlie disliked Warhol's work in part because "it's just two colours, it should have more colours." Appreciation of the contrast between black and white was also highlighted. Tess said, "I like Japanese [art] because - I don't know, it's so simple. Just the black and white."

A response to movement and tactile surface was also evident. Tom commented on his enjoyment of movement when he manipulated the flap of the fireman's hat in a fabric work he had made. He said, "I just like how it does that," moving the peak of hat backwards and forwards. Perhaps it was the movement that transformed fabric art - which might conventionally be regarded as a girls' material - into a medium that a boy could choose.

Another aspect of sensuality was highlighted in the way some participants talked about how their art emerged from the process of making rather than from just planning. For instance Lee said, "I like the art that you don't think about and you don't plan for weeks, you just sit down and it's there, you do it off the top of your head." She admired her brother's work because he worked spontaneously instead of planning: "He can just sit down and draw it." In some cases appreciation of other people's art was also at this spontaneous level. Fay said, "I think it's successful because it made me look at it, like, again and again, and it made me want to choose it. [It] jumped out."

A strong sensual response also featured in the discussions by the participants from School C, to be reported in the following chapter.

A number of the participants responded to the images they saw in a strongly emotionally way. For example, May selected Picasso's *Guernica* as the piece she thought was the best art. She explained her choice purely in terms of images: "Because I love the mix-up art and it's all mixed up... People getting piled up on top of each other... Too much crowded people in a small room...there's a couple of mixed-up animals. A lot of big feet and people yelling with their mouths open... The mixed-up pieces like a horse with a different type of tongue. A sheep, dog, goat, cow...because I like it; it's all muddled up." Carli picked the *Guernica* as the piece she thought was not good art. Her response was also in terms of the images she saw and the emotional reaction she had to them. As she looked at the painting she said:

“All the faces in different places. The face parts...yeah, it shouldn't be all jumbled up like that...there's no colour, it's only black and white... It's got that dead baby there.” She described her response to the work as “horrified”. It is interesting that both May and Carli responded strongly to similar elements of imagery, but their evaluation of the work as art were completely opposed.

Making Meaning Through Telling a Story

Stories featured in many of the participants' discussions about their reactions to particular art works. Some of these stories related to personal experiences or personal dreams. Tom brought a piece of fabric art he had made and explained, “We had to sew a person's face and I sewed a fireman, because I want to be a fireman when I grow up.” One of the reasons Jaz gave for liking the necklace she brought was that the fish tail in it made a connection for her with the ocean: “I like the ocean. I like swimming and stuff.”

Participants also created narratives to explain what they saw in the art that I brought to the interviews. For example Charlie, having picked *Starry Night*, tried to find a meaning in the work by connecting elements with a possible story: “Well, really, I just think that the wind's just going around...the people in the house would just be doing really nothing.” Fay explained her choice of *Starry Night* in terms of a story about a force that has overtaken the town. As she looked at the picture she picked out elements and tied them into an emerging narrative that was shaping in her imagination. She construed the tower in the painting as a castle: “A big castle thing at the front. It's dark, something like maybe it's a town that's been taken over, like someone that lives in this tower and is shadowing the rest of the town... Kind of like a dictator who's powerful and power hungry...Well, the castle is black and it's bigger than everything else.” Tahi also had a narrative interpretation of *Starry Night*, but it was different. He interpreted the movement as wind and added the spirits of the dead. As he looked at the picture he said, “Wind. Wind is going through. Going through the city... The people who are dead are going past. Oh, spirits.”

When Lee chose the bronze sculpture as the piece of art she liked, she explained the piece in terms of a story: “I think he's trying to pick up something and it looks a bit like he's bowing. To something up here... I think it's a sign of a

weakness.” She added that it “just looks like he’s got a lack of pride. Something’s happened and he just wants to go down. And not stand tall.”

Sometimes the participants drew on elements in a work that created a somewhat different story to the way the work is usually interpreted. For example, Tom picked Escher’s *Waterfall*, noting the “waterfalls and stuff”, the “pool-ish thing, a garden of strange plants, and a person hanging up clothes.” However, he missed the way the water goes uphill. Therefore he interpreted the picture in terms of a story of an ordinary house: “I just think, like, it’s a house of someone’s.” Tess also chose the Escher. She did notice that “the water goes up and it normally doesn’t go up.” She too made a story relating the location of the water to the location of the plants: “I think it’s a little bit, like, underwater ‘cause the plants look a little bit under water. That’s maybe because the water goes up.” Carli, who chose *Starry Night*, shaped a back story about a tidal wave sweeping over the town: “The colours and the town... It gets swept over by the water. The town will get swept over by the water... I can see the waves.”

Another form of story that recurred was linking a chosen art work to a family connection. Tom explained that, “This is a painting and I like it, all the shapes and stuff, and it was my mum’s great-aunty that made it. She is dead now.” Connection to family history apparently gave the work significance in Tom’s eyes. May brought pieces of pounamu jewellery that had been handed down through her family. What appealed to her in the art was “how old they are... They’ve been passed on.” What was important to her, she said, was “To know that I’ve had it, my mother’s had it and her mother’s had it.” She stated empathically that the reason she’d brought the piece was “to show it and tell about its story.” Jaz also brought in a necklace that she valued because of its strong family connections: “My uncle gave it to me when I was little. It was passed to him by his and my great ancestors.” When further questioned she identified other elements in the necklace that she liked - the designs, and the association with the ocean. However, she returned to affirming the family connection: “It’s one of my favourites...[it represents] my uncle.”

Sometimes the discussion suggested hints of an embedded story. Tess described how she added wings to her zebra shoes. She said, “I like zebras so I make a zebra shoe. With wings, really another animal. So I did wings... I want to do just

wings because that's like another animal in it. But it's not a bird." While there is no clear story here as yet, there seem to be the seeds of an emerging story.

Appreciation of Technical Art Skills

Many of the participants noted and appreciated evidence of technical skill in art works that they chose and voiced pride in being able to demonstrate technical skill in their own work.

Peter brought a drawing he had made in a Year 5 art class. The given subject was to draw a taniwha. He explained that he liked the work because of the skill he had shown in mixing colours: "I like this one because I have not only used the three main primary colours, but I have mixed them in like that and done dark there and then lighter there and then lighter in the middle - " (pointing to the middle) " - and then dark, lighter and lighter" (pointing to the eyes). When he talked about why he'd picked the greenstone patu he described features of the carver's skill in capturing the elements of the stone. He said, "I like this one because it's not done by painting, it's done by carving and chipping." He added, "When they done this the limestone...looks like it's, like, crazy because the lines go everywhere inside the limestone," and "I like the way it's been carved in and how it's, like, flat there, and the shape it's in. And the darker colour there and the different colours." He told the interviewer that it was a successful piece of art "because it, like, feels finished and it's, like, smoothed away." Similarly Tai valued the polished finish of the shell carving he brought in to show. He said, "For the shape and stuff, it's perfect - the polishing and the round bits around it."

Peter admired the evidence of his brother's skill in the work that he had selected. He explained why he thought the drawing was good: "What I really like about this one is that how when my brother made it he made it kind of 3D-ish and how he has done the shading to make it look like it is coming out of the ground... He used water colours like black water to get over it, and that makes it a lot harder to do, which makes it maybe not look that great but the work that is put into it was pretty big." He clearly valued underlying technical expertise rather than the overall look of the work.

Jaz also valued detailed and intricate work. The piece of her own work that she brought in was a complex pencil drawing of flowers. She reported that she'd used colouring pencils and a ruler, and that she felt pleased with the way she had played with the dark colours.

Tahi explained the success of *Starry Night* because of the artist's skill in layering paint - "because of the brushes and how he used them...the different colours...the paint, and he used brushes." Tahi formed an understanding of the technical process the artist used with brush and paint: "He grabbed the brush and then went over it, then he grabbed another brush and then went over it again... Because of the painting. And the drawing. It looks cool."

Sometimes it was the combination of technical intricacy and surface simplicity that was admired. For instance, in discussing her brother's painting Lee said, "If you look at it, it looks so simple, but if you really look at it it's so intricate - that's what I look at - and if you look at it like that - but it is really intricate."

In other cases it was inadequate technique that was discussed. One or two of the participants critiqued the work they brought in because of what they saw as incomplete technique. For instance Tahi decided the pukeko he had drawn was not particularly good: "I don't think this is good...the colour, you can still see a bit of white...and that looks funny" (pointing to pukeko's leg). "Yeah, it looks like he's got a bend on his leg, and look, that's where I've coloured in too...you can see white."

An apparent lack of clear technical excellence was the reason why so many participants selected Warhol's works as the ones they thought were the least 'good' art. For example Charlie decided that *Brillo Box* was an inferior work: "I don't really like this one because all it is - it's like repeating itself... And like it's just two colours - it should have more colours."

Social and Cultural Values

This next cluster of themes is a complex one and involves a number of different features that characterise art as a 'special' activity according to values and rules assigned by tradition, family values and teacher judgements.

Tradition and Authority

A factor that identified art works as something special was the authority that tradition gave them. For example Tahi selected *Starry Night* as a work he thought was 'good'. After talking about the work for a while he acknowledged that he knew of Van Gogh and that his class had been asked to copy the picture in a previous class. He said, "Van Gogh... 'Cause I've drawn this before. I've seen it in drawings... Whaia Tracey, she broke it up for us and we had to draw it." Previous acknowledgement of the painting's place in cultural history seemed to be a primary factor in his choice.

Sometimes the authority or mana of the material itself was a reason for valuing the art work that was made from it. Tai explained his reaction to the greenstone patu in terms of wanting to hold the stone. He said, "'Cause I haven't held a greenstone patu for ages...that's why I grabbed it... It just feels special." When asked what made it special he replied, "Greenstone." When questioned he could not further explain what he meant by special. "Don't know," he said. But he did not seem to think a wooden patu would have the same appeal. Jaz was also drawn to the patu, primarily because it was made of greenstone - and because, as she said, "it's part of my culture."

The Rules of Art

Many of the participants indicated that they believed tradition had laid down rules and guidelines about what was and what was not real art. For example, Charlie explained that while he liked the piece he brought in, he considered that "it is not exactly art...it's art, but made by kind of a computer." According to Charlie real art is also marked as too precious for everyday handling. He explained, "I just couldn't find anything else that I wouldn't break - my mum probably wouldn't trust me with [other] stuff." Similarly, Peter felt the need to explain that carving such as was shown on the patu is "like a different kind of art." though he seemed unable to be explicit about what made it different or what it was different from. However, the art works he brought in were intricate and complex drawings, and perhaps it was the apparent simplicity and utility of the patu that made him hesitate before designating it as art.

A majority of the participants selected one of the Warhol works as being the least 'good' piece of art. Lee said, "I don't think it's art - it's advertising." Others

agreed that advertising is not art. Fay explained, “It doesn’t have thought and I don’t think it’s art work. Art work has to have thought in it.” Jaz also thought the Warhol *Campbell Soup Cans* work was not art. She said, “They kind of look like those place mats.”

However, Lee thought a little further and decided that while one can was not art, perhaps the act of putting them all together made a difference. She speculated, “That’s not art - ” (pointing to one can) “ - but putting them all together makes it art. Someone thought about that and said, ‘Yeah, I can put these all together and make an artwork.’” The thinking behind the work was the criteria that made it art. Another indicator of the thinking that had gone into making art works was the extent to which the meaning of the work needed to be worked out by the viewer. Some of the participants admired this quality. Lee said, “I like art that makes you think about it... Like you look at this piece of art and you try to work out what’s going through the artist’s mind when they made this.”

Some participants made a distinction between copying and art. Lee said, “I had to copy that penguin for my picture and at the end it was up in the office and the teacher thought it was great but I didn’t... I didn’t feel like I had just done art because I just copied the picture.”

Originality

The originality of a work, or the way it was different from other work, was a reason given by a few participants for valuing an art work. For example, Fay said, “If I see a painting or a sketch I look for the unusual things in it. Things that are different from everybody else’s art.” The desire to be different also guided her decisions in her own art-making. She recalled, “And everyone was doing sneakers or jandals, so I thought okay, I’ll be different, and I did a high heel ‘cause no one else did high heels.” She critiqued the work she did in class because of the lack of originality. She said, “We do things that aren’t very...just self-portraits and things that aren’t very creative, or ‘cause our self-portraits have to look like us we can’t make them look like our mind.”

For Lee originality was also an important quality in art. She did not like the way art lessons required her to follow models. She explained, “In art lessons I don’t like how we follow someone else’s art... I hate doing that. We get like - she shows us

a piece of artwork. And I don't like being shown art because it narrows your mind. You don't think. 'Cause you think does my art really have to look like that?' Both Fay and Lee felt that they were really doing art when they were allowed to choose their own style. Fay liked it when "we are allowed to choose what style we did it in and what colours we did it in. What materials we used and what it looked like. We could choose - we didn't have to, like, follow a set of rules." Lee agreed: "The same - when we are allowed to do what's in our mind, what we want to do. Just get that clay and do whatever we wanted to do with it."

The Teachers' Judgements

A particular form of respect for evaluation of the worth of art by a higher authority was the role participants gave to teacher feedback. Many of the participants commented on how their teacher's praise had helped them feel secure that their art work was good. For instance, Fay related how the teacher had praised her shoe: "She said that it was creative and different, which I like." She trusted her teacher's suggestions and judgements. She said, "I wanted to make my shoe really tall, but she said no, that probably won't work because it could break while it's being fired. Then I decided I'd make it short because Mrs. H is an art teacher and she's really good at art so she probably knows what she's talking about." Jaz liked to have someone else tell her if her art is good or not. When asked what she would do if her critic said the work was not good, she replied, "I don't know. I would probably throw it away or do some more work on it."

Lee, on the other hand, did not always respect her teachers' judgments. She explained, "I never really listen to teachers' comments because I don't think they really tell us because they might say that's really good and then tell someone who isn't any good at art that theirs is great as well." Other participants had a more mixed reaction to the judgement of their teacher. Tai often felt criticised by his teacher. He reported that "if it's not up to standard she tells us it's like little kiddies', and to do it at reading time... She says it looks like scribble. That's what juniors do." When asked if he agreed with her judgement, he said, "Nah, everything doesn't have to be perfect." May also felt criticised, but she accepted the criticism in order to improve. She said, "Then you can look back and learn from your mistakes."

Relation to the Research Literature

The above categorisation shows that the participants in the first cluster responded to and evaluated art works from quite different initial frameworks. Some primarily responded to sensual elements such as colour, touch, surface imagery and movement. Some offered narratives, sometimes seminal, that provided a meaningful context for their response to the work. Others admired technical elements of the making process. Still others seemed to measure the work against one of a number of criteria that defined art-making as an activity that is something exceptional, a little outside and above everyday life, often relating to the values of society, their teacher or the home.

The responses have some direct resonances with ideas discussed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The inclination to create explanatory stories finds parallels in Barry's (2006) study of how a group of similarly aged children responded to music. Barry found that young listeners tended to create a narrative that contextualised the work and formed a bridge to their own lives. Richards (2003) found that children in the middle school tended to reject scribbling as bad drawing and placed emphasis on the proper way to draw and colour in. A clear criterion of success was the absence of mistakes. A number of students in this study voiced similar concerns. Acknowledgement by some participants of how they looked for teacher approval of their work aligns with Holland and O'Conner's (2004) observation that in the middle years of schooling students seem to transfer power of opinion on their work to their teacher. It is interesting, however, that not all the participants in this study accepted their teacher's opinions. While some judged their own or others' work against criteria such as that noted by Richards, a few reported that their teachers judged work in this way but they themselves rejected the judgement.

The way in which several participants expressed reservations towards accepting certain works as art highlights the significance of the challenge of Banksy (2006) to the established art world and of Freedman's (2001a) and Duncum's (2001) identification of the need to align art and popular culture within art education. These students were aware that there were conventional standards of high art and tended to use these as benchmarks for classifying work. For example, although Charlie admired

the poster he had brought in, he was concerned it was not art because it had been made by a computer. His hesitation points to a rupture between his own aesthetic response and the response he thinks he should make.

A more significant and powerful connection to the literature is that the participants were able to make strong personal choices and, within the constraints of their different language skills, identify reasons for their choice. Both the *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) and a number of the theorists reviewed emphasise the importance of students exploring and expressing values and making connections between their lived world and the skills and knowledge they learn at school. For example the *UNESCO Road Map* (2006) emphasises the importance of children's participation in arts education in a way that would further their development as full and free human beings. Thompson (2007) stressed the importance of children's art-making emerging from children's lived experience. Catterall and Peppler (2007) report a relationship between arts education and what children believe about themselves and their futures. Chalmers (2001) argues the value of understanding visual culture as an ordinary way of communicating. The fact that the participants in this study are making different but strongly personal evaluations of their own and other people's art means they are well placed to participate in further explorations through art of their value systems and their understandings. As Maras (2003) stresses, teachers will teach more effectively if they understand the kinds of theories children start with when they come to class.

Relationship to Art Strands and Key Competencies in the Curriculum

As discussed in Chapter Two, the *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) defines four interrelated strands: understanding the arts in context, developing practical knowledge, developing ideas, and communicating and interpreting.

Many of the participants' explanations that have been grouped under the theme of tradition fit into the strand of understanding the arts in context, particularly in the cases where participants saw an art work as an inheritance from the past or as an expression of culture. The attitudes by some of the participants to greenstone are clearly based on a respect for the past and the values of the past and show an awareness of the significance those objects have had for ancestral communities as

well as for today's societies (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 73). To some extent the participants' assumptions about art that were grouped together as the theme of rules of art also fit into this strand because participants are drawing on the way that "visual culture reflects and is shaped by the beliefs...and values of society" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 73).

The comments of the participants about the processes involved in the making of the art works map broadly onto the strand of developing practical knowledge. This strand addresses awareness of techniques, materials and tools (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 72). Many participants' comments showed that the way they valued work was influenced by the degree to which they considered that they or another artist had used sophisticated techniques, materials and tools. In the following chapter I will discuss in more detail how a further group of participants reflected on their own process in using practical processes.

A number of the themes discussed above are consistent with the strand of communicating and interpreting. Story making is one form in which "meanings and intentions" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 73) are explored. Response to imagery also relates to this strand, which talks about the interpretation of "sign and symbol systems" (Ministry of Education 2000 p. 73).

Participants' comments that I have grouped under the theme of originality fit into the strand of developing ideas, which asks students to "source ideas...and extend and organise them" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p 72).

The overview statement in the *New Zealand Curriculum* identifies five key competencies: thinking, using language symbols and text, managing self, relating to others, and participating and contributing. To some extent the participants' discussion did reflect the first, second and fifth competencies, but because I was only looking at their response to products the evidence is limited. In the next chapter I will explore more fully how these competencies are evident in participants' work.

Possible Implications for Art Teaching

Several studies cited in the literature review (Alter, Hays & O'Hara, 2009; Byres, 2006; Ashton, 1999; UNESCO, 2006) report that primary teachers often lack confidence in teaching visual art and that many feel they do not cover the full extent

of the curriculum well. Many base their assessments on specific technical processes rather than the skills and understandings described in the curriculum. The discussions analysed in this chapter indicate that students have a wide and rich range of ideas about art and a range of ways of valuing processes and products. They also show that various participants approach art in different ways and base their valuation on different elements and qualities. Teachers might well find it useful to engage with what their students are already thinking in order to set up meaningful further learning. I will discuss this further in relation to the second cluster of participants in the next chapter. At this stage it is useful to note that some of the participants did not feel their art was valued or understood by their teachers. Is this because the teachers were working towards assessment rather building on students' current interests and understandings?

It is also interesting to note that the students in School B, the higher decile school, displayed a wider repertoire of language and concepts when they talked about their art. However, their accounts of previous art experience show that they gained some of this repertoire from experiences and specialist classes outside the school context. This means that they arrived at school with a richer cultural capital to draw on in relation to art. The participants from School A expressed an equally strong interest in art, but had fewer tools to discuss it. Because their school was a small combined-primary-and-intermediate school they did not have specialist art teachers. Moreover, their responses show that their previous art experiences came from inside the home and consisted of activities that might be termed popular art. They demonstrated fewer structured ways of talking about art works and art experiences than the students from School B. Nevertheless, they clearly had experiences and opinions. The challenge for their teachers is to investigate their individual interests and build on them. This is not easy in the context of a large class and the 'crowded curriculum'. However, if the thinking and development of value systems articulated by these participants is to be developed further, teachers need to find ways of making contact with their students' initial ideas.

Limitations in the First Cluster of Interviews

This cluster of interviews was successful in indicating the range of ways in which Year 6 and 7 students view and value art. However, as I worked through the data I became aware that there were connections between the responses of individual participants to various works that I was not tracking. I wondered if I could understand more about their thinking and value processes if I could watch them work and discuss their work with them in addition to asking them for their feedback on specific art works. In my original design I had planned a workshop to explore the thinking of a small number of students about their own art at greater depth. As it turned out, school availability meant I needed to defer my interviews with the students at School C for a number of months. Therefore, I scheduled that group of interviews to tie in with the workshop. This allowed me to observe students working in their chosen art projects, and to discuss their progress and decisions with them, as well as in later interviews ask for their feedback on finished work (as I had with the students from the first two schools.) I could then link what the students had talked about in the workshop with the ways they talked in the subsequent interviews about their own art works and the art works of others. These discussions are analysed and reported in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

School C: Individual Aesthetic Responses

In this chapter I will discuss the material that came from the final group of participants, those from School C. As explained in the methodology chapter, these students participated in a four-hour workshop as well as being interviewed. Facilitation of the workshop by an artist, whose brief was to provide opportunities for students to work rather than teach specific skills or content, left me free to observe and interview students as they worked. The value of the workshop for this study was to observe students doing extended work on a project of their own choice in a way they wanted. The choices participants made during the workshop and their sustained working focus gave practical as well as verbal answers to the question of what they thought makes art good. Quite different styles of working emerged, and each of these can be seen as an individual search for aesthetic satisfaction.

There were five participants in this group. Their background interest in art and the focus of their workshop projects is outlined first. The remainder of the chapter tracks each participant's work process and opinions of selected art works in more detail.

The Participants

Patten has been doing art since preschool. She explained, "I went to Montessori preschool, and that's a really arty preschool - they always really encourage everyone to do art." At that time she was introduced to a lot of different materials. "We did lots of different stuff like clay. I really enjoyed clay when I was little. And lots of painting and stuff." Both her sisters, she reported, "did photography." Her stepfather "is good at art" and she said that "when we were younger we always used to do these art projects and stuff." She clearly came from a background that introduced her to art-making and that encouraged her. She said that she also liked viewing art: "I'd love to go and look at art and everything, because I really enjoy that." However, when the group talked about visiting art galleries she said, "I wouldn't make a special trip." Within the workshop Patten worked to translate personal experience into images that

would tell a story. Her ideas were clear at the beginning and she was assertive in her choice of images and styles, but she liked to call on the expert artist for validation.

Taff had developed an interest in art in the previous year. He said, "I think it might have been the artists-in-school thing...I am really into it now." He reported that his older brother and sister also "kind of like art." His interest was in realistic representational work. He explained that "I really like making realistic things. I'm more into that sort of stuff." He indicated that if he was to go to a gallery, he would enjoy looking at "maybe like the model things, maybe like carvings, maybe flax and stuff." In the workshop Taff stripped his original sculptural idea back to a simple model that could be made from found materials. He showed his awareness of material and shape in his selection of objects from the outside environment. He willingly accepted assistance with parts that were physically too hard for him to do himself.

Bam reported that his family does some art. "They sort of do the same thing as me. They sort of stop and start." He added that "they sort of use paper or fabric." He said that he had been "just sort of doing it." He also reported that he got pleasure in making art. "I like art because it just makes me feel good about things." Bam spent the workshop exploring process. When the drying of his first mask gave him extra time he decided to use different ways to explore his material. He was very happy to seek advice on technique, but he had very clear ideas of his own about subject matter and about the different ways of viewing the two works that he created. He firmly distinguished between work that was "just art" and work that meant something more to him.

Taylor recalled that he became interested in art in the new entrance class. "[I] got to do this art work with paint and stuff. It was really fun." He added, "I've always liked making things. Making them look good so people like them." He identified both pleasure in doing and approval by others as motivating factors. Taylor's father had been involved in making art for some time when he was "training to be an artist at Polytech." Taylor's interest in art had been a long-term thing and, perhaps, encouraged by his father's example. Taylor revealed he knew a bit about some of the galleries in town but he "wouldn't go exactly if there was something better to do." In the workshop Taylor appeared to work directly from the materials rather than from

discussed ideas. He quickly and independently achieved the product he wanted. He then dealt with the technical challenge of attaching the materials together.

Lucy had had a number of influences on her interest in art. She reported that she had been doing art “ever since about new entrants. We did painting and I just really got into it.” She recalled how her former neighbour took her for painting lessons. “An art teacher who used to be our old neighbour and she did an art class. She used to have a barn and we did it in there.” She also explained that her grandmother was a painter, “but she can’t paint any more - she has to paint with a knife. But I used to sit and watch her paint.” As a result she considered she had always liked art. “And I’ve never really not liked art. Not just making art, also looking at art.” She said she liked looking at “any kind of art, really.” She particularly liked looking at sculptures at the Town Basin Gallery. “I’ve been in there and it’s pretty cool. I quite like the art sculpture, like the metal. It looks really cool...I just like [the material] and it’s just different. When you look at a painting – even though art is so cool, it’s different from just paint.” She likes to look at art and try to understand what it means. “Sometimes when I do a painting I don’t really know what it means and when I see one I want to know, so I stand and I look at it.” At the end of the interviews when the *Guernica* was explained to the group she said, “Oh, yes, I see now. It kind of explains the dead baby.” Lucy also spent the workshop exploring process. She was particularly interested in exploring how an effect (embossing) might be achieved, and she experimented to solve the problems she encountered. She reflected deliberately on each part of her process and on results.

Patten

From the Workshop

Patten was clear about the way she wanted to work and came to the workshop with a fairly specific idea. As soon as the artist asked if anyone knew what they wanted to do she said she would like to do a Hundertwasser. “I really like the colours of dye - the bright sort of colours...We were studying Hundertwasser - we had, like, the onion houses. I’ve got it framed in my mum’s house now. Even though it’s not finished it looks really good.” She also had an idea of materials she might like to use. “Shiny paint, texture, 3-D, paste anything onto shiny cellophane paper.”

She was also ready with advice for the rest of the group. When others hesitated in choosing their theme she offered, “Well, at home when I feel like making art I’ve got lots of books, like craft, with lots of ideas. But then if I don’t find anything I look on the computer and that may just give me an idea.” Her suggestion reflected her preference for working with stylistic guidance, as from a guidebook, even though she has clear ideas of what she wants to explore in her art.

She was, however, prepared to refine an initial idea. As she listened to the discussion among the group she adapted her intention. “I’ve been thinking. I’ve already done a Hundertwasser painting. I thought because recently I found a baby pukeko. I thought I might include pukekos in my art. I took the baby pukeko to the Bird Recovery Centre and on the first night he died. So I thought maybe I could like do a picture of Whangarei – I want to include things like all of the graffiti – the tagging – it actually looks cool. My sister had a friend who was into all of that stuff- he didn’t do graffiti or anything. There was this butcher in Browns Bay and he did this big graffiti thingy on the wall for them, and they paid him. And I always liked looking at it and stuff.” She drew on personal experience and framed it into a story that inspired her work. Her later explanations of her workshop piece reinforced that detail of content was important to her.

She began work straight away, and when later asked about her progress explained, “What I did was I went onto the internet and I looked up the graffiti alphabet, and wrote Whangarei and I sketched it in pencils. I expanded it with pencils, sketching it. And I’ve got pastels and I’m making the thick line of the actual letter. And it’s sort of working, but you can’t read it that easily. I might have to go to coloured pencil instead of pastel. It’s not easy to read with pastel outline...but it’s going to say Whangarei and the dot on the ‘i’, will be a love heart. And I sort of want Whangarei to be read but not too easily.” There was a lot of apparently disconnected detail in her first explanation but as she continued her work it became clear that all the details contributed to the overall story. She was very aware of the effect she wanted to create and she methodically followed out her plan.

Later in the workshop the artist turned to Patten after another participant had asked for his help, and asked her if she would ask for someone to actually help with her drawing. The following dialogue shows how she felt about the ownership of her work.

Artist: If that was you, would you feel like someone had taken part of your work away from you, or would that feel like an okay process?

Patten: I usually like to do my art by myself, sort of thing. If I really didn't have a saw and someone came to help me, I would sort of hold on to it and make sure I was still learning and doing it. I would instruct them about what I want them to do.

Artist: So if you instruct them, it would still be like your work?

Patten: Yeah.

Two themes emerge from this dialogue. Firstly, Patten valued technical skill and was keen to learn new processes. Secondly, her comments suggest she most valued the conceptual aspect of art; if she was instructing, she would be in charge of the idea and therefore still in control of the art.

Patten liked to check her intentions with someone whom she viewed as an authority. She explained her decision to retain the use of pastels in terms of the artist's advice and approval. "Well, I talked to [the artist] and he thinks it looks cool like the pastels. So I think I'm going to leave it with the pastel. I'll just start drawing my guy with the hood on looking really cool with the steering wheel in his hand and his other arm on the side of the car. We talked about the hood and now I think he's looking really cool, I think... We were deciding whether I wanted it to look realistic or cartoon it."

Although Patten looked for affirmation for her choices, once she had made a decision she was very clear about what she intended to do and why she thought the process was important. "I decided I want it to look like a car that's been drawn... Because with this picture I'm not really going for realistic sort of stuff. I want it more cartoon-ish... I like drawing, but I've only done a little bit of cartoon drawing. It's sort of like I get to experiment with this." The colours she chose in the graffiti fell back to some extent to her earlier Hundertwasser studies. However, her choice of a cartoon style of drawing suggests she also wants to keep experimenting and break what is to her new ground.

Just before the end of the workshop she explained to the interviewer why the word Whangarei was an important part of the painting. "I've just shifted to Whangarei from Albany. I'd never have found a pukeko in Albany." It was now clear that all the

elements in the picture contributed to depicting a personal story, and the reason for the love heart in Whangarei became plain.

From the Group Interview

The piece of her own work that Patten liked and brought in to share was modelled on a Hundertwasser. She explained, “We were supposed to paint Auckland city the way we saw it. In Hundertwasser style.” Her allegiance to Hundertwasser was an ongoing theme in her discussion and seemed to represent familiarity - a toolbox of style, colour, form and composition in terms of which she could innovate and extend her own ideas. As she explained her painting, she pointed out that she had included some distinctive Auckland buildings. “So obviously that is the Sky Tower. And the main buildings we knew.” Some buildings she had directly adopted from Hundertwasser, “Onion-top houses...wacky windows...bright colours and the lollypop trees,” and some icons she had created of her own. “I put a little sheep on [the ferry and] I had the Maori-style waves.”

The use of symbols is another recurring theme that came out in her discussion. The work by another person that she brought in was a collage by her cousin. She explained that she liked it because it was made up of different elements. “I just like how it’s totally wacky and everything. And it’s all different sort of stuff.” She identified icons that appealed strongly to her: “I really like the pink lips...and the headphones. I think that’s a really cool thing. And the CD.” When asked if the elements tied in together, she replied, “Nothing really goes with anything, really. I think it’s all just like random.” Lucy and Taff offered an explanation of how the items were connected as the following dialogue shows:

Lucy: I thought that the lips were like a song and she’s talking.
Something to do with that.

Taff: It is - it’s a song. The song goes all round it.

When the interviewer asked Patten if the explanation worked for her or whether she preferred to see the work “more [as] the random bits?” Patten affirmed she preferred the random explanation.

Of the art that I brought in she chose the Escher. The mixture of different elements seemed to be part of the attraction. “When you look closely you see all these different sorts of things.” She explained, however, that what first drew her to the work were two elements that “look like origami.” They evoked a connection with something familiar and enjoyable. “I went through a phase when I did origami all the time. I found it always very cool when you looked at it.”

The work she rejected was Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans*. She found it “boring and uninteresting.” At the end of the interview the interviewer revealed that the soup cans were the work of a famous artist. Patten looked at it more closely and said: “Now that I’m looking at it properly I don’t see just the same can. It’s actually got different kinds of soup.” She still did not particularly like the work, but it seemed that the authority of a well-known artist provided some sort of validation.

Taff

From the Workshop

Taff also came into the workshop with a partially formed idea. “I like making models, realistic things.” A little later he offered a more concrete idea that he wanted to work on. “I’m just thinking about doing some model things. I had this idea about a plane that’s purposely built there, that’s half crashed into the ground. It’s in the ground and you can see the wings sticking out the back.” Taff immediately turned to sculpture when offered a choice of art medium. In his initial thinking he seemed to be interested in a background story to the work, or perhaps he was referring to a sculpture he had seen somewhere. As he talked he seemed to think a bit further and added, “I might make it like a model or something and then I can hang it.” When the artist challenged him to explore whether or not the plane would be sunk in the ground, Taff decided, “I’ll probably go with the plane idea... Yeah, one I can hang up.” The artist then suggested he might want to do some research about his particular plane. But Taff just wanted to begin. “I think I’m just going to start. Just any type of plane.” In the few minutes at the start of the workshop Taff had moved from an ambitious conceptual plan to one that was more general and could be achieved more readily.

Some time later the interviewer caught up with Taff while he was working outside using a knife to whittle a piece of wood he had found. “I’m just making a

model plane. I'm just making a wing out of a piece of wood. And I've got the body inside."

When asked why he had picked that particular piece of wood he explained that he "wanted a flat piece...it's nice and soft...makes it easier." His process in this workshop involved selecting materials that were manageable, that already had elements of the desired shape and that would be soft to carve. He continued his work, absorbed with cutting away the piece of wood. Later, when questioned, Taff reported on his progress. "I just found these bits of wood and I've just carved them down. I haven't got all the bits yet." He then identified his current problem. "I just need a saw to cut off that bit there, but we don't have one here." He further explained why a saw might be needed. "Because it's all manky and broken." His rejection of the damaged wood shows how completely he had moved away from his first idea of the crashed plane. Now he just wanted to make a model.

The artist asked if Taff would like him to help with trimming the wood because he was stronger and could make up for not having a saw. Taff happily passed the wood over. "You have a go." Taff clearly felt that he still held ownership of the art even if someone else helped him with a difficult task. Taff continued with his work on the wings for the rest of the workshop.

From the Group Interview

The item that Taff had chosen from his own work was a relief carving of a kiwi. "We did the artist-in-schools programme last year and I really like carving and stuff, and it turned out very well." He talked more about how he had entered into the work. "We already had some carving tools here. I just thought this would be a good idea. I started off with actually thinking about carving something, but it turned out a bit hard, so I just decided to engrave something into a bit of wood." Again Taff seemed to be mindful of how he could best use the material he had available. Another part of the motivation for the work was personal experience. "I chose a kiwi because Todd, the kiwi ranger, came in. He releases kiwis and stuff and looks after them. And we were doing something about our natural background, and yes, so I just done this." When asked if he had done any similar work since then he said, "I've tried doing other things, like out of bits of wood and things at home, but it doesn't really work out as

well.” While he seemed confident about his choices, Taff acknowledged that he had used the prompts and approval of a teacher to find and sustain his motivation.

Taff brought a piece made by his brother, a pastel drawing of a bird. He explained, “I think it’s nice...the texture, how it’s got stripy sort of things. And I really like the sky, how it’s faded blue and then purple-ish. Yeah, I quite like it.” There seem to be three themes suggested in his choice and explanation - the family connection, the texture and the use of colour. He explained that at home the picture was usually “blu-tacked to the wall in my mum’s room... We hang most of our art work up on our walls.” He commented on another work (not by a member of his family) that he had almost brought along. What he liked in that work was the sky. When asked if he had any idea about the technique used, he replied, “No, I’m not sure how he did it. I think he may have gone over it with pastels and smudged it a bit.” He was responding to a prompt, but was easily led to making deductions about process.

His preference among the art works that I brought was the Escher. “I don’t know. I really just like it. I think it’s a really nice black-and-white painting. It’s really complicated. It’s tricky, sort of illusionist, kind of.” He readily gave an example of what he meant by illusionist, “Here it’s going down but it’s going up,” he said, referring to the movement of the staircase. He added a further reason for his choice: “I like the black and white.”

The picture he disliked was the *Guernica*. “I like realistic things and this is just sort of nutty. What I call sort of ugly-ish. Like everything’s not right. They’re sort of so unreal, and I don’t really like it.” The key factor for his choice appeared to be the lack of realism. “It’s just not my type of drawing.” Towards the end of the interview, when several of the others had found connections in the *Guernica* to world issues they knew about, he still maintained his rejection of the work. “I just don’t really like the kind of art that it is.”

Taff also did not like Warhol’s soup cans. He was quite prepared to believe that a famous artist had done the work. “Yes, because I know one of the famous artists did a poo in a can and sold it for millions and millions of dollars.” It seemed that authorisation by name was not a significant factor in Taff’s decisions about what made good art.

Bam

From the Workshop

Bam arrived at the workshop with what he called a “sort of idea... I think I would like to do something with a mask.” He acknowledged previous experiences with a half-mask and wanted to experiment further. Building on previous experience was evident throughout his approach.

In his discussion with the artist, Bam explained that he was interested in making something to display rather than something to use. He wanted the mask to go “just on the wall.” As he worked and talked about his work, the concept of art being something on the wall was seen to be an important one to him. As later discussion shows it was also a complex concept.

After further discussion with the artist, he affirmed he would like to make a plaster mould of his own face that he would later use to make a clay face. He participated eagerly with the mould-making, stopping only to check how he could breathe. This shows that he was reflecting on the process and its possible difficulties. Throughout the mould-making he took an interest in the process, but was eager to take direction from the artist. The first attempt to make the mould failed because the plaster mix was too dry and it fell apart. Bam was determined to continue and get it right.

When the camera returned to Bam, he was with the artist. Bam reported on a conversation they had been having. He explained that the heat in the drying mould was caused by the fact that “it lets out energy as a source of heat.” When asked what made it do that, he answered, “The chemicals.” Bam was interested in all the aspects of the process, including the science.

Although his role in most of the mould-making was that of a receiver of guidance, he proactively took advantage of the drying time to further experiment with the use of clay to make a mask in a different way. “I’m making a mask, a different mask to that one over there, because that one’s going to take a while to dry. So I’m going to use this fresh piece of clay.” Process was clearly still important for Bam. He was particularly interested in using the same materials in different ways.

The interviewer commented that he had a really flat piece of clay. “Yeah, I don’t know if it’s going to be flat. Or if it’s going to have like air underneath it. I’m doing broad shapes.” He was willing to let the process develop and ideas emerge as he worked.

Later the camera showed that he had built up the mask with crumpled newspaper underneath, so it was a semi-relief. “I put newspaper underneath. So I spread it out a bit.” He explained that this way he would not use so much clay and that he “liked this sort of shape.” He intended to “work around it now and make my nose, my mouth, my eyes stick out.”

In later discussions he repeated he was happy with what he was doing. “I feel I am going all right...now I know what I am doing.” When asked by the artist about the drying process in the first mask, he confirmed he would just wait and see. Bam was fully immersed in the work and building on his original concept by experimentation.

The artist provoked Bam to compare the two masks, “Um I reckon that one has more shape” (pointing to the one in front of him). “And then the other one will stand out with more features. This one is like a drawing moulded. It will still look cool but it won’t have those textures and features.” When pushed to explain further, he explained that the second mask was “just an ordinary picture of a face.” Whereas the mould was “something in particular, this one is just a piece of art.” The mould was something that “ideally, I would like to give it to my mum.” When asked which one he would prefer to finish he chose the mould. “Because that’s the one I originally started on and I want to finish it. I just need some time for it to dry.” In his explanation he seems to be making a distinction between art and realistic representation.

He affirmed the difference in his understanding of the two pieces. He said he might add realistic colour to the mould but would not be concerned with realistic colours in the second piece. “No, because it’s not a particular person’s face. I might put some colours on it but not the exact colours that a person’s face would have... Because it’s not a person’s face. It’s an art drawing.” The suggestion is that art does not have to be real. There is a further suggestion that art is less personal and is more abstract than a copy of the real.

From the Group Interview

The preferred piece of his own work that Bam brought in was the mask he made in the workshop - the first one, the cast of his face. He said, "I like my mask because I just do." He detailed the technique he used to make it. "I lay on the table and they put this stuff over my face. I had straws in my mouth, and then I had to wait a while for it to dry. Then we stuck clay in my mould." He recalled that it took a while to dry. "I had to wait a long time. About a week or something. And then we pulled it out of the mould." When the clay had dried and was out of the mould, "I got a brush and I just made it smooth to get rid of the lumps in it." He was still waiting to fire it. "It was fun." The two elements that he clearly valued in this piece were its personal connection and his understanding of the process he had used.

The work by someone else that he admired was a painting by his uncle. He noted a number of things he liked about it. The first was the subject matter. "I like the sea so I guess I like this." He also liked the depth in the work - "It looks 3-D" - and liked "the different colours, and the shade." Lucy interjected, saying that the work "looks really realistic". Bam responded, "That's the sort of painting I like. That sort of stuff, like making things 3-D." Bam was also aware of the medium. He explained, "It's a print on canvas. He painted it originally." When asked if that was a painting style he would like to develop or if he would prefer to work in sculpture, he replied, "Yes. 3-D stuff." For a number of the participants described in the previous chapter, the subject matter was a significant reason for valuing the work and realism tended to support the subject matter.

Of the artwork I brought, he chose the greenstone patu as the piece he liked best. "It just draws your eye to it. I like it because it's got different shades of green. And it's 3-D. And it's pretty cool. And the shape." He commented that it was not the kind of work he would like to make. However he liked the shades and the material and the workmanship. A response to the sensual aspects of the work was a significant element in his validation.

The work he did not like was Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*. "This one, because it's pretty plain. It's something just over and over and over again."

Taylor

From the Workshop

Taylor began the workshop with apparently no idea of what he was going to do. To initial inquiries about his ideas he replied, successively, “Nothing yet,” “I don’t know,” “Not really.” The artist prompted by asking whether he would like to explore something in his Maori heritage. Taylor replied, “Yes...ye-ah...maybe...probably.” Again the artist prompted, “Your dad paints too, doesn’t he?” Taylor replied, “Yeah, and he does paint and stuff.” When the artist asked whether Taylor would like other people to help him with ideas he said yes. As the others made offers, Taylor replied with a slightly absentminded “Mm,” and “Yeah, okay.” After a while he wandered out of the room to look for materials, and the work that eventuated did not relate to any of the suggestions.

A little later when the camera returned to Taylor he had brought in some materials - pieces of wood and stone - and he was playing around, trying out balance and composition. Taylor had created a structure from the found materials. He looked pleased. He explained his work, talking with more energy than before. “I don’t know. I just looked around and found stuff and thought maybe I can make something out of all of this stuff. So I just kept on experimenting with levels and balance and stuff. I had an idea I was going to do that one that was balancing. So I found that piece of wood... Yeah, and so I made it so it’s all balanced - completely balanced you can see.” He explained his process. “I put things on so it looks good. When you look at it from underneath it looks good too.”

When asked how he decided when he had the angle right he answered, “I sort of played around with it – and that looks good.” It seems that he was relying on his aesthetic intuition and on a “feel” for his materials. He wandered away to continue his work.

When the camera caught up with him again he had been talking to the artist about how to make the work permanent, instead of the current way in which the components were just resting through balance on one another. Taylor reported that he had tried the glue gun. “I put a bit on there - ” (showing the stone) “ - but I can’t glue it because it’s too dirty. It goes on and it comes off and won’t stand.” He admitted to having a dilemma about how to proceed. He reported that the artist “said I should try

like flax or something to bind it on... I don't know. I haven't tried it yet." A little later he reported that the flax did not work because "you couldn't really tie knots very well." He was now returning to a further attempt to use the glue. He said he was "cleaning the stone, taking the sand off of it so the glue will stick to it." Later Taylor felt he had solved his problem. Firstly he had successfully tied the rock onto the piece of wood. He explained that "I had to break the fibres [of the flax] so it wasn't so snappy like that." He demonstrated bending the flax. He added, "Made it bendy." He had reinforced the knot with glue. He said, "I was afraid the knot might come undone. But I put heaps and heaps of glue all over it." He then showed how he intended to attach the wood to the concrete. Previously the glue would not hold onto the wet concrete. Now he had tied flax onto the concrete and planned to glue the wood onto the flax.

Taylor worked quickly in shaping his sculpture. It appeared he worked spontaneously and intuitively as he began to handle materials. The big experiment for him, and what took most of his time, was to explore the technical challenge of attaching his materials to each other permanently.

From the Group Interview

The work of his own that Taylor selected was a clay bird. "I made this, I think about a year and a half ago, because my dad had the clay place in the Polytech. I got to go in with him and make this. He glazed it, but I sculpted it." He stated that he liked working with clay. "You can make anything with it. In a couple of seconds. You can make the sun or a star. Anything your imagination comes up with, I guess." However he acknowledged, "Sometimes I have problems with joining all the parts... Well, sometimes they just fall apart. Like a whale that I made last year." He had observed how his dad had resolved the problem. "My dad joins it by putting scratches in the end with a little carving tool. He spits on that part and same on the other part, and just joins it and smudges it up the sides." He explained that he had done the same thing with this item. Taylor clearly took his lead from his father, but also demonstrated he had developed an appreciation of the quality of the clay and the difficulties of working with it, and that he had learnt techniques for resolving some of those difficulties.

The work he had brought from home produced by someone else was a small painting done by an ancestor. “Well, this piece I brought I like it because my great-great-great-grandfather painted it. He was like a settler, like a hundred years ago.” He acknowledged the family connection as the main reason he liked it. “Yeah, mainly.” But he also liked several other features. “The writing on it: ‘A thing of beauty is a joy for ever’... I kind of like the words and the pattern around the circle. And the tiki.” His suggestion was that the words were like a prophecy that was being fulfilled by the survival of the painting and by Taylor bringing it to the interview. Taylor was very proud of his family and heritage, and connection with family history was a significant element of what he valued in art.

The art work he chose from the ones I brought was the *Guernica*. Initially he explained his choice in these terms: “Because it’s got all these different shapes and sizes. I like the stuff that’s more stuff together, that’s weird.” When asked if he thought the painting had a story, he said, “Chaos.” He readily identified a number of features that led to his conclusion. “Well, this guy has a giant knee. That guy has backwards eyes, sort of. This cow donkey thing has two horns here. And this guy is falling into something.” When asked about the mood of the picture he said, “Kind of mad. Kind of ugly.” Again he identified elements that led to his judgement. “Blows your mind. And there’s a volcano smoking. And there’s a dead baby there.” At the end of the interview, when the interviewer told the story of *Guernica* to the group, Taylor acknowledged he knew of Picasso. “Yes, I know him. I know Picasso.” He then drew an analogy of the theme of the painting to another event in history that he understood. “Like South America and North America. Like slavery.” Taylor’s comments show that he was able to look carefully at art work and to make connections between art works and his other knowledge about the world.

Taylor rejected Warhol’s *Brillo Box*. “It’s cheesy. It’s not hard. It’s just some boxes. He might have taken a picture of it...not hard.” When asked if he meant that the work showed no skills, he replied, “No. It doesn’t. It’s completely...” (shrugs shoulders in disgust). The apparent lack of technical skill was, it seems, a decisive element in his valuation.

Lucy

From the Workshop

Lucy's approach in the workshop was about exploring a process rather than making a particular product. At the beginning of the workshop Lucy showed her interest in craft. When the group discussed how to get starting ideas, she said she would "look in craft books... I like putting the details in." When Patten was talking about her Hundertwasser idea, Lucy offered a suggestion of technique. "Yeah, we did Hundertwasser once and we used tinfoil for the windows and stuff."

In this workshop she decided to explore a particular effect she had seen in a book. "When I was little I had this book and it was like pressed out paper. It was like bumpy, it was all pushed out." The artist explained the process was called embossing and encouraged her to invent her own way to raise the "bumps." Lucy set out to find ways to raise outlines. This task occupied her to the end of the workshop, "I am just going to do heaps of shapes." The following dialogue shows her early experimentation with the process:

Lucy: I'd had a go at this, and it does a little bit of a bump but not much.

Artist: It's generally better if you get some sort of tool like an ice block stick. You're asking it to do a lot all in one go. You watch this. (*He demonstrates.*)

Lucy: Oh, yeah.

Artist: See, that leaves the embossing on the other side. You need to have something that you're working on. You could do it on that. You're probably asking too much of the paper. You'd get a nice surface out of that maybe.

Lucy: I might use some cardboard.

Artist: And then you'll put colour over it, something like that?

Lucy: Yeah.

Later she explained her progress to the interviewer. "I'm trying to get it to come out of the paper like it's alive. I reckon it feels cool and it looks really good. And I've tried heaps of things. Like I've tried a jandal, and this top. And I've tried

this too (dustpan) and it seems to work with this, because it's got quite an edge on it. This one has worked as well (holding up another sheet of paper) but you have to do it quite lightly. And I want it to come out a bit more because then it really gets the texture." She had found that different kinds of tools gave different kinds of edge and different textures. She explained that currently she was exploring the impact of both the force of pressing and the height of her tool. "I'd like to see if you need a bigger lift because then it makes the drop more. Or whether it's just the pressing." A little later she was working with differences in effect using different kinds of paper. "I find that it's stronger and it holds the shape more." She also found that it was "quite reflecting".

A few minutes later she had decided to use black paper. "I decided to go with black paper because it made it stand out more." She had found a paper that satisfied her by the way it picked up the light. "And I got some that was still like glossy paper, but not so black."

In addition, she had been further exploring the use of a template, and had made the big discovery that she could control the shape by moving the template. "I've been working on my template so what I'm going to use is my textures and what will work. So I've decided to make my own ones. My first idea was to cut out the shape, but I figured out you didn't need to cut out the exact shape as long as you move it to make the bumps with it."

A little later in the workshop she shared her ideas with the artist. He suggested a further way of making curves and how to control the shape when cutting a big curve. "You are trying to cut a shape, and you can't get a big curve." He suggested she make it out of straight lines and play with ways she could use her tool "to draw curves, not just straight lines."

Just before going home she reported success with creating a curved koru shape, "I'm going good. I've started that part of my curl. And now I'm trying to make it go bumpy... I reckon it turned out how I wanted it to be. I think it's going to work; it just takes time to make it." She explained that she had played with using straight lines to make her curve and that she then tried a different technique. "It did take quite a while to figure out how to carve it. Like I had to do one bit and then I had to turn it around instead of just keeping it straight. I had to turn it to get the shape."

When asked if she had figured it out herself or if the artist had helped her she replied, “I did. I couldn’t get it round this bit so I turned it just like that. And it worked, it got right around it.” She reported that she was really happy with her process. “I like figuring things out.”

She also reported that she was still experimenting with paper. “So I would probably choose the white but it would probably depend... I think the black is more see-able because the light kinda goes in the shape in the outline. With the white it’s just a little line, really.”

Although she had spent all her time working out a process, she had plans to use it later. “I would use it...I like to do pictures and I remember having that book, but it got ruined...it was a drawn picture but it was all pushed up. And I loved the feel of the pages. It was like a quilt and it had crosses on it and lots of things like that. So I could try if I had the time.”

Throughout this session Lucy pursued the process of achieving an effect that she remembered from her early childhood. She used a range of tools and different types of paper and found new ways of manipulating both that made her feel she had gone a long way to achieving her goal. Her interest in the art-making was evidently in satisfactorily solving a technical problem.

From the Group Interview

Lucy brought two examples of her own work that she was pleased with. The first was a Hundertwasser derivative. “It’s kind of along the lines of him.” She identified a number of features she had taken from Hundertwasser. “He doesn’t like straight lines... He doesn’t really stick to a colour.” She also explained other specific Hundertwasser-derived strategies that she had drawn on. “We used silver paper. And put stuff inside things. And the houses with the glass on top and things like that.” She reported that in making the work she had not had an exact plan, but played with Hundertwasser shapes and strategies and let the work grow.

She was more diffident about her second choice. “I don’t really like this one. Because it’s not that great.” Yet she had brought it. When further prompted, she listed a number of things she liked. “I think it’s cool because it’s really whacky... I like the colours... I like the greens and the blues. We were learning to shade into the

pastels. We were kind of learning that at the time.” The things she didn’t like were that “it’s kind of weird because some things don’t look like what they should be...the sun’s all weird.” She concluded, “It does look like a kid’s picture.”

In response to the invitation to bring a work by someone else that she liked, Lucy had brought a 3-D piece in metal and wood (not made by a member of her family). She gave a number of reasons why she liked it. The first was the material. “I really like it because I like the wood as well. And it’s got some metal.” The next was the texture. “It’s got a really cool texture. It’s really bumpy and stuff – it looks really cool.” She also liked the kinetic element - “like the metal bits, this bit here –” (moving the part). “Yeah, I think that’s really clever.” Finally she liked it because it was out of the ordinary. “I just like it because it’s so unusual. I don’t think I’ve seen another one like this. Unless it was by the same person.” This last comment suggests how much she identified individual style with a particular artist. She acknowledged she would like to make that type of art. “I’d give it a go. I don’t know if I would succeed, but I’d give it a go.”

Of the work I had brought, she picked the Escher. First she responded to an overall impression. “Maybe the background or the towers.” Then her eye was drawn by a contradiction she noticed. “The river’s going up and it’s not usual.” Another contradiction she noticed was the garden. “And then the garden kind of looks like an underwater garden. Like sponges and stuff like that.” She then turned to fine detail. “There’s someone hanging out the washing. It kind of just draws my eyes to it.”

She rejected Warhol’s soup cans. “This one actually annoys me... When I think about it, you should be able to look at a picture, but when I look at this I just see soup. Because it’s just soup.” When asked if she would believe it was from a famous artist she replied, “I don’t think I would...even if it was a famous artist I wouldn’t change my mind.”

Correspondences with the Themes in Chapter Four

The themes that characterised the aesthetic responses of the participants examined in the previous chapter reappear in the discussions with students of School C.

In the workshop dialogues a focus on technical skills and the process of art-making predominated. All the participants discussed problems they had in realising

their evolving project and devoted energy to their resolution. In Lucy's case, the entire workshop was devoted to exploring ways to achieve a desired textural effect. Bam showed interest not only in how to process his materials, but also in their physical properties and how they responded to drying and heat. Taff talked about the suitability of his found materials for his project and his difficulties in adapting them. Taylor created his initial art piece quickly but spent most of the workshop exploring how to make his temporary installation permanent, particularly focusing on the impact of glue on various materials and surfaces. Patten searched for techniques to realise each of the images in her project. Attention to the technical process used to achieve particular effects also featured in the discussions of finished pieces. Examples are Bam's interest in the way his uncle had used different colours and shade to gain a three-dimensional effect and Taylor's account of the processes needed to make successful joins in clay.

Responses to the sensory aspects of art were also evident. Lucy's technical exploration was a search for a particular tactile effect. Bam's experimentation with process was a prelude to his further embellishment of surface texture and colour for the mask he made. Patten was constantly working to achieve particular visual impacts in colour, texture and symbolic icons, such as the love heart above the 'i'. For Taylor, it was the achievement of balance that created a visual satisfaction and made him decide his construction was completed. In the discussions about finished work all the participants commented on the impact of colour, and some commented on surface texture, the effect of unexpected combinations of materials, and the impact of specific visual images.

A sense of narrative predominated in Patten's workshop piece. Interestingly, however, in her response to other people's completed works she rejected the narrative elements suggested by the others, preferring to focus on what she saw as "random" images. Although Taff developed a strong narrative before he started his work, this seemed to fade as he dealt with the limitations of his found materials. While he talked most about the visual elements in the finished art works, he also drew narrative connections with some - explaining, for instance, his subject choice of a kiwi because of a previous connection with a kiwi ranger. Although Taylor did not offer narratives in his initial responses, he was happy to accept and offer narratives about Picasso's

work. And a narrative of his connection with his ancestral history might be seen to be implicit in his choice of a historic family painting.

The influence of socioculturally-derived art values did not feature strongly in the workshop situation, except perhaps in Patten's search for elements of her design from authoritative sources, such as the internet for the graffiti alphabet and the artist's opinion for her choice of pastels. However, such values featured in the later discussions about finished works. Two of the participants referred to Hundertwasser as the source of their choices about colour and form. The identification of Warhol as a famous artist made some impact on Patten, but Taylor, Lucy and Taff were adamant in asserting that the artist's fame made no difference to their judgement. Family and cultural connections of a work were identified as significant by Taylor and Taff. Taylor explained his choice of his ancestor's painting in terms of its enduring history and the family connection.

While the themes identified in Chapter Four reoccurred with the participants from School C, what is, perhaps, more interesting is the way in which the workshop revealed how the participants made connections between these themes and how these different elements of aesthetic response motivated their work. The combination of workshop and interview provided a richer base of information and revealed in more detail how the participants drew on various elements to shape their aesthetic response to art works.

Integration of Themes

A mapping of each participant's discussion as a whole shows an interesting combination of kinds of aesthetic response. Two of these are discussed in detail in this section.

Both in the workshop and in his discussion of the clay bird he brought to the interview, Taylor worked initially from a sense of flow and feel for the material, responding to visual impact and a sense of balance. He responded to the *Guernica* in similar terms, commenting on the different shapes and sizes and the fusion of images. He rejected Warhol's work because of a perceived lack of visual interest or of adventure with images or material. His own sculptural work confronted him with the issue of sustaining the image he had made, and he actively explored the properties of

his materials and joining techniques. Rather than an end in itself, process seems to be a necessary tool for achieving desired effects. In his responses to other people's work he does not comment on technique, except to say Warhol's *Brillo Box* showed no skills, but focuses on the impact of the imagery, visual and verbal. In the painting he brought he found suggestions of the enduring value of his ancestor's work in the quotation and the tiki. He shows himself prepared to draw narrative meanings from work, relating the Picasso to slavery and the American civil war, although he initially was happy to identify the narrative more simply as chaos. He seems willing to draw on traditions, such as his father's example in clay work and his family's Maori and early settler histories, but he does not allow social authority to dictate his judgements and continues in his rejection of the Warhol.

Lucy shows a strong interest in technical process. She spent the workshop resolving the problem of how to achieve embossing. Her interest in technique is also shown in her reporting of what she had learned from Hundertwasser, such as the use of silver paper, avoidance of straight lines and creating shade with pastels. She discusses materials and technical effect in her response to the sculptural piece she brought from home, noting the juxtaposition of metal and wood, the bumpy texture and the movement. She acknowledges she would like to explore how to achieve such effects. Her interest in technique is directed towards the creation of particular sensory effects, such as "making the paper come alive." She notices such effects in the Escher work, as in "the river going up." She is interested in colour, commenting on Hundertwasser's strategies for achieving rich colour effects. Her response to Escher's work is explained in terms of the way it "just draws my eyes to it." She explicitly draws on the example of previous teachers and works she has encountered, including the model of Hundertwasser and the book in which she "loved the feel of the pages." However, throughout the observed work and the discussions, the primary focus seems to be her processes of discovery. "I like figuring things out," she says.

These two examples illustrate how distinctively each of the participants has constructed his or her personal aesthetic awareness. The final chapter explores the educational implications of such differences and of the evidence they give of evolving aesthetic consciousness.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

This study has shown that students do have views about what makes art good, that they are evolving their abilities for making aesthetic judgements and that they can express these judgements in terms of their response to particular works of art. In keeping with what may be expected from a qualitative case study, the participants have not been seen as representative of the wider population of Year 6 and 7 students. Rather, their interests, opinions and perceptions have been explored in the expectation that a better understanding of the views and values of one group of students will stimulate similar examinations by teachers of students in their own classrooms. It is also hoped that this small study will lead other researchers to further examine students' emergent aesthetic awareness.

Range of Responses to Art and Art-Making

This study found that students respond to and make judgements about art in a wide range of ways. When asked to explain why they had decided a particular art work was or was not “good”, many students identified features that appealed to one or more of their senses, such as colour or surface texture. Some also indicated a connection with a narrative or story which gave meaning to the piece. Others expressed an awareness of the technique that was used in making the piece. Still others referred to a sociocultural context as the basis for valuing a work, such as awareness of the role a medium or form played in their own cultural tradition, connections with family history, teacher approval, recognition of the expectations associated with a famous name, or conformity with an accepted ‘rule’ of art-making. Some but not all expressed their response from a combination of these approaches. It might be noted that just this kind of range may be found more generally in the history of art criticism and art writing in the adult world.

Each of the above approaches is consistent with one or more of the New Zealand curriculum aims, and aligns with one or more of the four strands that the curriculum identifies as important areas of study in the arts. Therefore, teachers could

clearly accept each of these perspectives as a useful and productive way of engaging learning within the fields mandated by the curriculum. However, the range of responses suggests that teachers need to develop a teaching design that allows them to adapt more closely with each of a range of different student approaches to art. They would then be able to stimulate students to expand the scope of their aesthetic response. From this basis further knowledge and more complex reflection can be encouraged. While the general formula “one size does not fit all” is recognised and articulated by most teachers, it is often not translated into resources, content, teaching approaches or criteria for assessment. The findings in this study suggest that the developmental needs of students in the arts are best sustained by a wide range of learning opportunities and environments, and a wide range of emphases in teaching.

Observing Process

The workshop observation and discussion, reported in Chapter Five, reveals in more detail the way participants pursue a particular approach to the aesthetic in the making of an art work and the complex ways they integrate different kinds of responses in their approach to art. For example, it was interesting to note that while Patten seemed to develop the work she undertook in the workshop in terms of a strong narrative about her own recent arrival in Whangarei and the discovery of a wounded pukeko, she apparently avoided narrative interpretations of other people’s work and preferred to reflect on them purely in terms of the visual impact of the images they contained. Lucy spent the workshop exploring ways to achieve a particular effect she wanted to use in her future work. While she responded in the interview to a range of different elements such as colour, materials, and elements of the unexpected or apparent contradictions, it can also be seen that she was constantly looking for the ways she or other artists could use materials or elements of composition to achieve particular effects. Moreover, she disliked art where she could not identify indications of such a process. In other words, while it is possible to trace patterns of how each student integrated different elements of their aesthetic responsiveness, quite different patterns emerged for each participant.

This finding shows that the evolution of aesthetic awareness in students is a complex process. In this study I learned more about the students’ evaluative

strategies and about what they liked and valued in the group where I could observe their workshop process and engage them in conversations about their own and other people's art than in the cases where I simply talked to them about completed art works. This suggests that classroom teachers also could learn more about their students' emergent aesthetic thinking through close interactions with them while they work as well as encouraging them to talk about completed art works.

The report of the students' work in Chapter Five shows how each of them engaged in processes of problem-solving, and how each took an individual and different direction. In line with Sullivan's examination of creativity as research practice (2007), each of the five projects could be seen as an action research task in which each participant pursued and evolved a goal, identified obstacles and problems along the way, and used a range of strategies to resolve them, including experimentation, research into published resources, advice seeking, and reflection on received feedback from peers. This approach to art aligns strongly with the curriculum goals in the strands "Developing Ideas in the Arts" and "Communicating and Interpreting in the Arts" (Ministry of Education 2007) and with the *UNESCO Road Map's* emphasis on arts education as a means of enhancing the creative and communicative potential of people in society (UNESCO 2006).

The Significance of Prior Experience

Kathleen Gallagher (2010), in a recent reflection about her career as an arts educator and arts researcher, talks about the things she found "when [she] wasn't looking." One of the things I particularly noticed within the study was the wide range of art experiences that the participants reported and the equally significant differences in the vocabulary and concepts they could draw on in talking about art works and their responses to them. All the participants had been selected by their teachers on the basis of a strong interest in art and an ongoing commitment to work in one or more media. However, students from the school situated in the lowest socioeconomic area gave evidence of a more restricted range of experiences with art than those from the other two schools. Their explanations of why they liked or disliked a particular piece of work were often short and used a more limited vocabulary. While they were keen to talk about their art, their physical reactions often called for the interviewer to

intervene and collaborate in their discussion. This suggests that the more students have opportunities to talk freely about their art, the more able and confident they become in doing so. Teachers can play an important role in contributing to their expressive strategies. Innate interest and talent play important parts, but schooling needs to provide a rich repertoire of experiences as well as opportunities to develop the language with which to express reflections on art and art-making. In the socioeconomic contexts where families have not had access to preschool and holiday art lessons, or have been restricted in the materials they can access for their own art-making, it is the school that can provide the opportunity to extend students' experiences, as well as to help them find ways of communicating their existing interests and values. As in other subject areas, there is more need for schools in lower socioeconomic areas to play a developmental role, even though they often have fewer resources to do so. While a thorough exploration of how this might be done is beyond the scope of this study, the reported findings emphasise the value of engaging with students' views and providing opportunities where they can think and talk about their work as it progresses. Teachers need to know, understand and build on the art experiences their students come with - including, as Freedman (2001b), Banksy (2006), Stewart (2006) and Silva (2006) suggest, popular forms of visual communication such as car graphics, and graffiti.

Implicit Distinctions Made by the Participants

Although I brought several prints of works by famous artists to the group interviews, no participants, in response to my request for them to bring in works they liked by other people, brought books or prints of famous artists' works or library books containing pictures by well-known children's illustrators. There may be a number of explanations for this, but my speculation is that the students do not think about visual work by unknown strangers in the same way as they regarded the art-making that they have been involved with or that is in their own homes. Exactly what the perceived differences are would be an interesting avenue for further study.

Also interesting was the absence, except in one case, of posters, computer art and other modes of popular art from the samples of work brought in by the

participants. Charlie's X-Box poster was the exception, and his apology for it as "not a real art work" seems to underline the implicit rule. It was made by a computer, he said, and so it did not constitute real art.

Possibly these absences were accidental to this study. However, they suggest that book illustration, public art works and popular art forms are not given attention as art by primary school teachers. It seems that this might be an area for fruitful development. Literacy programmes encourage students to read the narrative of visual texts. At the same time teachers could begin to elicit some form of aesthetic response to the visual images, encouraging students to look for art in their everyday lives as well as during their art periods.

My Learning Journey

Although this study overtly concerned the interests and perceptions of the students, my reflective journal notes point to the way my own knowledge and understanding about art and art education developed. My pre-service teacher training had focused on child development in art and I had learned something about Maori art, clay work and sculpture through my own interest. This study prompted me to learn more about art history and historic conceptualisations of the aesthetic. I became aware not only of the 'rules' set up by successive styles in art but also of the way some particular artists have mocked or broken those rules. I also became aware of the role different groups in society play in legitimising particular kinds of art. I began to question why what is known as 'high art' should have more value than popular art. The participants' reflections and the literature I read prompted my own continuing re-evaluations of which things we call art and of how I frame my own aesthetic response. For example, while I had always responded sensually to art works, I became more aware of how styles relate to historical change and social politics. Current literature about teaching and learning (for example Kemmis and Smith, 2008) stress the importance of teachers' critical reflection about their own practice and perceptions. Professional development to support the arts, however, consists almost predominantly of exemplars for assessment and reporting (Te Kete Ipurangi in Ministry of Education, 2010, for instance). My personal experience in this study suggests the

value of professional development that facilitates teachers' reflection on their own evolving aesthetic responses.

Implications for Teaching Practice

Several implications of this study for classroom teaching of the arts have already been suggested. Here I want to explore some further ideas about how the findings of this study might relate more broadly to arts education and to the wider field of learning and teaching.

The study shows that students actively make art judgements and that these judgements vary considerably from individual to individual. While the ways students responded aesthetically can be grouped into a number of broad categories - such as sensory approach, narrative loading, appreciation of technical process and sociocultural values - close tracking of the five participants from School C shows that students have very individual ways of navigating the potential connections between each of these different ways of responding. These connections relate to their own interests in art-making and to the ways they use art as a means to make sense of the world. The differences highlight the importance for teachers of learning where their students "are at" and using that as a basis for further development. Carr and Claxton (2004) stress the importance of learning disposition, students' readiness and their desire to learn about particular subjects. Dewey (1916) explains the connection between learning and the ability to relate and use experiences. Boone (2008) and Maras (2003) highlight the value, for developing art awareness, of educators supporting children's expression of their own views. Maguire (2005) emphasises the value of students as informants about their own learning interests. The differences in individual perceptions, values and ways of processing reported in this study indicate the extent to which teachers need to explore and encourage the diversity of interests and inclinations within their classrooms.

Most teachers tend to acknowledge in general terms the need to recognise the diversity of learners, and to espouse the need to work from the basis of students' existing skills and attitudes. When it comes to art, they appear to recognise that students come with different abilities and different interests but they also, and

somewhat contradictorily, tend to focus energy on finding common criteria for assessment and to focus teaching on channelling students towards those assessable criteria. They sometimes draw on the Ministry's TKI (Te Kete Ipurangi) site and on NEMP (National Education Monitoring Project) reports for material to use as normative exemplars. When exemplars, intended as illustrative, are used as normative, students' freedom to explore materials and ideas about the world are restricted. Research by Rose, Jolly and Burkitt (2006) and Richards (2003) reveal the tendency to encourage visual realism and tidiness, and the consequent tendency of students to accept normative art rules. The findings from this study suggest it might be more useful to spend time exploring the initial bases from which students themselves make art judgements and provide a working context in which students can further challenge and refine their thinking and their ways of working. Such an approach supports Chalmer's (2001) proposal that visual culture is a way of communicating about the world that could potentially become as ordinary as speaking, and Eisner's (1998) exploration of how art is as important in coming to know the world as is verbal discourse.

The self-directed way the School C students followed their own aesthetic goals in the workshop prompts a suggestion that it would be useful classroom practice to treat students as emerging artists. This would involve encouraging them to work to their own evolving aspirations, prompting pertinent self-reflection, encouraging experimenting and problem-solving strategies, noting developing skills and understandings, and promoting the framing of new questions. It would also involve seeing the arts as a means to learn about the world, not simply a progression of technical skills.

The UNESCO Road Map (UNESCO, 2006) identifies the arts as a central element in human development and emphasises the role of art education in "cultivat[ing] a sense of creativity and initiative, a fertile imagination, emotional intelligence and a moral 'compass', a capacity for critical reflection, a sense of autonomy, and freedom of thought and action." It asserts that "education in and through the arts also stimulates cognitive development and can make how and what learners learn more relevant to the needs of the modern societies in which they live." Such a view constitutes art in education as an investigative, critically reflective and communicative process that is as important as literacy and numeracy in preparing

students to successfully live in the world. It implies that teachers need to approach teaching in the arts with as much attention and desire to know more, as they do in other areas of the curriculum. The findings in this project, particularly the extended examination of the work by students in School C, suggest that Year 6 and 7 students have already begun to view art as a complex process for investigation and communication, and that they have divergent interests in what they want to investigate, and different ways of unpacking the elements of art for communication.

A student-centred view of arts education need not be seen as in opposition to structured teaching. In fact, as the differences in students' experience and ability to express their ideas reported in this study show, there is an important role for teachers to actively assist in the development of vocabulary and concept development, and to provide well-resourced working environments where students can develop, sustain and question their projects. As Andreotti (2009) and Gilbert (2005) point out, the emphasis in the *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) is on the construction of knowledge. A dynamic process of constructing knowledge within our classrooms calls for both active engagement by learners and appropriately scaffolded teaching structures that promote further learning. The development of such teaching structures and of the resources to support them is a process that translates national curriculum into classroom practice. Within arts education this is a project in its early stages.

There are some useful indicators of how such scaffolding might develop. For example Eisner (1998; 2002) explains how creative inquiry can be achieved through use of the arts and offers a detailed examination of stages in visual arts development. Perkins (1994) offers illustrative examples of how children can be led to understand art at different levels of complexity in order to develop different kinds of intelligence. Parsons (1987) suggests developmental stages of art understanding. Fraser, Price and Henderson (2008) offer a handbook of practical ideas for teachers. This research offers a further contribution by identifying ways in which Year 6 and 7 students engage with art works and by emphasising the value of the views they bring as a foundation on which teaching structures can be built.

This study raises questions for learning more generally. If the evolving values and judgements of students are perceived as important in arts education, are they not also important in learning more generally? The seminal work of Dewey (1916) and Freire (1972) and more recent research such as that by Boone (2008) and Lewis and

Porter (2004) affirm the value of student inquiry and student voice in articulating new understandings. A normative approach to measuring achievement in literacy, for example, can potentially mask the progression - or absence of progression - of students' interpretive responses (as opposed to knowing how to correctly answer a comprehension question). Such an approach would probably do little to encourage students to relate the content in the materials they read to the world they are experiencing and are seeking to understand.

An overarching factor that limits teachers from approaching art in a student-centred way is the reality of constraints of time and resources. While teachers might want to know more about student thinking in art, they feel they do not have the time to conference with each student and do not have available material resources to draw on for each stage of interest or development. This perhaps reflects the status of art within the overall scope of classroom learning. For the teaching of reading there is a wide range of resources to challenge development of different skills and to meet a broad variety of interests. There is also a well-established tradition of research into effective teaching practice in reading. It is the same with mathematics. But in art, teachers are invariably thrown right back on their own resources. In this way a valuable learning pathway promoted by Richardson (1964), Eisner (1998) and Perkins (1994) may be lost.

This thesis began with Taylor's reflection about his making of a sculpture in the workshop. Later he recalled his earlier experiences of working with clay. As Taylor said:

Well, you can make anything with it... You can make the sun or a star.
Anything your imagination comes up with, I guess.

Following the expectations of both the *New Zealand Curriculum* and the *UNESCO Road Map* a similar claim could be made for the potential of art in the education of children. What we make with their education is only limited by our imagination. If the richest potential (the sun or a star) is to be realised, teachers need to know more about art and about the development of aesthetic responses. This thesis has explored an important element of this - that is, what students themselves think and value.

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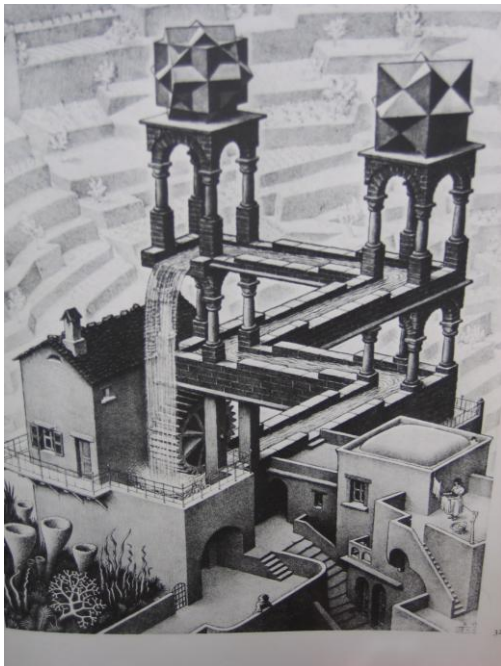
Appendix A: Art Works



G Greenwood: Bronze sculpture
(focus group interview)



Unnamed Ngai Tahu Artist:
Pounamu: Greenstone sculpture
(focus group interview)



MC Escher: *Filipagnoli*
(Focus group interview)
www.mcescher.com



Van Gough: *Starry Night* (Focus
group interview)
www.photobucket.com



Warhol: *Starry Night* (Focus group interview)
www.photobucket.com



Warhol: *Soup cans* (focus group interview)
www.images.artnet.com



Picasso: *Guernica* (Focus group interview)
www.artquotes.net-masters-picasso_guernica1937.jpg



Peter: Art work he created that he liked (focus group interview)



Peter: Art work he brought from home that he liked (focus group interview)



Charlie: Art work he brought from home that he liked (focus group interview)



Charlie: Art work he brought from home that he liked (focus group interview)



Tom: Art work he created that he liked (focus group interview)



Tom: Art work he brought from home that he liked (focus group interview)



Taff: Art work he created that he liked (focus group interview)



Lucy: Art work she created that she liked (focus group interview)



Patten: Art work she created that she liked (focus group interview)



Taff: Art work he brought from home that he liked (focus group interview)



Taylor: Art work he brought from home that he liked (focus group interview)



Lucy: Art work she brought from home that she liked (focus group interview)



Patten: Art work she brought from home that she liked (focus group interview)



Lucy: experimenting with her ideas to create an embossing effect (Artist workshop)



Bam: Taking part in conference with Artist (artist workshop)



Bam: Creating a plaster cast of his face to make a clay mask of his face. (Artist workshop)



Bam: Clay mask which was made using the plaster cast he created in the artist workshop (Focus group interview)



Taylor: experimenting with balance and form (Artist workshop)



Taylor: Experimenting with flax as a way of fastening his sculpture together (Artist workshop)